

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide SB 02.7.2021

WAKE UP TO A MIRACLE – Acts 11:27-12:24

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

In Acts 12, God Watched and Saw what Herod was doing to His people. Of the 12 who followed Jesus, James was the 1st to be Martyred. Up to Acts 12 the Church has been on a streak of success, experiencing one conversion after another. First, Saul of Tarsus, then the Gentile Centurion Cornelius, then the incredible move of God in Antioch. But in Acts 12 the ugly opposition inspired by Satan raised its head. The death of James shattered the illusion that somehow the 12 enjoyed a unique Divine protection. Knowing that Peter had already had mysteriously escaped from prison before, Herod assigned a high-security detail to guard Peter. But something amazing was about to happen. Let's get into our study...

1. What stood out to you during this week's study?
2. Have you or someone you know ever experienced something that they could not explain? Share that story with the group.
3. Are there any famous things or events that the world has trouble explaining? Consider things like Bigfoot, the Lochness Monster, etc.

Throughout our existence, human beings have come to understand much about the way of the world. Yet despite all our knowledge, there is much that we cannot explain. At our most prideful, we believe we can do anything and explain away anything that does not go the way we intend. **Yet in humility, we recognize that there is a great and loving God at work in our world, and His purposes cannot be thwarted by the ambitions of men.** This is all the more clear in our passage today.

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 12:1-5

1. According to the text, what motivated Herod to kill James and imprison Peter? What impact might these actions have had on the church?
2. Why do you think Herod put Peter under such heavy security? Was Peter more likely to attempt escape than others? Read Acts 5:19 to further your discussion.
3. Verse 5 highlights the response of the church to Peter's imprisonment. Do you think prayer is a legitimate response to the evil actions of men? Why or why not? How might have Herod and others in support of his actions perceived this act of prayer?

Having won points with the Jews by the execution of James, Agrippa moved against the chief of the apostles, Peter, arresting him and placing him in prison. It would have been after the holy days had ended that Agrippa would have brought Peter forth for public trial and surely also for execution. Peter was placed under heavy security, guarded by four squads, each squad consisting of four soldiers. This was the usual Roman practice, changing guards every three hours throughout the twelve night hours to assure maximum alertness. Perhaps the Sanhedrin had informed Agrippa of their own experience in jailing the apostles on a previous occasion (5:19), thus the heavy security.

While Peter waited in prison, the Christians used their most effective means of assistance. They prayed continually for him. The believers knew what Herod did not: that the ambitions of men can never thwart the purposes of God. As far as the believers knew, God may have allowed Peter to be executed, or He may have had other plans. Therefore, they prayed for God to do His will in Peter's life.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 12:6-11

1. If it were the night before your execution due to your faith, do you think you could sleep as soundly as Peter

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did? Why or why not?

2. Examine the facts of Peter's escape, setting aside the angel's role. Could there be any other reasonable explanation for his escape? Why or why not?

Still not fully alert, Peter really had no idea what was happening. The angel had to direct every single movement of the apostle. To remove the angel's words and actions from this story is to leave Peter's escape inexplicable. In fact, it is more accurate to say that Peter was delivered rather than say he escaped, for he was totally passive throughout the entire incident.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 12:12-24.

1. How did those praying for Peter respond when he came to their home? Would you have responded similarly? Why or why not?
2. Is there any contradiction between the prayers of the people and their insistence that Peter had died (v. 15)? Explain.

The response of the people reflects the Jewish belief that each person has a guardian angel as his or her spiritual counterpart. It was believed that one's angel often appeared immediately after the person's death, and that idea may lurk behind the response to Rhoda. Such a reply is remarkable coming from a group that had been totally occupied in prayer for Peter's deliverance. They found it easier to believe that Peter had died and gone to heaven than that their prayers had been answered.

3. What was Herod's reaction to the guard's story? Why do you think he reacted so harshly towards the guards?

Herod rejected any narrative that did not put human beings ultimately responsible. After interrogating the guards and failing to locate Peter, Herod had the guards executed. This was in accordance with Roman law, which specified that a guard who allowed the escape of a prisoner was to bear the same penalty the escapee would have suffered. Herod had every intention of subjecting Peter to the same fate as James.

Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

In Acts 12:7-8 Once again we see the ministry of Angels and are reminded that Angels care for God's children While the Angels brought Light and Freedom into the cell, the soldiers had no idea anything was going on. However, if Peter was going to be delivered, he had to **OBEY** what the Angel commanded him to do. Peter probably thought it was a Dream or Vision, but he arose and followed the Angel out of the prison and into the street. The Practical and the Spiritual, we must be willing to take a step of faith if we are to experience the supernatural. Peter had to put on his sandals and gird his loins. The Angel did the rest. God can do the extraordinary, but we must do the ordinary. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but the men had to roll the stone from the tomb. In the end God answered the prayers for Peter's deliverance.

1. What purposes might God have in allowing some of his messengers to be killed, but not others?
2. How do we know whether we should leave a rescue up to God or take personal action ourselves?
3. Do we view prayer as a powerful weapon? Do our prayer lives reflect what we say we believe?
4. What step of faith is the Lord pressing on your heart to obey? Will you step out and obey the Lord? (Start a new group; get equipped by attending training class, etc....)

PRAYER - Pray for greater faith in God's sovereignty and for trust in the power of prayer. Encourage one another to take steps of faith this week as the Lord leads us out of our comfort zones to serve Him in the power of the Holy Spirit. As you take a step of faith, share what the Lord did in your life with your group next week.

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

The "One Another" Passages

The phrase "one another" is derived from the Greek word *allelon* which means "one another, each other; mutually, reciprocally." It occurs 100 times in the New Testament. Approximately 59 of those occurrences are specific commands teaching us how (and how not) to relate to one another. Obedience to those commands is imperative and has a direct impact on our witness to the world (John 13:35). Let's look at some "one another" statements.

- Love one another (John 13:34 - This command occurs at least 16 times)
- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)
- Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- Build up one another (Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Be likeminded towards one another (Romans 15:5)
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- Admonish one another (Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16) Greet one another (Romans 16:16)
- Care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)
- Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:2, 32; Colossians 3:13)
- Be patient with one another (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13)
- Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15, 25)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19)
- Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 5:5)
- Consider others better than yourselves (Philippians 2:3)
- Look to the interests of one another (Philippians 2:4)
- Bear with one another (Colossians 3:13)
- Teach one another (Colossians 3:16)
- Comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Exhort one another (Hebrews 3:13)
- Stir up [provoke, stimulate] one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24)
- Show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)
- Employ the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of one another (1 Peter 4:10)
- Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another (1 Peter 5:5)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Confess your faults to one another (James 5:16)

NEGATIVE COMMANDS (how not to treat one another)

Do not lie to one another (Colossians 3:9) Stop passing judgment on one another (Romans 14:13) If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you'll be destroyed by each other (Galatians 5:15) Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other (Galatians 5:26) Do not slander one another (James 4:11) Don't grumble against each other (James 5:9)