

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 24TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

THE COST (ACTS 12:1-5) ABOUT THAT TIME...

About the same time as the famine and the offering from Antioch that went to Jerusalem, Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great (who put the boy children to death in Bethlehem), attacked the church and specifically the apostles.

- Herod thought he was making points with the Jews, but in reality, he was at war with Jesus. **Jesus always wins any conflict.**

SONS OF THUNDER

The first apostle Herod goes after was James, the brother of John. The Bible doesn't say why he was the first arrested. Once imprisoned, James was summarily executed, probably by beheading. This pleased the Jews.

- **One sign of a corrupt generation is when the culture applauds those who practice and indulge in sinful activities.**

PETER TOO

Herod, wanting to further please the Jews, imprisoned Peter with the goal to execute him as well. Perhaps remembering the apostles' earlier escape (5:17-21), Herod assigns four squads of soldiers to make sure Peter cannot escape. His intention is to kill Peter after the Passover. Luke records that the church was praying.

- **Man's plans cannot disrupt God's will.**

THE BREAKOUT (ACTS 12:6-19) A NEW PETER

In the Gospels, Peter is pictured as impetuous and weak-faithed. Here, on the eve before his execution, Peter is so soundly sleeping between two guards that he has to be shaken awake by the angel so he can escape.

- **The presence of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit makes all the difference in how we face struggles.**

NOT A DREAM

Peter thought his escape was all a dream until he was actually in the streets outside the prison. He recognized the grace of God in this moment and praised Jesus: "the Lord has sent His angel and rescued me."

- **Our first instinct as we live our lives should always be to give Jesus praise and glory, on the mountain or in the valley.**

A PRAYER MEETING

After praising Jesus, Peter's second impulse was to go to church and be with his people. Mary's house seems to be a well-known house church. Her son was definitely well-known (author of Mark, Barnabas and Saul's missionary companion). People were praying.

- **A church should praise and should preach. Undergirding both is prayer.**

ANSWERED PRAYER INTERRUPTS PRAYER!

The people are in disbelief when the answer to their prayers appears at the house. They insist that Rhoda is either out of her mind or seeing Peter's angel (ghost). God always answers our prayers—sometimes as we've asked and other times in ways we couldn't have imagined.

- **Is our prayer life an act of faith or a religious formality? Do we believe?**

THE RESULTS

Peter was delivered from death. James (the half brother of Jesus and the leader of the Jerusalem church) was informed, as were other leaders. The guards were executed. And Peter went to another place, away from Herod.

- **Theology isn't just about "heavenly" stuff. It affects us right where we are. Are we prepared to receive what He wants for us?**

PRIDE (ACTS 12:20-25)

TRADE WARS AND GOVERNMENT INTRIGUE

Governments are made up of people. As long as governments stay that way, there will always be wars and rumors of wars. Herod was angry at people in Tyre and Sidon. His official, Blastus, worked out some type of trade agreement. In honor of that agreement, Herod was to speak and address the people.

- **God uses governments for His purposes.**

PUNY GOD

Herod's appearance (one historian said his royal robes were silver and shimmered in the sunlight) and speech were of such eloquence that the people (whether in truth or false praise) declared him god-like. Herod did not refute the claim and the true God showed who He was by striking Herod down in a most painful way.

- **God gets the glory by praise or judgment.**

THE CONTRAST

Man's words (Herod's prideful arrogance) are snuffed out by God. God's word, the gospel, spreads and multiplies. The work of Herod ends in a painful death. The work of Barnabas and Saul continues to the glory of God and for the good of the Gentiles.

- **Humble, joyful submission to Jesus yields a harvest of an abundant life.**

NOT OUR WILL BUT YOUR WILL BE DONE

- We often pray according to our wills and desires, asking God to see it our way.
- God is not a genie to be manipulated but our God to be obeyed.
- God always answers our prayers: yes, no, not yet, or not in the way we thought.
- We do not force God's hand; we humbly submit to His will, believing it's always best.

A NO FROM GOD IS ALSO FULL OF GRACE

- Peter was delivered. James was martyred. Both were in Jesus' inner circle. Both were godly men. Both professed the gospel of Jesus. James died now. Peter would die later. We praise Jesus' name for both.
- If death is gain (Phillipians 1:21), for Believers both life and death should be seen as full of God's grace. Don't minimize death over life.

SUBMIT TO GOD, DON'T TRY TO BE GOD

- Herod willingly took the applause of humans as an indication he was a somebody, rather than getting his worth from God. He died for his arrogance.
- Jesus continued to use humble disciples to spread the gospel and grow His church.
- Barnabas, Saul, and Mark model what lives submitted to Jesus can accomplish.

ONE DEATH BROUGHT LIFE

- Jesus prayed to His Father that another way of salvation might be found. There was only one way, and it was through Jesus' death on the cross as our substitute.
- Sometimes God's hardest-to-accept "no" may be the way to His greatest "yes."
- Humble, open-handed prayer helps us endure whatever God has for us and His glory.