

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 24TH, 2026 // THE BOOK OF ACTS

ATTACKED (ACTS 12:1-5) KING HEROD

Luke takes a brief break from the Saul and Barnabas story to tell about King Herod and his hatred of God and Christ.

- Herod's grandfather sought to kill Jesus as an infant, his uncle had John the Baptist beheaded, and now Herod would follow the family tradition and violently attack the church.

JAMES, JOHN'S BROTHER

Here we find the first martyred apostle: James, the brother of John.

- Herod's desire to crush Jesus' followers was fed by the Jews' excitement when James was executed.
- Herod's next step was to arrest and execute one of the most outspoken apostles, Peter.

DURING THE FESTIVAL

Herod was a devout Jew and knew that those who rejected Jesus as the Messiah would be in Jerusalem for Passover.

- Executing James was just a way to stir up their resistance, and Herod emboldened the Jews even more with the public execution of Peter.
- **Satan's plan to destroy the gospel is organized and methodical.**

JAILED AND GUARDED

Saving Peter's execution for just the right time meant locking him up so that what happened last time wouldn't happen again.

- Sixteen guards were assigned to watch Peter—four guards every six hours, and two chained directly to the prisoner.
- **Peter was kept in prison, but the church was praying fervently to God for him.**

RESCUED (ACTS 12:6-19)

THAT VERY NIGHT

The night before Peter was to be executed, he was rescued from prison.

- Herod made plans, but he wasn't prepared for the prayers of the church and the power of God's messenger.
- **Prayer was an essential part of what Luke describes as a miracle. And it still is. Are we looking for miracles without prayer?**

SLEEPING IN CHAINS

Though he was chained between two Roman soldiers and faced the possibility of execution the next day, Peter slept.

- He was sleeping so well that the angel had to hit him in the side to wake him up.
- **Peter was chained, alone, and facing death. How could he sleep at a time like this?**

PETER BELIEVED AND OBEYED

People were praying and Jesus had told him he would live many years, so he slept in peace and woke ready for the next step.

- At each direction from the angel, Peter quickly responded with action.
- **When the chains fall off, are we ready to go where He may send us? Who is in control when we are free?**

WALKING PAST THE GUARDS

As Peter began to walk with the angel, God did the supernatural stuff that keeps us in awe of His power.

- Peter was still the one taking the steps of obedience in the ordinary stuff.
- **God alone can do the extraordinary, but His people must do the ordinary.**

HE CAME TO HIMSELF

What was happening was so amazing that Peter couldn't be sure it was real until the angel left him.

- At that point, he could look back and see what God had done to rescue him.
- **God initiated; Peter obeyed. Peter understood. Now he goes to tell others.**

PETER KNOCKED AT THE DOOR

He went to Mary's house, possibly because he had been there many times before to pray with other Believers.

- Rhoda was so excited to hear Peter's voice that she forgot to open the door.
- **Do we get excited when God answers prayers and works in the lives of others?**

FERVENT AND UNSURE

They had been praying for days without stopping, asking for Peter to be delivered.

- Now that he was standing outside the door, they doubted that it could really be him.
- **They may have had their doubts, but they didn't stop praying. God graciously honors even the weakest faith.**

PETER DESCRIBES WHAT HAPPENED

After their initial excitement, Peter calms them and shares what happened with the angel in the prison.

- Then, he instructs them to pass the story along to the apostles and other Believers.
- **What God does to save us, protect us, deliver us, and encourage us should not be a secret. Are we telling what God has done?**

FORWARD (ACTS 12:20-25)

HEROD IS STILL IN CHARACTER

Herod tried to find Peter, but God was protecting him. Herod had the guards executed and took a trip south.

- He wasn't a great leader and was at odds with many in the kingdom. But many tried to appease him because they depended on the Jews for resources to survive.

THE PEOPLE OF TYRE AND SIDON

In an effort to regain the favor of Herod, the people of Tyre and Sidon bribed Herod's personal servant to get a meeting with him.

- Herod took the opportunity to speak to a large crowd that was highly motivated to agree with everything he said.
- He wanted to impress the people. And he did!

HEROD THE GOD

They saw his silver robes, they heard his powerful voice, and they played to his giant ego.

- They shouted that they once thought him to be just a man, but now they knew he deserved the glory of a god.
- **The people were either deceived or deceivers. Herod was the one who believed he was in control!**

STRUCK DOWN

Because he enjoyed the praise and refused to redirect it to God, Herod was struck with a sudden, extreme sickness and died within five days.

- Herod was the last "king" in Judea.
- Using authority to oppose the truth will always end in judgment.
- Truth is meant to be followed, shared, and respected, not used as a weapon!

WHAT WAS LEFT

Herod was gone and buried, but the Church survived.

- Luke records intense persecution, and it doesn't disappear with the death of Herod.
- But the word of God spread and multiplied.
- **Every time we read about persecution, we read about church growth.**
- **How can this keep happening?**

CONTROL

- We want to be in control.
- **We don't want to be controlled.**
- **We look for ways to push back and take control of whatever small part of our lives we can call ours. How much of what we have and who we are is really ours?**

FREEDOM

- We believe that control equals freedom.
- **As long as we control something, we have power. If we have power, we can live in freedom.**
- **The problem is that we don't have enough power to control anything. We are in bondage to our pride, insecurities, desires, and all of our sin. That's not freedom!**

PEACE

- Peace is the answer to our control problem.
- Jesus offers peace that passes understanding.
- **Peace is what happens when we trust Him to wake us up and lead us out of our self-made prisons. We realize that God is in control, but because He loves us, He doesn't control us—He leads us. The question is: Will we take the freedom He has given us to follow Him? Do we want peace with God or will we keep fighting for control? Will we choose bondage or freedom?**