

HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

WEEK 12

PERSECUTION AND LEADERSHIP

Acts 12:1 About that time King Herod Agrippa began to persecute some believers in the church. 2 He had the apostle James (John's brother) killed with a sword. 3 When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish people, he also arrested Peter. (This took place during the Passover celebration.) 4 Then he imprisoned him, placing him under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring Peter out for public trial after the Passover. 5 But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him. 6 The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate. 7 Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, "Quick! Get up!" And the chains fell off his wrists. 8 Then the angel told him, "Get dressed and put on your sandals." And he did. "Now put on your coat and follow me," the angel ordered. 9 So Peter left the cell, following the angel. But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn't realize it was actually happening. 10 They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and this opened for them all by itself. So they passed through and started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him. 11 Peter finally came to his senses. "It's really true!" he said. "The Lord has sent his angel and saved me from Herod and from what the Jewish leaders had planned to do to me!" 12 When he realized this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer. 13 He knocked at the door in the gate, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to open it. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone, "Peter is standing at the door!" 15 "You're out of your mind!" they said. When she insisted, they decided, "It must be his angel." 16 Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed. 17 He motioned for them to quiet down and told them how the Lord had led him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers what happened," he said. And then he went to another place. NLT

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PETER'S ARREST?

WHAT DID THAT DO FOR THE EARLY CHURCH?

WHO WAS JAMES IN VERSE 17 IF JAMES WAS KILLED IN VERSE 2?

THE FIRST "SENDING"

Acts 13:1-3 Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called "the black man"), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul. 2 One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them." 3 So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way. NLT

WHAT PROMPTED THE SENDING?

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

WHICH CHURCH DID THE SENDING?

THE POWER AT WORK...

Acts 13:7-12 ...The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him, for he wanted to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas, the sorcerer (as his name means in Greek), interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing. 9 Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. 10 Then he said, "You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? 11 Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time." Instantly mist and darkness came over the man's eyes, and he began groping around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him. 12 When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord. NLT

WHY IS THIS STORY IMPORTANT TO THE EARLY CHURCH?

WHY DID SAUL/PAUL RESPOND THIS WAY?

WHAT WAS THE RESULT?