

200216 Acts 12 The Gospel in Story

- Remind yourselves of the story and context. Reda Acts 12. What 'earthquake' event had happened in the chapters before that Ben said led to the 're-awakening of the persecution of the church'?
- Herod arrested those who belonged to the church. What do you think makes someone 'belong' to a church? In what ways in the UK do Christians face persecution (if any)?
- Why did Herod arrest Peter? (vs. 3). Matthew Henry says 'those make themselves an easy prey to satan who make it their business to please men'. What does he mean by this and where do you see it outplay in your lives and others?
- On a scale of 1-10 how much does your acceptance by other people dictate a) the way you feel about yourself and b) the measure by which you judge others?
- Vs. 5 says the church was praying earnestly for Peter. Where else do we see this in the model of Jesus' life and the teaching of Jesus? What was the last thing you 'prayed earnestly' about? Who do you know who is in chains or a prison like Peter (metaphorically) that you need to pray for for freedom?
- Craig Groeschel issues the hard challenge 'if all of my prayers from the last week were answered, what difference would it have made in my life and the lives of others'.
- Read vs. 7-8. How is the miraculous and the mundane coupled together here? What would have happened if Peter didn't follow the instructions? Are you someone more likely to leave it all to God (i.e. I don't need to play any part!) or try and take all the control yourself (i.e. I know and can do better than God!)?
- Peter appeared to be the one in chains, but in what ways was Herod really the one who was bound up?
- Read Hebrews 12:1. The lie of living in sin is that we are living in 'freedom' free to do what we want when we want without having to follow rules. In what ways is this lie shown up when we take a closer look? How does sin entangle?
- Vs. 24 is the culmination of the Gospel picture in the story. We start with James dead Peter in chains and Herod in charge. We end with Herod dead, Peter free and the Word of God flourishing. Can you think of other examples of the Gospel at work in your life where situations that looked bleak where turned around?
- In what other ways do you see pictures of the Gospel in Acts 12? e.g. sin and judgement, prison and darkness vs. light and freedom, bowing down to people vs. bowing down to God, the sovereignty of God etc.)
- James is still dead. Why was Peter set free but James allowed to die? There is a level of mystery here that we can't explain. How does the Gospel message give us hope that death was not the end for James? Check these vs. for some ideas:
 - o 1Cor. 15:54
 - o Peter was able to sleep in peace the night before his execution Acts 12:6
 - o Philippians 1:20-21.
- Finish by looking back over the main points discussed and choosing one to apply to your life as you pray and minister to one another.