

Acts 12 → Martyrdom, Jailbreaks & the All Powerful Word of God

So this morning – as we continue in the book of Acts, Remember last week we saw this incredible church planted, in a strategic place in the middle east. Ordinary, unnamed people, taking the gospel everywhere – and a church at Antioch was formed. This week, as we look at Acts 12, we'll see first hand the unstoppable nature of the Gospel. But hear me – just because we know it's unstoppable, doesn't mean that people won't try and stop it anyway.

In fact, I'd suggest to you that our default setting should be to EXPECT opposition. Whether it's opposition among our nonbelieving friends and family, or opposition in our culture → we should expect opposition. But hear me – Jesus's mission is ABSOLUTELY unstoppable.

I invite you to turn with me to Acts 12 as we continue to explore God's Unstoppable mission.

I. Herod Kills James (12:1-5)

In these first 5 verses of Acts 12 we get introduced to King Herod.

- **Lots of Herods in the NT**
- Herod the Great – Matthew 1
- Herod Antipas – killed John the Baptist in Matthew 14
- **Herod Antipas (this Herod)**
 - Picking up right where grandpa and uncle H left off

READ 12:1-3

About that time King Herod violently attacked some who belonged to the church, ²and he executed James, John's brother, with the sword. ³When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter too, during the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

So Herod – decides to attack the church – trying to appease the Jews and kills James. This is James, one of the 3 closest companions to Jesus. If you remember from the gospels, Jesus often withdrew with Peter, James and John. This is the James that Herod kills.

And – because of their response – Herod throws Pete in jail. Now, I don't know about you, but if I'm part of this early church – we see James killed, then Pete thrown in jail, I'm going to be scared. But I want us to see the response of the church – the prayed.

READ 12:5

⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was praying fervently to God for him.

We have to see this – when we face opposition – we don't pray as a last resort. We pray as if our life actually depends on it. We pray fervently. We beg for God to intervene – and we trust that God's purposes (whether in life or death) will be accomplished.

Hear me church – in every area of our life – prayer should be the first response. Struggles with family, struggles with work, doubts, fear, relationships – prayer should be our first response whenever we are opposed.

II. Jail Break

Well, the church prayed, and God acted. While James would be martyred, Peter is broken from jail.

READ 12:6-7

⁶When Herod was about to bring him out for trial, that very night Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while the sentries in front of the door guarded the prison. ⁷Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. Striking Peter on the side, he woke him up and said, “Quick, get up!” And the chains fell off his wrists.

Don’t miss the gravity of V6 – James has been killed, Pete’s in jail and he’s sleeping. He’s not planning a break out. He’s not practicing his legal arguments. He’s sleeping. I have to think he’s sleeping because of a complete and total confidence in God.

As I was preparing this – I was brought to Psalm 127:2 – one of my favorite psalms

²In vain you get up early and stay up late,
working hard to have enough food—
yes, he gives sleep to the one he loves

Peter gets delivered from jail – miraculously, and he goes to the house where the church is. And they’re still praying.

And we get this funny interaction – a girl named Rhoda – the church obviously surprised that Pete had just now shown up. Eventually they let him in.

Meanwhile, Herod goes berserk and kills the guards when he can’t find Peter.

III. Judgment Day

Later, Herod would deliver a speech – and would prove to all that he was a glory hog. This is a temptation for all of us. You all know I love to watch sports – especially college football. But not just in sports, every one of us will be tempted to be a little glory hog – look at me, look at us, look at how great I am. But as a Christian, our goal in all things is to glorify God.

As Herod sought glory for himself, the angel of the Lord struck him dead. The Lord had judged Herod – and His judgment is complete and final.

But don't miss this last verse – 24 – But the Word of God flourished and multiplied. God's word works. It is enough. It is enough for the church, it is enough for the world. It works, and it will flourish and multiply. We have to trust it.

CLOSE

?How will you handle opposition?

?Will prayer be your first or your last resort?

?Will you seek the glory of God above all things?