

Acts 12.

vs. 1-19

Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem, King Herod (son of the King Herod who had killed John the Baptizer and mocked Christ) had James (one of the 12 apostles and brother of John) arrested and then killed with the sword. The Jews, who saw the early Christians as ones who were undermining their beliefs, were pleased to see one of the leaders of this group killed.

King Herod then had Peter arrested (as a means to remain popular with his subjects) during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (also known as the Passover). When the Feast was over (lasted for 1 week), Herod was planning on having Peter publicly tried.

The Church prayed for Peter earnestly. In answer to their prayer, God delivered Peter the night before the trial. An angel

appeared and led Peter out of the prison (without the guards even realizing it). Peter at first thought that it was a vision, but after having walked one street length from the prison, he realized that it was truly happening (the angel left him at that time).

Peter then went to the house of Mary (mother of John Mark) and knocked at the door. Rhoda, a servant girl, answered the door and in excitement, left Peter there as she went to tell the others who were praying. The people assumed that Rhoda had seen Peter's angel and ignored her. Finally, Peter came in to the people's amazement.

Peter explained what had taken place and asked for them to inform James and the brothers (the apostles) about this. Peter then left.

When Herod sent for Peter it was discovered that he had escaped. Following the Roman law, those who were responsible for letting him escape were killed.

vs. 18-25

Herod then went from Jerusalem to Caesarea (a coastal town on the Mediterranean, about 54 miles away from Jerusalem). The people of Tyre and Sidon (other coastal cities about 50+ miles to the north of Caesarea) sought to discuss their differences with Herod. Using a connection in Herod's household, they obtained permission (they wanted to get things worked out since they depended on Herod's country for their food).

Herod gave a speech to the people and they proceeded to flatter him. Upon being called a god, and not giving the Living God the praise and glory; Herod was struck down by God, was eaten by worms and then died.

The Church, in the meantime, continued to grow. Saul and Barnabas (having been sent by the Church at Antioch with a gift, to the Church at Jerusalem) now returned to Jerusalem. John Mark travelled to Antioch with them.

Acts 13

vs. 1-3

Upon returning to Antioch, Saul and Barnabas were called to be set apart for a special work that the Holy Spirit had for them. This occurred during a time of worship and fasting (fasting was for the purpose of developing self-control and devoting extra time to prayer and study). Among the Church at Antioch were men who spoke the word of God (prophets spoke the word of God-- sometimes future events, but not always!) and teachers. These men placed their hands on Saul and Barnabas (to set them apart and imparted miraculous power-- Saul will now perform signs and wonders, which we have no previous record of!)

vs. 4-12

(See Map of "PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY")

Barnabas and Saul (accompanied by John Mark) set off as the Spirit led them. They went to Seleucia (a port city where they could leave by boat). By boat they travelled over to the island of Cyprus and landed at Salamis. At Salamis they began working with the Jews. They spoke the Word of God in the Jewish synagogue.

They travelled by foot across the island until they reached Paphos on the other end. There they encountered a Jewish sorcerer and

false prophet who tried to prevent them from telling his master about Christ. Finally Saul (also called PAUL (Greek form of the Hebrew name Saul)-- which would have made him more readily accepted by the Greek speaking world) spoke against Elymas (or Bar-Jesus) and caused him to become blind. When Elymas' master saw his servant blinded at Paul's command, he believed the message of God. The man, Sergius Paulus, happened to be the Roman Governor on the island!

vs. 13-52

Paul and Barnabas (John Mark makes the voyage with them, but then returns home upon getting to port) then travelled from Paphos on the island of Cyprus to the port city of Perga in Asia Minor (Pamphylia being a region of Asia Minor-- similar to counties in the United States). They travelled from there to the city of Antioch in Asia Minor (different from the one they had begun at). Here in Pisidian Antioch they went to the Jewish synagogue. They were given the opportunity to speak following the reading from the Law and the Prophets.

Paul quickly summarized and reviewed the history of Jewish people and how Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies (statements that God would send a "special" man to restore the greatness to the Kingdom of Israel). He reviewed Jesus' life briefly and then went on to how God had raised Jesus from the dead. Paul cites Old Testament Scriptures to verify that what had happened to Jesus was truly the fulfillment of the prophecies. Paul now speaks to those who were gathered concerning the message of salvation that is available through the Messiah. The people invited them to come back and speak more about Jesus.

The next week, the synagogue was filled with people from all over the city to hear the message. When the Jews saw the crowds they were jealous and began to argue with Paul. He responded by telling them that since they had rejected their Messiah, the Gentiles would now be invited to come and follow Jesus the Christ! The Gentiles responded with joy and accepted the Lord.

The Jews responded by causing trouble and getting Paul and Barnabas evicted from the region. Paul and Barnabas shook the dust from their feet in protest and went on to Iconium. The converts in Pisidian Antioch, however, were joyful and the Holy Spirit continued to work in their lives.

Acts 14

vs. 1-7

In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas continued their practice of going to the synagogue (there they would find God-believing people whom they hoped to convince of the message of Christ; this allowed them to go first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles). They were effective at winning converts from the Jews and the Gentiles. The unbelievers caused division in the city. Paul and Barnabas continued to preach boldly and perform miraculous signs and wonders (by the power of God working through them) to confirm that their message was from God. Eventually, they heard of a plot to stone them and they fled to Lystra and Derbe where they continued their evangelistic efforts.

vs. 8-20

In Lystra, Paul healed a lame man (lame from birth) as evidence that what he had been saying about Jesus was true and came from God. When the crowd saw it, they began to treat Paul and Barnabas as they would the Greek gods. Paul and Barnabas were furious and spoke to the people, persuading them that they (Paul and Barnabas) were just ordinary mortals and that it was the One True God that they served, who had healed the lame man through them.

Jews from Pisidian Antioch and from Iconium then came to Lystra and stirred the people up. They were finally successful in having Paul stoned (they thought he was dead when they finished). The Christians went out and brought him back into the city. The next day, Paul and Barnabas left for Derbe.

vs. 21-28

In Derbe they continued to preach and the Lord added to the church. Paul and Barnabas then re-traced their steps through the various cities. In each place they met with the Christians to encourage, strengthen, appoint elders (with prayer and fasting) and then committed the elders to the Lord's care.

After going through the region of Pisidia (where Antioch was located) they went to Perga (preached there) and then over to Attalia. From Attalia, they sailed back to Antioch of Syria (from where they had been chosen and sent from) and reported back of how the Lord had blessed their work.

STUDY GUIDE

ACTS 12

1. How did Herod persecute the church?
2. What happened before Peter was brought to trial?
3. Did Peter immediately know that his escape was real? Explain.
4. Where did Peter go after his release?
5. How did the Christians respond at hearing of Peter's escape?
6. What happened the next day because of Peter's escape?
7. Why did the people of Tyre and Sidon want peace with Herod?
8. What flattery was given to Herod and how did he respond?
9. How did God punish Herod for his pride?

BONUS:

1. Explain (using Peter's escape) how you know God worked differently than the people expected.
2. Think of several examples where God worked differently than you anticipated and what was the result?
3. Should Christians ever be proud today?

STUDY GUIDE

ACTS 13

1. What were they doing in Antioch when the Holy Spirit spoke?
2. How were Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which they were called?
3. What else was Saul called?
4. What happened that convinced the procouncil of Paphos, to believe?
5. In Paul's sermon at Pisidian Antioch, who did he say God brought to Israel from David's descendants?
6. Through Jesus, what is mankind offered?
7. How did the Jews respond to Paul's message?
8. When the Jews became jealous and spoke abusively, how did Paul and Barnabas respond?
9. How did the Gentiles respond?
10. What finally happened to Paul and Barnabas at Pisidian Antioch?

BONUS:

1. List the methods that Paul and Barnabas used to proclaim the message.
2. What lesson can we learn from this?

STUDY GUIDE

ACTS 14

1. As the chapter begins, where do we find Paul and Barnabas?
2. What did the unbelieving Jews do?
3. How did the Lord confirm the message of Paul and Barnabas?
4. Why did they leave there and go to Lystra and Derbe?
5. How did the local people respond when the lame man was healed?
6. What did Barnabas and Paul say about God at this time?
7. What happened to Paul then?
8. What did Paul and Barnabas do when they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and to Pisidian Antioch?
9. How were the elders chosen for these congregations?
10. What did they do when they arrived back where they had started?

BONUS:

1. Compare the response of Paul and Barnabas' healing and that of the "miracle healers" of today.
2. Why would it have been necessary for elders to be appointed, instead of being elected by the congregation?
3. Give supporting evidence that church supported missionaries should report back and what this should accomplish.