

CHAPTER 7

The Growing Church is Attacked (Acts 11-12)

The Church at Antioch

We have already learned that after Stephen's death, there was a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). The believers were forced to leave Jerusalem. What did these scattered believers do wherever they went (Acts 8:4)? _____ In Acts chapter 11 we learn about those believers who were scattered to the north of Jerusalem and how God used them in a great way.

According to Acts 11:19 these scattered believers traveled as far as Phoenicia (the major cities in this area would be Tyre and Sidon), the island of Cyprus, and Antioch. Can you find these places on a Bible map? As the believers went to these places they preached the word to the _____ only (Acts 11:19).

In the city of Antioch, however, the believers preached the Lord Jesus not to the Jews only, but also to the Greeks or Gentiles (Acts 11:20). Was God's hand of blessing with them as they preached (Acts 11:21)? _____ How many believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 11:21)? _____

Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman empire. The only cities that were larger were Rome (the capitol city) and Alexandria (located in Egypt). As we will learn later, the church in the city of Antioch played a very important part in God's plan to bring the gospel to Gentile people who lived throughout the Roman empire.

The believers in Jerusalem heard about what God was doing up north, and they decided to send B _____ there (Acts 11:22). When he came he saw the work of grace which God had done in the hearts of these people, and he encouraged them to remain true to the Lord (Acts 11:23). Did God continue to save people in the city of Antioch (Acts 11:24)? _____

Barnabas knew that there was a need for more leadership in the church at Antioch. All of these new believers needed to be taught and strengthened in the Lord. Whom did Barnabas want to help teach and lead the new believers in the city of Antioch (Acts 11:25)? _____ Saul was living in Tarsus which was about 100 miles from Antioch, but Barnabas made the trip, found Saul and brought him to Antioch. How long did Saul and Barnabas stay in Antioch teaching the believers (Acts 11:26)? _____

In Acts 11:26 we learn that "the disciples were called _____ first in Antioch." This was the first time this name was used! What name do you find in the word CHRISTIAN? C _____ . Christianity is not a **religion** (man trying to DO certain things to please GOD) but it is a **relationship** with a Person (who has already DONE all the work necessary to save sinful men--John 19:30), and this Person's name is C _____ . Those who have a personal relationship with this PERSON are called C _____ (Acts 11:26).

Does the verse say that the disciples called themselves Christians? _____ They did **not** give themselves this name, but they WERE CALLED "Christians" by the unsaved people who lived in Antioch. As the unsaved world looked at these disciples, they were forced to think about **Christ!** When they thought about the disciples, it made them think about **Christ**. This is why they gave them the name "**Christians**."

What about you? Can people look at your life and tell that you have a personal relationship with Christ? Do you live in such a way that people know that you belong to the Son of God? Can others see Christ living in you (Galatians 2:20)?

Suppose one of your friends were to ask you this question: "What is a CHRISTIAN?" How would you answer this question? Suppose someone else were to ask you this: "How can a person become a Christian?" How would you answer?

One day a prophet from Jerusalem stood up and told the believers in Antioch that there would be a great FAMINE in the land (Acts 11:28). Earlier the Jerusalem church had helped the Antioch church by sending Barnabas. Now the Antioch church was able to help the poor believers in Jerusalem. They collected money and sent it to the needy believers in Jerusalem. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have _____ one to _____" (John 13:35). The believers in Antioch did this deed of love for the needy disciples living in Jerusalem.

The Church is Persecuted

James is Killed

The ruler of Palestine at this time was a man by the name of H _____ (Acts 12:1). This was Herod Agrippa I. He was a nephew of Herod Antipas, the man we read about in Matthew 14:1-12. Who did Herod Antipas kill (Matthew 14:8,10)?

_____ Herod Agrippa I was also the grandson of Herod the Great, the man we read about in Matthew chapter 2. Who did Herod the Great kill (Matthew 2:16)? _____

Herod Agrippa I was a murderer just like his uncle and his grandfather. Whom did he murder (Acts 12:2)? _____ the brother of _____. The following chart shows all three of these Herods and who they murdered:

NAME OF RULER	CHAPTER IN THE BIBLE	WHOM DID HE MURDER?	TIME
HEROD THE GREAT	Matthew Chapter 2	Innocent Babies	4 B.C.
HEROD ANTIPAS	Matthew Chapter 14	John the Baptist	about 28 A.D.
HEROD AGRIPPA (the grandson of Herod the Great and the nephew of Herod Antipas)	Acts Chapter 12	James the brother of John	44 A.D.

James was a fisherman who had decided to follow Jesus (Matthew 4:21-22). He was the first of the apostles to be put to death for his faith in Christ. He was killed with the S_____ (Acts 12:2) which means he was probably beheaded. Herod was able to kill James' body, but what was he **unable** to do (Matthew 10:28)? _____ As soon as James died, where did he go (Philippians 1:23) _____?

Peter Is Imprisoned

Herod not only killed James, but he also captured whom? (Acts 12:3)? _____
He wanted to kill Peter also, but he thought it would be better to wait until after the Passover week (the word "Easter" in Acts 12:4 means "Passover week"). What mighty weapon did the church use to get Peter out of jail (Acts 12:5)?

- a. **Sharp swords**
- b. **A band of soldiers**
- c. **Bows and arrows**
- d. **A bomb**
- e. **Prayer (see 2 Corinthians 10:3-4)**

Herod did everything he could to make sure Peter stayed in prison. Peter was chained to two soldiers who took their positions on either side of him (Acts 12:6). There were also guards before the door of the prison (Acts 12:6). They did not want to take any chances. Perhaps they remembered the other time when Peter escaped from prison in an amazing way (see Acts 5:17-23).

The Great Escape

God waited until the very night before Peter was to be killed (Acts 12:6), and then He did a wonderful thing. God sent an angel to deliver Peter. What are some things that the angel told Peter to do (Acts 12:7-8)?

What are some things that only the angel could do (Acts 12:7-8)?

There are some things that only God can do and there are other things that God expects us to do. If we do our part (in the little things that we can do), God will surely do His part (in the big things that only He can do). Did Peter give glory to God for this great escape (Acts 12:11)? _____

Before Jesus went back to heaven, He told Peter about the kind of death Peter would die (John 21:19). Did Jesus say that Peter would die when he was young or when he was old (John 21:18)? _____ Even though Herod tried to put Peter to death, it was not God's time for him to die. Perhaps this is one of the reasons Peter was able to sleep (Acts 12:6).

God allowed James to be killed, and He allowed Peter to live. When it comes to living and dying, God is completely in charge! He knows what is best for each person. In Hebrews 11:33-37 we read

about some of the great heroes of the faith. Some were delivered and escaped but others were killed and died. In Romans 14:8 we read, "whether we live therefore or die, we are the _____."

What happened to the guards of the prison when they found that Peter had escaped (Acts 12:19)?

The Answered Prayer Knocks at the Door

Peter first went to the house of Mary where he knew that some of the believers would be meeting. When Peter arrived, what were the believers doing (Acts 12:12)? _____ What do you think they were praying for (see Acts 12:5)?

Who came to the door (Acts 12:13)? _____ Did she recognize Peter's voice (Acts 12:14)? _____ Did she let Peter in (Acts 12:14)? _____ When Rhoda told the others that Peter was at the gate, what did they say?

- a. "Praise the Lord! Our prayers have been answered!"
- b. "Thank you Lord for delivering Peter out of the hand of Herod."
- c. "Rhoda, YOU ARE MAD!!!"

They prayed, but when their prayer was answered, they did not believe it! We can learn a lesson from this. When we pray, we should expect God to do great things according to His will. Jesus said in Mark 11:24: "Whatever things ye desire, when ye _____, _____ that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Let us not be surprised when God answers our prayers. God is able to do far more than we could ever ask or even think (Ephesians 3:20).

Herod is Struck Down by God

One day Herod was sitting on his throne all dressed up in his royal robes and he gave a wonderful speech. When the people heard it they shouted and said, "It is the voice of a _____, and not of a _____" (Acts 12:22). Did Herod stop the people and say, "Wait a minute! You are all wrong. I'm not a god, I'm just a man"? Did Herod give God the glory or did Herod give himself the glory (Acts 12:23)? _____ What happened to him because he did not give glory to God (Acts 12:23)? _____

God took care of James (2 Corinthians 5:8). God took care of Peter (Psalm 34:6-7). God took care of Herod (Psalm 94:1,3,23). **TO GOD BE THE GLORY GREAT THINGS HE HATH DONE!**