



'Acts' - Extra Teaching Points #14

Acts 12:6-25 (NASB)

Pages 184-193 in *'Acts For Everyone' (Part 1)* by N. T. Wright

Acts 12:6-19

*On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. ⁷ And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. ⁸ And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he *said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." ⁹ And he went out and continued to follow, and **he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.***

*¹⁰ When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. ¹¹ When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." ¹² And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. ¹³ When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate. ¹⁵ **They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel."** ¹⁶ **But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed.** ¹⁷ But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brethren." Then he left and went to another place. ¹⁸ Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter. ¹⁹ When Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away to execution. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there.*

Q: In vs. 9, what "sidebar" insight do we glean from Peter's initial belief that he was experiencing a vision, rather than reality?

- Critics of Biblical accuracy often try to explain away eyewitness accounts of miracles by suggesting that people so long ago were more superstitious and gullible; unable to recognize the difference between hallucination and reality.
- Peter (as well as others of his time and our) was very well aware of how the mind could play tricks, and how things could actually be different than they appeared.
- This lends credibility to incredible eyewitness accounts of miracles and angelic activity.

Q: The disciples were gathered together praying at John Mark's mother's house. What were they likely to be praying about?

- As far as they knew, Peter was going to be executed in the morning. It is very likely they were asking God to save Peter.

Q: When Rhoda tells them Peter is outside, they insist that she is out of her mind. What does this tell us about the early believers?

- They, just like us, were probably surprised when God answered their prayers!
- It was probably not a matter of weak faith, but of an acceptance that God would do whatever was best for His mission of saving the lost.
 - They (like us) couldn't know for sure what would be the best thing to happen. For all they knew, God needed Peter to be a martyr in order to accomplish His will.
 - No doubt, they were surprised that they had asked for the right thing, or that God could grant their request in accordance with His will!

Q: Tradition tells us that Peter would later be executed by being crucified upside down. Why would God rescue Peter, only to allow him to suffer an even worse death later?

Acts 12:20-25

Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country. ²¹ On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. ²² The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" ²³ **And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.** ²⁴ **But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.** ²⁵ And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.

Q: Herod Agrippa died in 44 AD, so Luke's story, so far, has covered approximately 12 years of Jesus' continuing acts through His apostles and disciples. Herod's death is part of a theme that Luke repeats throughout his letter. What is that theme?

- "Things appear to go badly for the church, this way or that. There may be real reversals, tragedies, and disasters. And yet, the God who has revealed Himself in and through Jesus remains sovereign, and His purpose is going ahead whatever the authorities from without, or various controversies from within, may do to try to stop it." P. 190

Q: How should that theme reassure us today?

- "Luke was aware, and reminds us from time to time, that there is coming a day on which God will judge the world, restoring all things, putting all wrong things to right (Acts 3:21; 10:42; 17:31; 24:25). At that time, it will be seen: Who has been serving God, and who has been serving their own selves; who has been worshiping the true God, and who has been going after idols." P. 191

Q: What was the result of all the persecution and resistance to the Kingdom of God invading the earth?

- ²⁴ **But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.**
- "Like the commands and promises in Genesis 1:26-28 (be fruitful and multiply), like the word in Isaiah 55:10-13, which comes down like rain and snow and accomplishes God's new creation, and like the seed sown in the parable (Luke 8:8), so the word is doing its own work; sometimes quietly; sometimes dramatically; always effectively." P. 192

Follow Up Assignment

Q: Has God ever surprised you by answering one of your prayers? Explain.

- Does being surprised by God answering a prayer mean you have a lack of faith?

Q: What do you pray for?

- Has your study of the book of Acts changed the way you pray? Explain

Q: What resistance and/or persecution is the Kingdom facing right now?

- What will come from that resistance and/or persecution?
- Does the way you *do, say, think, and pray* confirm that you really believe that?