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ENCORE Discussion

1. Jesus taught us to love one another (Jn. 13:34).

- 1) Read Acts 12:1 and 2. How did the Jews and Herod their king treat the Jewish believers at Jerusalem?
- 2) Read Acts 11:27-30 and 12:25. How did the Gentile believers treat the Jewish believers at Jerusalem?
- 3) Sacrificial love runs contrary to our self-centered culture. As Christians we are called to this kind of love. Does your life show a pattern of sacrificial love?

2. In Acts 12, there is a striking dichotomy of how God deals with people.

- 1) God allowed James to be killed and yet He spared Peter. Why do you think God would allow one apostle to be killed and yet save another?
- 2) God judged Herod Agrippa, and yet He saved Saul of Tarsus. Why do you think God would judge one wicked man and yet save another?

3. This chapter details God's deliverance of Peter.

- 1) What part did the church play in this deliverance (v. 5, 12)?
- 2) Did the early believers seem to believe God would answer their prayers (v. 15,16)?
- 3) In what ways are you like those early believers?
- 4) How can you be more like Rhoda?
- 5) What can we learn about prayer from this account?

4. Political expediency motivated Herod to persecute the church to the point of death. It can be easy for Christians to become discouraged when politicians seem to be more motivated by political advantage or greed than principals of right and wrong. Write down the biblical principals found in the following Scriptures:

I Tim. 2:1,2 —
 Rom. 13:1,2 —
 I Pet. 2:13,14 —
 Acts 4:18-20 —

5. Herod lost his war with God (v. 23). Herod's death was not God's only victory in this skirmish. Read verse 24; what do you think this indicates?

6. The early church faced external persecution (Acts 4), internal hypocrisy (Acts 5), disunity (Acts 6), more religious persecution (Acts 7 and 8), the adding of Gentiles to the Church (Acts 9-11), and now governmental persecution (Acts 12). What do you think was the greatest obstacle faced by the early church? Why?

7. How would you summarize the first twelve chapters of Acts?

Acts 12:1-25

NOW ABOUT THAT TIME Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. ²Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. ³And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

⁵Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. ⁶And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. ⁷Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands. ⁸Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." ⁹So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

¹¹And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."

¹²So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. ¹³And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. ¹⁵But they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel."

¹⁶Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren." And he departed and went to another place.

¹⁸Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. ¹⁹But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there.

²⁰Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country.

²¹So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. ²²And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"

²³Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.