

God Rescues Peter

Key Verse: “*Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.*”
—Acts 12:5

Selected Scripture:
Acts 12:1-17

INTENSE PERSECUTION

was the portion of the Early Church, and yet divine providence permitted contrasting experiences in the lives of the saints. In today’s lesson we learn that Herod, king of Judea, had James put to death by the sword. Thus he became one of the earliest martyrs for the cause of Christ, whereas his

brother John lived to a ripe old age, probably until near the end of the first century.—Acts 12:1,2

As another of Christ’s closest disciples, Peter’s experience was still different. Because Herod had pleased the Jews by killing James, “he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter [Passover] to bring him forth to the people.”—vss. 3,4

Our Key Verse reveals the earnest prayers on behalf of Peter by the brethren in Jerusalem. Their minds were probably reflecting upon the fact that one of their leaders, James, had been slain and were concerned lest Peter also should fall to the sword.

That night when Herod had planned to bring him forth from prison, Peter was peacefully sleeping. He was chained to two soldiers while two other guards were on

duty, thus seemingly to insure that he could not escape from his captors. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared, aroused Peter from his sleep, and miraculously, the handcuffs that bound him fell off. Then, also by a miracle, Peter was led by the heavenly messenger from his confinement in the prison to his freedom in the city. “They came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city: which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.”—vss. 6-10

Seemingly, the foregoing events related to Peter’s release from captivity were so remarkable that for a time he perceived he might have been dreaming or in a trance. Once Peter realized he had actually been set free, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where brethren were gathered together in prayer. Peter knocked at the door of the gate and a servant girl named Rhoda recognized his voice, but in her excitement, neglected to open the door. She ran back and told the brethren who had been praying that Peter had arrived, but they did not believe her. Ultimately, as a result of Peter’s continued knocking, they opened the door and saw him. He then gave them an account of his providential deliverance. Peter told them to inform one of the disciples named James, as well as others of the brotherhood, and then departed to an undisclosed location.—vss. 11-17

The “effectual fervent” prayers of the righteous can avail much. (James 5:16) We will never be tried beyond what we can bear, but a way of escape will be provided. Sometimes this may occur through death as was the case with James, whereas in Peter’s case, divine intervention effected his release. May we persevere daily in striving to do God’s will, assured that if we are faithful, we can rejoice, because surely we shall be delivered at a time and in a manner that the Heavenly Father deems best. ■