**Acts 12:1-2**

\*Barnabas and Saul were back in Jerusalem, and the churches had rest since the conversion of the hateful Pharisee Saul (cf. 9:31). Presumably they had prayed quiet and peace (I Tim. 2:2).

\*However, Satan had another foil—Herod Agrippa I (11 BC-AD 44), grandson of Herod the Great! The former, a Jewish sycophant, wanted to favor those in Jerusalem with the execution of the leaders of the *“sect”* (Acts 28:22). He wanted to *vex* (*kakoo* [“do evil”]) certain leaders of the Jerusalem Baptists.

\*The third Christian martyrdom (John the Baptist, Stephen the deacon) fell on the Apostle James of the inner circle of the Lord (cf. Mt. 17:1 ff.), probably to please the Sanhedrin! The Apostles knew their danger and ultimate end (Mk. 10:38-39). James was promised of the “Guide” unto death (Ps. 48:14).

**Acts 12:3-4**

\*Herod wanted to please the Jews again so he captured the former Pastor, the Apostle Peter. Luke wanted to instruct the Gentile Theophilus specifically about the Jewish holydays.

\*With parenthesis, he gave important and exact details, coming from Lev. 23:4-6 in the *Torah*. *“The days of unleavened bread”* came on the 15th day and following for seven days of the first month Nisan. Prior to this was the Passover Lamb slain and eaten on the 14th day (Passover and then Feast). The Jewish *pascha* had already occurred. Herod’s *pascha* (i.e., *“Easter”* > worship of *Ishtar*) would occur after *“the days of unleavened bread”*!! The *KJV* translators derived much of the phraseology of the NT from the *Tyndale* NT (1534). As *Tyndale* translated the Greek *pascha* as *“Ester”* (28x) including Acts 12:4, the *KJV* rendering followed *Tyndale* **only** on this one verse as *“Easter”* forbiblical reason!

\*Herod’s *“Easter”* became foundational for the RCC celebration of *Ishtar* the goddess of fertility with rabbits, bunnies, eggs, etc. In AD 325, the dimly-illuminated RCC required that Easter could not fall on the same day as the Jewish Passover, and so the calendar shifts the date of Easter accordingly to the lunar calendar of Judaism. Christians celebrate the resurrection of Christ on every Sunday and attempt to avoid the paganism of Easter!

\*Apparently, both James and Peter were easy captures, since they learned the futility of the sword (Lk. 22:36-38 and 50-51). Deep into the Fortress of Antonia with 16 guards, Peter had no human possibility of escape. Herod wanted to celebrate his *Ishtar* holyday with the execution of Peter!

**Acts 12:5-6**

\*Former Pastor Peter had a problem and the Baptist assembly at Jerusalem had prayer! In the providential plan of Jehovah, the ministry of the Apostle James was over. Peter had no *“blessed hope”* (Tit. 2:13), since the Lord prophesied that Peter, when he was *“old”* (now, probably in his middle forties), would stretch forth his hands, be girded, and carried away, probably for beheading by sword (Jn 21:18). Nevertheless, the Baptists prayed *“without ceasing”* (Rom. 1:9; I Thes. 5:17), having an all night prayer meeting in the Baptist house church of Mary, John Mark’s mother (Acts 12:12).

\*Herod secured Peter between two soldiers with two chains and with keepers of the doors, making it absolutely impossible for him to escape, since earlier the high priest attempted to secure the apostles including Peter in the common prison, but somehow they all escaped (Acts 5:17-25)!

\*But there was Peter, asleep at crucial times (Lk. 22:45-46)! Now, Peter was sound asleep the night before his execution! (*“was sleeping”* > *periphrastic* construction indicating he had been and was still sleeping. The best place to receive a good night’s sleep is in the will of God (cf. Pss. 3:5; 4:8)!

\*Human impossibility was no hindrance for the God of the impossible! Peter had *Epistles* yet to write!

**Acts 12:7-8**

\*In the providential will of God, Peter was in a helpless and hopeless situation as King Herod incarcerated Pastor Peter with intent to murder him in conjunction with the celebration of the pagan holiday honoring the fertility goddess Ishtar (*“Easter”*). Was the Lord’s prophecy of the death of Peter soon to be realized (Jn. 21:18; Eccl. 3:2a)? John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, Stephen, and James were all slaughtered through the instrumentality of Satan’s dupes. Was Peter next?

\*The church prayed for a miracle and *“the* *angel of the Lord”* (cf. Acts 5:19; 8:26) answered in the “nick of time.” Luke slowed the narrative by giving details, such as activities and conversations, heightening the drama! Light appeared with the presence of the divine Saviour, and the Lord aroused “sleepy” Peter with the urgent command to arise and his chains fell off (soteriological truth: “when Jesus comes the chains fall off!”). The Lord *“smote”* Peter and later *“smote”* Herod (v. 23).

\*With four imperatives (3 *aorist* and 1 present), the Lord commanded Peter to *“gird,” “bind,” “cast,”* and continue to *“follow.”* With his hands free he could dress for the escape. Peter had learned early to *“follow”* the Lord (Mt. 4:19; Jn. 10:27; 13:36-38; 21:19, 20)!

**Acts 12:9**

\*With painstaking detail, Luke takes the reader along with Peter as he *“went out”* and *“followed”* the angel. The apostle *“wist”* (German word from *wissen* for “to know;” related to *“wot”* and *“wit”*) not the reality of the event but thought he saw a vision. Peter enacted Ps. 119:105: *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*

**Acts 12:10**

\*The LORD knows the way out of all complex difficulties (I Cor. 10:13). There was the first *“ward”* (literally “cage” or holding area) and then the second *“ward,”* and then to the iron-gate. Luke recorded that it opened *“of his own accord”* (*automate*). Finally, rushing through the maze of the prison matrix they reached the outside street. Once delivered out of the prison the angel of the Lord departed.

**Acts 12:11-12**

\*In the Lord’s sovereignty he rescued Peter but not James. Peter had work to do (2 Epistles) but James’s service on earth was done (Ps. 116:15).

\*Peter had opportunity to reflect on the event and recognized that the Lord delivered him from Herod and from the *“expectation”* of the Jews. The Jews were not interested in celebrating the Passover, the Feast of unleavened bread, or the Christian “Easter,” but in celebrating the martyrdom of one of the apostles of the sectarian “Christian” movement!

\*Supernaturally delivered from prison and certain death, where would Peter go in Jerusalem? He went to church. The Jerusalem Baptist Church was now reconvened and was meeting in *“the house of Mary,”* presumably the *“upper room”* (Acts 1:13). Apparently, she was a widow and stayed in Jerusalem at the dispersion. Since John Mark was her son, and he apparently was connected to the *“upper room”* where the Lord met with His disciples (Mk. 14:15), presumably he was the young man who fled naked (Mk. 14:51-52). Since the church was praying *“without ceasing”* (v. 5), Peter assumed that the all night vigil was continuing and that as former pastor, would be welcome!

**Acts 12:13**

\*The house was large with a gate, a servant, and a large upper room, suggesting that Mary was affluent as was her brother Barnabas. Rhoda responded to the knocking, cautious about the night visitor.

**Acts 12:13-14**

\*Having been delivered from prison and sure execution by *“the angel of the Lord,”* Peter went to the place where the Jerusalem Baptist assembly was meeting. At the home of affluent Mary and John Mark, the Apostle Peter and former pastor knocked on the door of the gate and the servant Rhoda (“rose”) answered (female servants kept the doors [Jn. 18:16-17]).

\*In the early morning darkness she heard the knock of a night visitor and recognized the voice of Peter who probably had been her pastor but did not open, presumably assuming a ruse. Not glad but no doubt frightened, Rhoda went to the assembly and asserted that Peter was at the gate.

**Acts 12:15-16**

\*If Rhoda’s response was fear but faith, the other church members’ response was unbelief and accusation. *“Thou art mad”* (*maine >* mania, maniac). She joined an elite group of *“mad”* people (Jn. 10:20; Acts 26:24-25)! She constantly affirmed it was Peter! These Jewish Christians knew about angelic visitations and supernatural phenomena, and thought that she saw Peter’s angel! The apostles seemed to believe in *“phantoms”* (Mt. 14:26; Mk. 6:49). Untaught they believed in *karma* (Jn. 9:2).

\*Sometimes answers to prayer are so stupendous it is difficult to comprehend (see Jer. 33:3)!

\*Peter, not his ‘guardian angel” (cf. Ps. 91:11; Mt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14), continued to knock (cf. Mt. 7:7-8).

\*Seeing Peter, the assembly members *“were astonished”* or ecstatic with joy and wonder!

**Acts 12:17**

\*Peter knew that the excited church members needed to quiet down in the early morning since they were in a city home (cf. Mk. 14:13). He recounted his deliverance from prison by the Lord and recognized that the authorities would soon be looking for him.

\*His last pastoral duty for the church was for members to go to the pastoral leadership and inform of the answer to prayer about Peter. Pastor James and the brethren were absent, probably at home sleeping. James was the Lord’s half-brother (Acts 1:14), pastor of the church (Acts 15:13), and writer of the *Epistle of James* (Jam. 1:1). As a “fugitive” Peter departed *“into another place”* obviously hiding!

**Acts 12:18-19**

\*Great confusion and commotion occurred at the prison as Luke used his literary device of understatement *“no small stir”* happened among the 16 soldiers and two guards. They were responsible with their own lives to guard the prisoner (cf. Acts 16:27). How could Peter escape?

\*Herod wanted this choice victim beheaded (Mk. 6:16-25; Acts 12:2) in honor of *Ishtar* before the apostate Jews. After examining the perplexed guards, the only way of escape was by a conspiracy of the soldiers, Herod reasoned, and had public execution of them for *Ishtar.* Life and death are in the hands of the Lord (Eccl. 3:1-3; Mt. 10:28). He providentially allowed **1)** James to die, **2)** Peter to live, and **3)** the faithful guards to die. **4)** Next in line for death was disappointed Herod who went to Caesarea.

**Acts 12:20-23**

\*Angry and choleric Herod focused on Tyre and Sidon since he financed their commerce, but their politicians strategized to befriend Herod’s personal assistant *Blastus* (“sprout”). Blastus knew that this proud and peevish king desired glory for his “magnanimous person” and requested a day when he could expound his greatness in an oration with robe and on his throne! The audience swooned over his divine voice, and their pandering appealed to his ego (Prov. 16:18-19). The Angel of the Lord smote him since he did not give God the Glory, and worms “ate him for lunch” (cf. Mk. 9:44, 46, 48)!