

## The End of Peter's Recorded Ministry

### Acts 12:1—25

Other than a brief mention in Acts 15, the account of Peter's life comes to an end in chapter 12. He was named in 57 verses in the first 12 chapters of Acts, and then mentioned one more time in Acts 15. There is also another account where Paul reprimands Peter in Galatians 2. This is pretty amazing considering he was the lead Apostle who ministered with Jesus for approximately three years. He was promised the keys of the Kingdom and that he would be sitting on one of the 12 thrones of rulership in the Millennial Kingdom. Now, all of a sudden, Peter fades to nothing as Paul increases in prominence. There is an obvious, yet often ignored, change in direction of how God was dealing with the world.

Now that God has put Israel aside, we will see Peter and the other Apostles also being put aside, because they are inextricably linked to the nation of Israel. Once Israel lost her status of being a special nation, there was no need for keeping the original 12 Disciples on the forefront of God's work. This is just another clear indication that God was changing His dealings with mankind.

At least 10 years have passed since the stoning of Stephen, which marked the end of God working with the nation of Israel as His special people, and during that time the Apostle Paul was raised up, Peter and the Hebrew church were learning that God is going directly to the Gentiles, and now we see the end of Peter's ministry. It's very possible that Peter wrote his two epistles not too long after these events happened. It would help explain why Peter says he was struggling to understand what Paul was teaching (2 Peter 3:16). Peter understood the Kingdom doctrine, but struggled to comprehend the Grace teaching given to Paul by Jesus Christ.

#### **Peter imprisoned**

Herod had seized some of the Little Flock, who were part of the Hebrew church at Jerusalem, including the apostles James and Peter. This is the James who was a Disciple, the brother of John, not the brother of Jesus, leader of the Hebrew church and writer of the book of James. He was not the brother of Jesus. When Herod killed James with a sword, he saw that it pleased the Jews. Agrippa I was the king, and he knew it was in his best interest to keep the Jews happy. Note that Herod is a general name that could be referencing Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, Herod Agrippa I, and Herod Agrippa II. Herod the Great is mentioned in Luke 1. He died shortly after Jesus was born and his kingdom was divided into quarters and ruled by his three sons and a daughter. One of those sons, Aristobulus, had a son named Herod Agrippa I. It is thought that King Agrippa I was the Herod who killed James and wanted to kill Peter. King Agrippa I gave birth to King Agrippa II, who ruled after Agrippa I died in AD 44 (Acts 12:20—23). James is the only original Disciple with a biblical account of being martyred. The King Agrippa in Acts 25 is the son of King Agrippa I

Peter was arrested and thrown into prison waiting to be put to death, probably just before Passover. He was being guarded by four sets of guards with two chained to him at all times. He was going to be put to death after the Jews were done celebrating Passover. With the understanding that I may be soundly thrashed by the staunch defenders the King James Bible, I boldly take issue with the use of the word *Easter* in Acts 12:4. Here the Greek word *paskha* was translated as Easter, although every other time the Greek word *paskha* is used, the Bible correctly calls it Passover. In order to accept that this change of translation is correct, it would be necessary to believe that the translators had obtained a special (verbal?) revelation from God to translate this one Greek word into two different English words. And this is exactly what many do in order to defend the King James Bible as being the perfectly preserved word of God. That

would mean that the many Greek manuscripts available were actually imperfect and needed to be improved. Although Passover technically lasted only one day, it was often used to describe the entire week, including the Feast of unleavened bread and Feast of First Fruits (Ezekiel 45:21). Although I may be accused of disparaging the King James Bible, I am actually calling into question people who jump through hoops trying to defend a rather odd translational choice. The King James Bible is a great translation which has stood the test of time, but it is not absolutely perfect.

King Herod was going to wait until after Passover to kill Peter because he did not want to offend the Jews who were glad when he killed James. In the meantime, Peter was locked up in prison, and the church was praying earnestly for him.

God answered those prayers and sent an angel of the Lord to, almost casually, lead Peter out of prison. It was so surreal that Peter thought he was dreaming. Once he came to his senses, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were praying. We are most familiar with John-Mark as being the author of the book of Mark and the traveling companion of Paul and Barnabas as well as a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). Peter grew to love John-Mark, calling him his son (1 Peter 5:13). The house Peter went to must have been fairly large to be able to hold groups of people and requiring a maid.

No one could believe that Peter would be knocking at the door, in answer to their prayers. Once he was let in, Peter told them how God had delivered him from the hands of Herod. He then told them to tell these things to James and the believing brothers at the Hebrew church.

### **Herod's death** (verses 18—23)

Once Herod found out that Peter had escaped, he put the guards to death who were in charge of keeping Peter. Later, he traveled to Caesarea, north of the Sea of Galilee on the Mediterranean Sea, and abode there for a time. Caesarea was built up by Herod the Great and served as a center of government, which is probably one reason Herod (King Agrippa I) went there.

He was displeased with the cities of Tyre and Sidon, two cities to the north of Caesarea also on the Mediterranean Sea coast. In their quest to make things right with the king, and to make sure the king would not withhold important food supplies from them, they made friends with the king's chamberlain, Blastus. When the king was scheduled to sit publicly on his throne, they came together to acknowledge him not only as king, but as a god. He gladly accepted the designation of god and in doing so, was struck by the angel of the Lord. According to Josephus, a historian living during these events, the king suffered with intense pain in his stomach for five days before dying. Scripture says that he was eaten of worms and died.

King Agrippa I is a type of antichrist, who will be ruling in the Tribulation. In similar fashion, the antichrist will set himself up as God in the temple (2 Thessalonians 2:1—4). This has the imprint of Satan, who also desired to be God, and receive acclamation (Ezekiel 28; Isaiah 14). Herod died in AD 44 at the age of 54 after ruling for less than seven years,

### **Barnabas and Saul**

Paul was still referred to as Saul up until he and Barnabas leave on their journey together to visit the churches. Notice also that Barnabas is listed first as the leader of the group. Barnabas is probably still Paul's introduction to other believers, since Saul is still known to many as a persecutor of the saints. Their mission of ministering and teaching those at Antioch was complete, and now Barnabas, Saul and Mark were returning from Jerusalem. We are now being set up for Paul's first major journey, preaching the Gospel of Grace to the Gentiles.