

**THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**  
**NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP STUDY**  
**PART THIRTEEN - CHAPTER 12 & 13**

'Herod the King', (12:1) was Herod Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod the Great who killed the babies at the time of Jesus' birth, (Matt.2) and a nephew of Herod Antipas who executed John the Baptist, (Matt.14) and wanted Jesus to perform a sign. (Lk.23) They were ruthless tyrants but at the same time skilled politicians who knew how to keep popular with those whose support they needed to stay in power. Herod showed these family traits in his murder of James, which pleased the Jews. Killing Peter would also be popular but he knew not to do it during a religious holiday. (12:1-4)

Peter slept for what he thought might be his last night on earth. God intervened to effect one of the greatest prison escapes of all time. Peter thought at first that this was another of his dreams with a message. It was not until he stood alone in a city street that he was wide awake. (12:5-11)

Walking out of prison proved easier than walking into Mary's house. As Peter had once denied Jesus to a slave girl at the gate of the high priest's house, so his friends now denied him to another servant girl. Despite the fact that fervent prayer was being made for Peter, (12:5) it was a prayer of unbelief because otherwise they would have expected and welcomed him. Presumably in their panic after James' death the church thought only to pray for Peter's life, not his freedom. They forgot to listen to God's plan or even to remember what the Lord had done for all the apostles in chapter 5. God sprang Peter from jail despite the unbelief of the Christians.

Two new people were introduced to us in this chapter who will have major parts to play in the rest of this book.

John Mark (12:12) came from a Christian home which became a house-church in Jerusalem. As such he would have met the apostles personally. When Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch he went with them as a promising young missionary in training. According to a tradition which rings true, he was the writer of Mark's gospel and as such he was probably the young man who ran away naked after trying to follow Jesus when the Lord was arrested. (Mark 14:51,52) He was soon to discover that it takes more than a good family and worthy ambition to make a missionary.

James was the Lord's half brother, (Gal.1:19) who grew up with Him, not believing in Him. He met the Lord after His resurrection, (I Cor.15:7) became a respected leader in the Jerusalem church once the apostles began to move out, and wrote the Epistle of James. More than all the apostles he had seen Christianity in action in ordinary daily life at home, in the life of the Lord Jesus.

Again Herod showed how much like his grandfather he was in his arbitrary execution of innocent guards. (12:18,19) But then his enormous ego allowed him to accept worship as a god just like the Roman Emperors who were being worshipped as gods after their death. God stepped in to strike him dead in judgement, normally reserved for after death, but

sometimes exercised now because of outrageous blasphemy. (Lev.10:2; Acts 5)

Acts 12:24 is the third of Luke's chapter endings, confirming that the gospel had triumphed over impossible odds yet again.

Chapter 13 takes us back to Antioch and the beginning of a new era of missionary activity.

13:1-3 Q.1 What does the presence of five teachers in Antioch tell us about Barnabas as a teacher? What do we know about each of the five? How could such a varied group work so well together? What do we know about the prayer life of the leadership in Antioch? How does God call people to special service? Why did they fast, pray and lay hands on Barnabas and Saul?

13:3-5 Q.2 Who sent Barnabas and Saul out? Why did the Holy Spirit lead them first to Cyprus?(4:36) Why did they begin preaching in the synagogues? What can we learn from these verses about beginning a ministry?

13:6-12 Q.3 What means was Elymas using to prevent the proconsul becoming a Christian? What means does the Devil still use today to turn someone with an intelligent interest away from the Lord? What authority do we have to prevent the Devil achieving this?(I Jn.4:4) How do you suppose Paul felt about Elymas being blinded for a while? Did the proconsul become a Christian because Elymas was blinded?

13:13-15 Q.4 Why do you think John Mark deserted Barnabas and Paul? What great lesson did he still have to learn? Arriving in Pisidia, Barnabas and Paul again went first to the synagogue. What can we learn from the way they went about gaining an opportunity to speak in the synagogue?

13:16-22 Q.5 What two Old Testament stories did Paul use in this part of his message? What principle was he bringing out of both stories? How could David be described as a man after God's heart 'who will do all My will' considering all the mistakes he made?

13:23-31 Q.6 What two approaches did Paul use to introduce teaching about Jesus? What can we learn from his example? What facts about Jesus did Paul relate? How do they build on verses 17-25? Why was his way of presenting the gospel so appropriate to a Jewish audience?

13:32-41 Q.7 Once again Paul went back into the Old Testament. What Old Testament passages did he quote? Look them up and note their context. What fact about Jesus are they all intended to confirm?

13:42-52 Q.8 What three responses did Paul's message bring? How do we meet the same responses today? What three reasons does Paul give for leaving the Jewish synagogue and moving on? What clues does this message give us about when to move on from a church where we feel we may be wasting our time? Was it a disaster for the gospel when the Jews of Antioch ran Barnabas and Paul out of town?