

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 39

### I. Exposition of Chapter Twelve (Continued).

A. Verse 11 – “**And when Peter had come to himself...**” – Comparing this to verse 9 we know that Peter finally realizes that this is not a vision but is actually happening and God is supernaturally delivering him from prison. B. Verses 12-17 - Peter goes to the house where the believers are praying for him.

1. Verse 12 – “**So, 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.**”

a. He goes to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark.

“This verse introduces the reader to John Mark who figures prominently in Paul’s missionary journey. Evidently his mother Mary was a woman of prominence and means. Probably her house was a principal meeting place of the church, so it must have been spacious. Because John Mark’s father is not named, Mary may have been a widow. This same Mark is considered to be the writer of the Gospel bearing his name (cf. Mark 14:51–52; 1 Peter 5:13).”<sup>1</sup>

b. “**...many were gathered together praying.**” – According to Dr. Bob Utley, the grammatical form here indicates that not only had they gathered for prayer but they intended to remain in prayer.<sup>2</sup> Also, the word “**many**” seems to indicate a significant amount of believers. The Amplified Bible translates it as “**...a large number...**”. Grant Osborne states: “**She is a wealthy woman with a house large enough to serve over fifty people.**”<sup>3</sup>

2. Verses 13-14 – “**And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. When 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.**”

a. The word “**girl**” is rightly translated elsewhere as “**servant girl**” or “**slave girl**”.

b. Rhoda was so surprised and overjoyed at the appearance of Peter at the door, she forgot to let him in and went in and told the others he was there. This indicates that Rhoda was also a believer and possibly was praying with them as well.

3. Verse 15 – “**But they said to her, ‘You are beside yourself!’ Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said ‘It is his angel.’**”

a. The phrase, “**You are beside yourself!**” means; “**to not be in one’s right mind, to be insane, to be mad, to be out of one’s mind, insanity, madness.**”<sup>4</sup> Regarding their unbelief, Warren Wiersbe asserts:

“**We must face the fact that even in the most fervent prayer meetings there is sometimes a spirit of doubt and unbelief. We are like the father who cried to Jesus, ‘Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!’ (Mark 9:24) These Jerusalem saints believed that God could answer their prayers, so they kept at it night and day. But, when the answer came right to their door, they refused to believe it. God graciously honors even the weakest faith, but how much more He would do if only we would trust Him.**”<sup>5</sup>

b. The idea that the believers suggested that it was Peter’s angel she saw rather than Peter himself, reflects a common Jewish belief of that day. F.F. Bruce states:

“**The words ‘It is his angel’ (12:15) probably reflect the belief that a person’s guardian angel had the power of assuming his or her appearance in time of need. Our Lord made reference to the guardian angels of little children, but their ministry, according to him, is carried out in heaven (Matthew 18:10).**”<sup>6</sup>

“**When you remember that (a) many people were praying, (b) they were praying earnestly, (c) they prayed night and day for perhaps as long as a week, and (d) their prayers were centered specifically on Peter’s deliverance, then the scene that is described here is almost comical. The answer to their prayers is standing at the door, but they don’t have faith enough to open the door and let him in! God could get Peter out of a prison, but Peter can’t get himself into a prayer meeting!**”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 385.

<sup>2</sup>Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 156.

<sup>3</sup>Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 227. <sup>4</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene

#### 4. Verses 16-17 – The believers finally open the door.

a. **Verse 16 – “Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.”** – The word “**astonished**” is a word we’ve seen several times in the book of Acts and means; “**to cause someone to be so astounded as to be practically overwhelmed**”<sup>8</sup> (cf. 2:7, 12; 8:9, 11, 13; 9:21; 10:45.)

b. **Verse 17 – “But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent...”** – In their astonishment they, no doubt, were loud in their expressions of excitement in seeing Peter. Peter, being concerned they would draw the attention of the unbelieving Jews, had to try to calm them down. After sharing with them how the Lord had delivered him from prison, he then gives them the following instruction: “**Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.**” The name “**James**” was a common name (cf. 12:2), but most scholars seem to agree that this is referring to James the half-brother of Jesus. Most also agree that he was the leader of the Jerusalem church (**Matthew 13:55; Acts 15:13; Galatians 1:19**) and was also the author of the Epistle of James.<sup>9</sup>

c. “**And he departed and went to another place.**” – No one knows for sure where Peter went at this time. Wiersbe adds some interesting thoughts:

**“Where Peter went when he left the meeting, nobody knows to this day! It certainly was a well-kept secret. Except for a brief appearance in Acts 15, Peter walks off the pages of the Book of Acts to make room for Paul and the story of his ministry among the Gentiles. First Corinthians 9:5 tells us that Peter traveled in ministry with his wife, and 1 Corinthians 1:12 suggests that he visited Corinth. There is no evidence in Scripture that Peter ever visited Rome. In fact, if Peter had founded the church in Rome, it is unlikely that Paul would have gone there, for his policy was to work where other Apostles had not labored (Rom. 15:18–22).”<sup>10</sup>**

#### 5. Verses 18-19 – Peter’s escape is Discovered.

a. **Verse 18 – “Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.”** – When the soldiers discovered that Peter was nowhere to be found there was chaos and panic. Note the following definition of “**...no small stir...**”:

**“no little consternation.”** The translation given...is ‘*mental agitation*’... ‘a state of acute distress and great anxiety, with the additional possible implications of dismay and confusion...The English word “consternation” is preferred here because it conveys precisely such a situation of anxiety mixed with fear. The reason for this anxiety is explained in the following verse.”<sup>11</sup>

b. **Verse 19 – After searching for Peter, Herod had the guards who were guarding put to death. “Herod organizes an area-wide search for him, but to no avail. He is gone and far out of the area. So he calls in the guards and thoroughly interrogates them (probably using torture to get at the truth), then executes them, actually a legal decision and not just anger at their ineptitude. He probably also suspects they accepted a bribe to set Peter free. He would hardly have accepted a miraculous escape at the hands of God. Herod had come to Jerusalem for Passover and now returns to his home in Caesarea (9:30; 10:1) and the Herodian palace there.”<sup>12</sup>**

#### 6. Verses 20-24 – The Death of Herod Agrippa I.

a. **Verse 20 – “Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon...”** – It’s not apparent why Herod was angry with these cities but the people wanted to be reconciled to Herod due to him apparently cutting them off from food supplies.

b. **Verse 21 – “So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them.”** – This “**set day**” was a public festival held at Caesarea in honor of Emperor Claudius in March, AD 44 – this is an historical fact.<sup>13</sup>

c. **Verses 22-23** – When Herod accepted worship from the people, he was immediately struck with an illness from “**...an angel of the Lord...**” When you make God your enemy, including “**...to harass some from the church**” (cf. 12:1), you will lose every time. The Jewish historian, Josephus records the death of Herod which corroborates this account by Luke. Dr. Stanley Horton writes:

**“He was ‘eaten by worms,’ dying at the age of fifty-four. Josephus adds that Herod lingered five days with agonizing stomach pains.”<sup>14</sup>**

d. **Verse 24 – “But the word of God grew and multiplied.”** – “**The persecutor died, ‘but the word of God grew and multiplied’ (12:24)—a recurring theme in Acts.**”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 312.

<sup>9</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 454.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible* (Biblical Studies Press, 2005).

<sup>12</sup>Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 229.

<sup>13</sup>F. F. Bruce, *Acts: Bible Study Commentary* (Nashville, TN; Bath, England: Kingsley Books, 2017), Ac 12:12–24.

<sup>14</sup>Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 230.

<sup>15</sup>F. F. Bruce, *Acts: Bible Study Commentary* (Nashville, TN; Bath, England: Kingsley Books, 2017), Ac 12:12–24.