

when God gives us all and more than we asked for. It was a popular belief, not contradicted by our Lord (Matt. 28 : 10; Heb. 1 : 14) that everyone had a guardian angel who sometimes assumed the bodily appearance of the person himself. They thought, that Peter had been put to death in prison and his angel had come to announce the fact to them.

16. But Peter continued knocking and when they had opened the door and saw him; they were astonished. (R. V. amazed)—Peter was in danger of recapture and every moment's delay was serious—Often God's answers are knocking at our doors and we won't let them in, but keep on praying for them. We may well be amazed at God's forbearance and patience with our unbelief.

17. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the lord had brought him out of the prison, and he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren, and he departed and went into another place—Their clamour of joy prevented his voice from being heard until he had stilled them by a gesture. This James was not one of the Twelve, but afterwards found acting as the official head of the christian community at Jerusalem. (Acts. 15 : 13; 21 : 18; Gal. 1 : 19). He was the eldest male relative of Jesus (Gal. 1 : 19), and according to oriental usage the natural head of the community founded by Jesus. Early Christian tradition, confirmed by one or two passages in the New Testament, affirms that James occupied a unique position in the church in Jerusalem, and that he was succeeded in this by his cousin Simeon, the son of Cleopas, who was the head of the christian fellowship when it migrated to Pella,

(Lindsay), to escape the siege of the city by the Romans. Later writers call him "Bishop" of Jerusalem, but there is no evidence that he exercised the special unctions now exclusively performed by those who call themselves by that title. He was a bishop such as every minister of our church claims to be. Where Peter went we don't know. Roman Catholic writers claim it that he went to Rome at this time, but that is inconsistent with the tone of Paul's statements in 2 Cor. 10 : 16. (Lindsay). He probably went into concealment. Herod's death soon after would set him free from danger.

ORIENTALISMS.

In Egypt from very early times prisons were established, and put under the charge of the military as we see from the story of Joseph, but among the Jews, until after the return from captivity, there seem to have been no prisons except private ones, as in Persia. The prisoner was farmed out to some private individual, who took charge of him, in much the same way as used to be done with paupers in some parts of the United States. A most convenient, therefore common, place of confinement, was, as to-day, a pit either dry or partly so. The story of Jeremiah is an illustration. No food is provided, and unless friends supply the necessities of life the prisoner will starve. Hence we have the beautiful prophecy of Isaiah 51 : 14. The prisons of the time of our lesson were Roman, or after their model, with fetters, stocks, &c.

The Rabbins divided the angels into ten classes, differing in authority and knowledge, only the highest angels were allowed to look on the face of God. The highest were Gabriel and Michael, the former the minister of Justice, the latter of Mercy.

BIBLE SEARCH LIGHTS.

Distinguish three Herods. (1) H. the Great (Matt. 2 : 16). (2) H. Antipas, uncle to the one in our chapter (Matt. 14 : 3-11) and (3) Herod Agrippa I. (Acts. 12 : 20-23). Also distinguish James, son of Zebedee and brother of John, from James, the Less, brother of our Lord and pastor of the church at Jerusalem, author of the Epistle of James, who was not an Apostle.

5. When had Peter escaped from prison before this? (5 : 19). Are we encouraged to pray for others? (Eph. 6 : 18; Jas. 5 : 16; 2 Cor. 1 : 11; 9 : 14).

6. With what promises might Peter compose himself to rest that night? (Ex. 23 : 20; Deut. 33 : 12, 27; Job. 33 : 18; Ps. 34 : 19; 41 : 1, 2; 72 : 14; 91 : 1-4, 14; 121 : 4; 146 : 7; Luke 21 : 18; Matt. 10 : 29-31).