

Lesson II.

PETER DELIVERED FROM PRISON

April 11, 1909

BETWEEN THE LESSONS—Some of Peter's brethren in Jerusalem criticized him for preaching the gospel to Gentiles, but his explanation removed their objections. In order to complete the part of the narrative commenced in Lesson XI., ch. 9: 31-43, in which Peter is the chief figure, a period of from four to six years is, in the meantime, passed over, during which the chief event was the founding of the church at Antioch. This will be taken up in the Lesson for April 25, after the Lesson on the conversion of Saul, who was to become one of the leading teachers in that church. (See ch. 11.)

GOLDEN TEXT—The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.—Psalm 34: 7.

Memorize v. 7.

THE LESSON PASSAGE—Acts 12: 1-11.

Study Acts 12: 1-19

1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying,

Revised Version—put forth, ² afflict; ³ when he saw that; ⁴ Omit further; ⁵ seize; ⁶ (Omit brackets, And those were; ⁷ taken; ⁸ guard; ⁹ the Passover; ¹⁰ the; ¹¹ earnestly of; ¹² was about to bring; ¹³ guards; ¹⁴ an; ¹⁵ stood by him; ¹⁶ cell; ¹⁷ awoke him; ¹⁸ Rise up; ¹⁹ he did so; ²⁰ Omit him; ²¹ he; ²² And; ²³ into; ²⁴ straightway; ²⁵ truth; ²⁷ forth; ²⁸ Omit hath.

Daily Readings—(Courtesy, I.B.R.A.)—M.—Peter delivered from prison, Acts 12: 1-10. T.—Peter delivered from prison, Acts 12: 11-19. W.—A strong Deliverer, Ps. 33: 10-22. Th.—Prayer and answer, Ps. 34: 1-10. F.—The delivering angel, Dan. 6: 16-23. S.—Promise of answer, Matt. 7: 1-11. S.—Trust in God, 2 Cor. 1: 1-11.

THE LESSON EXPLAINED

I. IMPRISONED.—1-4. About that time; when Barnabas and Saul had gone up to Jerusalem (see Between the Lessons). Herod the king; Herod Agrippa I., grandson of Herod the Great, at this time ruler, as his grandfather had been, over all Palestine. To vex; to "afflict" (Rev. Ver.), oppress. Killed James; along with Peter and John, one of the three most prominent of the apostles (see Mark 5: 37; Luke 9: 28; Matt. 26: 37).

With the sword; a mode of death regarded by the Jews as specially disgraceful. Pleased the Jews.

The main point in Agrippa's policy was to win the favor of the Jewish leaders, who, he knew, bitterly hated the Christians. Proceeded . . . to take Peter; the leader amongst the apostles. Days of unleavened bread; the seven days following the eating of the Passover, during which no bread made with leaven or yeast might be used (see Lev. 23: 5-8). Apprehended; seized. Quaternions; groups of four men. Each group of four was on duty six hours out of the twenty-four. After the Passover (which came at the same time as our Easter) . . . bring him forth (Rev. Ver.); that is, after the Passover week, during which no legal decision could be given.

II. PRAYED FOR.—5. Prayer . . . without ceasing; Weymouth, "long and fervent prayer was offered". Of the church; that is, by companies of its members scattered here and there throughout the city. Unto God; the heavenly

¹⁸ Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

⁸ And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And ¹⁹ so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

⁹ And he went out, and followed ²⁰ him; and ²¹ wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

¹⁰ ²² When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth ²³ unto the city; which opened to them of ²⁴ his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and ²⁵ forthwith the angel departed from him.

¹¹ And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a ²⁶ surety, that the Lord hath sent ²⁷ his angel; and ²⁸ hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

¹² When he saw that; ¹³ Omit further; ¹⁴ seize; ¹⁵ (Omit brackets, And those were; ¹⁶ taken; ¹⁷ guard; ¹⁸ the; ¹⁹ earnestly of; ²⁰ was about to bring; ²¹ guards; ²² an; ²³ stood by him; ²⁴ cell; ²⁵ awoke him; ²⁶ Rise up; ²⁷ he did so; ²⁸ Omit him; ²⁹ he; ³⁰ And; ³¹ into; ³² straightway; ³³ truth; ³⁴ forth; ³⁵ Omit hath.

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A COIN OF HEROD AGRIPPA

King, in whose hands King Herod was powerless.

III. DELIVERED.—6-8. When Herod would have brought him forth; Weymouth, "was on the point of taking him out of prison", for sentence and execution. That same night; in all human likelihood Peter's last night on earth. Peter was sleeping; fearless and calm through his trust in God. (Compare ch. 16: 25.) Between two soldiers, bound with two chains; literally "wristbands", fastening him to his keeper on either side. Keepers before the door; the other two of the "quaternion" on duty. An angel of the Lord, etc. (Rev. Ver.). Compare Luke 2: 9. A light shined; "the glory of the Lord" (see again Luke 2: 9). Smote Peter; to rouse him from his sound and quiet sleep. Chains fell off, "dropped from his wrists". Gird thyself; put on thy girdle, to bind up the long Eastern undergarment, loosened for sleeping in. Sandals; the footgear of the poor: shoes were worn by the