



# ACTS 12

## Deep Dive



In Acts 12 we see the believers experiencing persecution and loss through the execution of James and arrest of Peter with the intention to also have him face the same fate. However, we also see the supernatural come into play with Peter's miraculous release from prison.

This series we are doing a deep dive into this chapter to understand what we can learn about how to handle challenges such that we draw on the power we have access to and respond accurately to supernatural intervention.

We pray that the Holy Spirit will hand hold us through this series and open our eyes to the help that God has already made available to us.



## Day 1 Staying Alert

“When he had seized Peter, he put him in prison, turning him over to four squads of soldiers of four each to guard him [in rotation throughout the night], planning after the Passover to bring him out before the people [for execution].” Acts 12:4

Peter had been unfairly imprisoned because Herod wanted to please the Jews by executing him just as he had done to James. Herod wanted to make a spectacle of this event and had Peter surrounded by squads of soldiers, making it appear that Peter’s fate had already been sealed and all hope was lost. But the church did something they hadn’t done in the case of James - they prayed.

“So Peter was kept in prison, but fervent and persistent prayer for him was being made to God by the church.” Acts 12:5

We don’t know why similar prayer wasn’t made for James. Perhaps everything happened suddenly, or the church felt Herod wouldn’t actually do such a dastardly and unjust act. We don’t really know why, but we do know that once the church saw what had happened to James they rose in unison to take a stand against the same thing happening to Peter.

“When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.” Luke 4:13

“For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places” Ephesians 6:12

The enemy is constantly waging war against us whether we know it or not. This warfare isn’t dependent on any instigation on our part - it’s fairly certain that James and Peter didn’t do anything in particular to provoke Herod. They were simply walking according to their faith. But Herod - inspired by the devil - rose up against the church. James and Peter were only the starting point as Herod would have continued attacking the leadership of the church.

“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

There is a lesson for us here, the enemy’s always seeking an opportunity to devour. When the enemy attacks it’s not always because we did something to prompt it. It’s because we are always engaged in a battle and as such we must stay alert so we don’t lose the upper hand by giving into the enemy’s strategy to get us to neglect prayer.

**Prayer:** Lord help me stay alert and ahead of whatever the enemy may strategise against me and all that concerns me

## Day 2

### The Peace of God

“The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate.” Acts 12:6

Peter was held in prison in the manner one would expect of a violent and dangerous criminal, not a former fisherman who was simply expressing his faith. The level of security placed around Peter was a reflection of two realms. In the natural, it spoke of how dramatic Herod wanted his demonstration of power over Peter to be. In the spiritual realm it spoke of how feared and dangerous Peter was regarded by the enemy’s kingdom. Regardless of the perception and intentions, Peter did something that was remarkable the night before his trial: he slept.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:7

“and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7

Knowing what happened to James, the evil in Herod’s heart and the way the Jews were looking forward to a similar fate befalling him, it’s remarkable that Peter was able to sleep. There was more than enough to keep him awake, knowing that in a few hours he would be facing a trial where his case had already been pre-judged. Being in prison there’s no way Peter would know that the church was praying for him. Yet we know he slept so soundly that the angel had to strike him to wake him up. Clearly there was something beyond Peter’s natural capacity that gave him peace. The Bible tells us that God hasn’t given us a spirit of fear and that there’s a peace that God gives that surpasses all understanding.

“Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10

Life will always throw challenges at us, many of them quite unfair. But we have the assurance that in the midst of the challenges we can access God’s peace which protects, preserves and keeps us going in spite of the challenges.

**Prayer:** Lord I ask for Your peace to envelope me and keep me secure and focused on You even in the middle of challenges

### Day 3 Illumination

“Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him...” Acts 12:7

The answer to the prayer of the church came in the form of an angel who was assigned to get Peter out of prison. The bright light representing the angel's presence didn't wake Peter up. Interestingly neither did it wake up the soldiers surrounding him. This means even though the angel (representing the answer to the prayer) was present, Peter may have missed it if the angel hadn't taken the next step of waking him up.

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” Ephesians 3:20

“...the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do...” I Chronicles 12:32

Perhaps Peter had made peace with going to be with the Lord and hadn't really considered deliverance was possible. Sometimes when we're in a dark or difficult situation, it's possible to be so overwhelmed that we give up. It's also possible that we receive the answer to what we're praying for but miss it because it doesn't look like what we were expecting or had ever considered.

Sometimes the answer to our prayer is clear and comes as we expect. There will also be times when we require discernment to see the answer even in the midst of the challenges. This is why when we're going through things our prayer shouldn't only be “God deliver me”, but also “Give me the illumination (insight/understanding etc) about what's really going on and the ability to discern the answer when it comes”. So we don't miss it when God sends the answer we need because it doesn't look like the answer we want.

**Prayer:** Lord illuminate every area of darkness around me. Let Your light bring clarity, understanding and the discernment to recognise Your answer when it comes. Help me submit to Your will, trusting that You will lead me along the best pathway for my life.

## Day 4 Awakening

“Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him...” Acts 12:7

The angel knew Peter needed to access deliverance so he struck Peter in order to wake him up. It was after Peter woke up that the angel was able to start engaging him on getting out of prison. What Peter experienced was a divine awakening. Had Peter not woken up, the angel would be there but his situation wouldn't have changed.

“Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep.” Zechariah 4:1

Zechariah was already in discussions with an angel but even while he was conscious, the angel had to wake him up again. This tells us that when it comes to spiritual things, awakening is not necessarily about our natural eyes being open but our spiritual eyes. And also that there are levels of awakening. When our spiritual eyes are opened we start functioning at a level of understanding we didn't have before because we're now seeing from God's perspective. Sometimes we arrive at this awakening through prayer and study of God's word. There may also be times where situations are orchestrated by God to bring us to the level of understanding we need for the situation(s).

“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened...” Ephesians 1:17-18

“His watchmen are blind, They are all ignorant; They are all dumb dogs, They cannot bark; Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.” Isaiah 56:10

“But you, lazybones, how long will you sleep? When will you wake up?” Proverbs 6:9

As we engage the Lord in prayer we must always pray that He wakes us up from any form slumber that is holding us back from receiving wisdom, revelation and understanding. Slumber may be in the natural where we're not making maximum use of the hours in the day productively. It could also be spiritual where we lack awareness of what's going on around us. Whatever the case, we need to constantly be awake and awakened.

**Prayer:** Lord wake me up from every form of slumber that's holding me back from receiving all You have for me and becoming all You created me to be

## Day 5 Time to Arise

“Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, “Arise quickly!” And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel said to him, “Gird yourself and tie on your sandals”; and so he did. And he said to him, “Put on your garment and follow me.” So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.” Acts 12:7-9

Note that the chains didn't fall off immediately the angel showed up to rescue Peter, rather this happened when Peter got up. There are some situations that divine intervention alone will resolve, but many more require our active involvement and cooperation.

“Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you... But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.” Isaiah 60:1-3

One of the instructions we have as believers is to arise AND shine. The rising comes first because it's as we arise and begin to align with God's plans and purposes that we start shining the light of His grace, wisdom, counsel, principles, etc all of which bring Him glory. The converse is that of we don't arise in the place of our assignment, the light that's been made available to us will not have the needed platform for expression and therefore will not shine through.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

God expects us to engage Him in finding out for ourselves what His assignment and agenda for us is, as well as how to let the Holy Spirit lead us along the journey. As we determine to move in line with God's plan, the chains of fear, procrastination, discouragement, oppression etc are also being broken off us, enabling us to move freely into being all aged designed for us to be.

**Prayer:** Lord help me to arise so Your light can shine through me. Let everything holding me back give way so I move with acceleration into all You have for me.

## Day 5 Impossibility Specialist

“They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and this opened for them all by itself. So they passed through and started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him.” Acts 12:10

When God is involved nothing is difficult. Things that typically would be major issues are inconsequential to Him achieving His purpose. Had humans tried to plan how to get Peter out of jail, the obstacles before them would seemingly have been insurmountable.

“Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.”” Matthew 19:26

“Is anything too hard for the Lord?..” Genesis 18:14

As we go through Peter’s release from prison, let’s identify all the seemingly impossible things that were done. Peter was chained between two soldiers, yet neither of them woke up. The chains he was bound with fell off on their own accord. Peter got dressed and left the prison, yet none of the four squads of soldiers he was guarded by knew he’d left. Even the guards at their posts somehow didn’t see Peter leave the prison. Then to top it off the closed gate leading to the city opened to them all by itself. No one could have successfully orchestrated all this without divine intervention.

““My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”” Isaiah 55:8-9

While Peter’s release from prison may seem extreme, there are many issues we’re struggling to handle alone that God has an unlimited number of ways to solve, many of which we wouldn’t even have considered because they seem impossible. But His ways aren’t our ways and He has no limitations. What is it that seems insurmountable to you right now? Bring it before the Lord, nothing is too hard for Him.

**Prayer:** Lord I recognise Your ways are higher than I can fathom and Your resources are unlimited. I bring my challenges before You and ask for Your intervention and guidance and that You take all the glory.



## Day 6 Deliverance

“Peter finally came to his senses. “It’s really true!” he said. “The Lord has sent his angel and saved me from Herod and from what the Jewish leaders had planned to do to me!”” Acts 12:11

Even though Peter was actively participating in his exit from prison, he still thought he was dreaming. It wasn’t until after the angel left that Peter realised everything that happened was real. There are times when we look at our problems and think they’re too much for God to resolve, but He always establishes His power, authority and willingness to deliver His children.

“The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to the rescue each time.” Psalms 34:19

“For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease.” Psalms 91:3

We would be naïve to think we won’t face any challenges in life. Challenges will arise either due to the fact that we live in a broken world and the hearts of people are desperately wicked or due to our own errors. Whatever the reason, we have the guarantee that the Lord will rescue us even if it’s not as dramatic as Peter’s.

“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

“Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn’t even smell of smoke!” Daniel 3:27

Sometimes deliverance comes in the form of avoiding the trial as happened with Peter. Sometimes like the Hebrew boys, we go through the trial but God preserves us through the trials so we don’t look like what we’ve been through. Whatever the challenge, God is more than able to see us through.

**Prayer:** Father I look to You for Your deliverance from the challenges I am facing. I ask that You reveal to me the path of deliverance and give me the grace to stay focused on You, trusting Your faithfulness and not in myself.

## Day 7

### Know Your Company

“When he realized what had happened, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, who was also called Mark, where many [believers] were gathered together and were praying continually [and had been praying all night].” Acts 12:12

When Peter realised he was delivered, he knew exactly where to go because he had a company of people he identified with, who prayed for him consistently until he was delivered. There’s something about having a group of people you know you can count on in any circumstance and the comfort we have is that these are people God can connect us to.

“When Saul returned to his home at Gibeah, a group of men whose hearts God had touched went with him.” 1 Samuel 10:26

“From the half-tribe of Manasseh west of the Jordan, 18,000 men were designated by name to help David become king.” 1 Chronicles 12:31

“And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.” Acts 4:23

If we glance through scripture we see a strong connection between fulfilling God’s assignment and having the right people backing spiritually and/or materially. God always assigns people with whom we fulfil our divine assignments per season and those who rejoice with us on good times and encourage us in not so good times. This tells us that there are specific people we must pray into our circles so we work together to fulfil our respective purposes.

It’s also important we accurately discern our role in the lives of people we’re connected to and vice versa. God must be at the center of identifying our company because we don’t know the future and we can’t see the hearts of people. He’s the one who knows both those that are really for us and those the aren’t. Likewise He knows who’s assigned to each level of our journey as well as who we are assigned to.

It may be a difficult experience when some people seem to move on from us, but the critical thing we need the Lord to help us identify is our role in the current season in their lives and vice versa. This helps us stay free of bitterness and offences.

**Prayer:** Lord show me my own company as well as those You’ve connected me to per season so I always fulfil Your purpose in my life.

## Day 8

### Prayer Direction

Prayer is one of the agencies for making what we read in the Bible a reality in our lives. Having gone through this study, let's go into some of the prayer directions we can glean to kickstart supernatural intervention in our lives:

Peter was so deeply asleep he didn't see when light had come. Sometimes we're asleep spiritually and don't see the answer to our prayer even when it's right in front of us: Ask God to wake you up and illuminate every area of darkness

There was an urgency to the angel's interaction as though he was more in a hurry to save Peter than Peter was to be saved: Ask God to answer you speedily and place an urgency in you to fulfil your assignment.

- ✚ It was when Peter got up the chains binding him fell off, not before: Ask God for the boldness to arise and move even in the face of seeming impossibilities or difficulties. Enforce your authority in Christ and command everything holding you back to let you go NOW!
- ✚ We see that Peter didn't fully understand what was happening but he followed the angel: Ask God for the grace to follow completely and obey totally even when you don't fully understand, trusting that He will lead you along the best pathway
- ✚ The same way the gate keepers couldn't hold Peter back, place a demand that every gate keeper holding you back in any way must lose their hold over your release. As it happened with Peter, they will not see when you pass by and will only hear of your victory
- ✚ Command the gates of the city, nation, sector, etc to open to you by itself. Command hard situations give way to you and that rocks pour out rivers of oil for you (Job 29:6)
- ✚ Peter knew exactly where to go upon release: Ask for grace to have a company of people that you can depend on and can also depend on you.
- ✚ Peter's release was so surprising even those praying couldn't believe it: Ask God to let your life be a signpost to His glory and power.
- ✚ The believers were praying fervently for Peter, but they were limited in how they thought God would answer: Ask God for the grace to take the limits off Him. Let Him break protocol for you, remember He's the God who rules in the affairs of men (Daniel 4:17)

Let's not be weary in prayer knowing that God is not a respecter of persons. The one who heard and answered the believers concerning Peter is the same who hears and answers us.

Thank you for completing the study. We'll love to hear from you, so please connect with us on:

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