

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ACTS 11-12

It's called "the turning point."

A lineman picks up a fumble and returns it for a touchdown... a political candidate makes a fatal gaff in a debate... a salesman lands a mammoth account...

The situation takes a sudden 1-80. The landscape changes. *This is what happened in Acts 10...*

God gave Peter a vision that altered the whole scope of Christianity. Prior to this moment, the ancient world viewed Christianity as a sect of Judaism.

The first Christians were Jews - in Jerusalem - living under the Jewish Law. But in Acts 10 God opened the door of salvation to Gentiles. He showed Peter that **His grace is for every race** - both Jews and Gentiles.

At the time, God's people ate from God's menu in Leviticus 11. *Jews kept kosher. Gentiles didn't bother.*

What was eaten and not eaten was a source of Jewish pride. Diet set Jews apart from everyone else.

But it was lunchtime in Joppa, and God shows Peter a picnic blanket full of unclean entrees - all off-limits to Jews. Yet He tells Peter to "pig out." Peter is asked to step over his religious prejudices to obey God's will.

And Peter could see, what God was doing with diet He was doing with humans. In light of the work of Jesus, religion had

become obsolete. Keeping the Law, and its dietary stipulations, no longer mattered.

Salvation was by God's grace through faith in Jesus.

This meant folks didn't have to become Jewish to know God's favor. *Salvation was now open to all men!*

Humans were no longer special and common, or clean and unclean. After the cross the only line of demarcation among men is whether we're "in Christ" or *apart from Him*. The cross was the new crossroads.

And Peter was immediately called on to act on what he'd been shown. This religiously devout Jew goes with Gentiles - to a Gentile city - to the house of a Gentile, **Cornelius** - to speak to a Gentile audience...

Peter tells Cornelius' crowd about Jesus and before he finishes his sermon the Spirit falls on believing hearts. *Without a single person getting circumcised, or hearing a lesson on Sabbath-keeping, or conducting a reading of the Law, or offering a single sacrifice, perhaps over a plate of smoked ham and hog jowls* God saved Gentiles just as He had the Jews - *by faith*.

Salvation was by Christ alone and faith alone.

Acts 10 forever altered the direction of Christianity and the composition of the Church. And as Gentiles, we should be glad! *Because of Peter's vision we can follow Jesus and enjoy pork BBQ all at the same time!*

Peter's vision was good news for Gentiles, but there were Jews who thought his actions were blasphemous.

What was Peter doing ignoring 1500 years of tradition, and running roughshod over the Jewish Law?

Not everyone was happy with Peter. There were angry Jews in Jerusalem who called him in to headquarters to provide an answer for what he'd done.

That's where we pick up the story in Acts 11... "Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"

Recall in Acts 6 Luke tells us that a large number of Jewish priests became believers in Jesus. Obviously, they carried a deep affinity for the principles of Judaism. They were staunch traditionalists.

For centuries you had to be a *child of Abraham* to be a *child of God*. Gentiles who wanted to know God had to join the Jewish community. So what is Peter doing now swinging the door open to Gentiles?

Bigwigs in Jerusalem thought the Gentiles should have to jump through a few Jewish hoops to be saved.

Remember the game we played as kids... Two lines formed facing each other. Everyone locked hands.

One group shouted, "Red Rover, Red Rover, send Sandy right over." Little Sandy would muster a head of steam and race toward the other line to try and break through the wall of interlocked arms and hands.

Imagine, Jesus standing behind the Church at Jerusalem. He's calling, "Red Rover, Red Rover, send the Gentiles right over." And here come the Gentiles, led by Peter and Cornelius, racing toward the church.

Yet the Jews clench their teeth, and lock their arms. They've put up a wall. They're determined to maintain the status quo, and keep the Gentiles out. *And we need to take heed...* Whenever a church tries to keep people *out* whom God has taken *in* they are opposing the Gospel. People of another color, or from a different background, need to be included, not resisted.

These Jews had questioned Peter's actions, but they weren't privy to his vision. So he recounts what he had seen on the rooftop. Verse 4, "But Peter explained *it* to them in order from the beginning, saying: "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me.

When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' But I said, 'Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.' Peter admits he was initially reluctant. He had the same reservations as the Jews.

Verse 9, "But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.'"

Ignoring the dietary laws wasn't Peter's idea, it was God's command. God changed the rules.

God said it was OK to eat bacon and put sausage on your pizza. And He said it three times to hammer home the lesson! Verse 10, **“Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven.”**

The OT Law conditioned the Jews to view all of life as either clean or unclean. It was a grid that governed food, people, days, houses, times of the month, skin conditions. Everything in life was either holy or unholy.

But the cross of Jesus cleared away this distinction.

The Law proved that all men are unclean. The only holy one is Jesus. A new dividing line was drawn. What decides our status now is our relationship with Jesus.

Peter continues his story, **“At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house.”** It was Peter, and six other Jews, along with the three Gentiles who came to fetch him.

In one sense they went just a few miles up the coast from Joppa to Caesarea, but in another sense they were crossing a 1500 year old ocean of precedent.

“And he (the Roman centurion, Cornelius) told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, ‘Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is

Peter, who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.'

God sent an angel to Cornelius. He wanted to save Gentiles. "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning." Just like at Pentecost, it was a sovereign move of God. Peter and his Jewish friends had done nothing special to warranted God's salvation. It was all about grace.

And that's exactly the way it had come to Cornelius.

Verse 16, "Then I remembered the word of the Lord, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' The power of the Spirit is God's gift. Jesus gives it to whomever He chooses.

And "If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

"When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

It was obvious to the church, as well as to Peter, that the salvation of the Gentiles was God's work...

For the moment the opposition was muted.

Yet before we leave this story, please note that Luke saw fit to include it twice in the record for emphasis.

Both Acts 10 and 11 describe this colossal moment.

And he wasn't writing on a 500 gigabyte hard drive, but on a limited parchment scroll. Yet Luke knew what happened at

Cornelius' house was no trivial matter. It was a major breakthrough in the history of redemption.

Verse 19, “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.” This makes us appreciate Peter's step of faith. He went where no Jew had gone before. Peter cut a trail where there wasn't one.

It takes special men to pioneer new works and blaze new trails - it takes clear vision, and decisive action, and unwavering conviction, and courageous faith.

Once the trail seems safe, other people jump on the bandwagon, but in the beginning the pioneers are few.

And such was the case here. There were few Jews willing to follow Peter to take the Gospel to Gentiles. For the most part, the Gospel was spreading from Jew to Jew. Other men needed to climb on the bandwagon.

And there were some branching out. “But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.” Remember, Hellenists were Jews who'd adopted Greek culture and language.

They were Jews, but lived as Gentiles. At least these unnamed Cyprian evangelists were willing to go cross-culture with the Gospel. They targeted secular Jews.

“And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.” Antioch was the capitol of Syria.

It was a city near the Mediterranean coast, 300 miles northeast of Jerusalem. After Rome and Alexandria it was the third largest city in the Roman empire.

Antioch’s population topped half-a-million people.

The city was an architectural wonder. Its main street was paved with marble, and lined with marble columns.

Historians say it was the only road in the ancient world with street lamps. Its splendor earned it the nickname, "Antioch the Golden, Queen of the East."

Antioch of Syria was situated on the Orontes River, 20 miles upstream from the ocean. It was known as the gateway from the eastern Roman Empire to the west.

Antioch was a key hub for ancient travel. The perfect place to launch an outreach to the Gentile world.

As we move on in the book of Acts we find that the church that started in Antioch became the beachhead for Christianity's invasion into the Gentile nations.

And obviously, the Jerusalem believers sensed the significance of a church in Antioch. That’s why they sent Barnabas to encourage this start-up church...

Verse 23 speaks of Barnabas’ arrival in Antioch, “When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should

continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.”

If you're looking for a name to name your son, here's a good one, "*Barnabas*." It means "son of consolation or son of encouragement." Barnabas had befriended Saul when he went to Jerusalem to meet the disciples.

And under Barnabas' leadership, we're told, "And a great many people were added to the Lord." Barnabas did a *really good job in a very wicked city*.

Realize, Antioch was dedicated to the Greek goddess Daphne - who in Greek mythology was seduced by Apollos. The city's seedy legacy spawned the sexual perversion that ran rampant in its streets.

It was a city full of temptation - *yet in desperate need of Jesus*. Barnabas' word to the believers was hang tough, be tenacious, strengthen your grip on Jesus.

Today, we live in similar surroundings. Sex is worshipped. Perversion is commonplace. Ours is an "anything goes" culture. It's "people gone wild." We too need "purpose of heart... to continue with the Lord."

"Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul." The church in Antioch was growing quickly, and Barnabas needed help, so he sought out a man perfectly equipped to reach Gentiles - his buddy Saul.

And all pastors need to mimic Barnabas' example.

Sometimes we're reluctant to admit we need help, and insist on doing it all ourselves - but not Barnabas.

He was humble enough to recruit a man - and share the ministry with someone who ended up being more gifted than himself. The growth in Antioch was a credit to Barnabas' unselfish, servant-hearted leadership.

“And when he had found (Saul), he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” Before Antioch, followers of Jesus went by different names, "believers," "disciples," "receivers of the Word," "servants," "people of the way," to list a few.

But they were first called "*Christians*" at Antioch.

Recently, I ran across a list of famous people who earlier in their life or career changed their name for a more sophisticated, stylish sounding name...

Robert Zimmerman became "*Bob Dylan*."

Marion Morrison went by the name "*John Wayne*."

Leonard Slye came up with the name "*Roy Rogers*."

Everyone knows *Issur Danielovitch*. He's now "*Kirk Douglas*." *Peter Hernandez* is "*Bruno Mars*." And we all know that *Eric Bishop* is now comedian "*Jamie Foxx*."

And finally, *Betty Perski* became "*Lauren Bacall*."

But the believers in Antioch stuck with their uncouth, embarrassing name. "*Christian*" was originally intended as a derogatory term. The suffix "*i-a-n*" means "the party of" - "*Christian*" meant "*the party of Christ*."

This was how the Romans referred to their slaves.

Claudius' slaves were known as the "*Claudians*." Anthony's slaves were said to be the "*Antonians*."

Thus, for believers in Jesus to be labeled "*Christians*" it was meant as an insult, a mockery.

Yet Christians were honored to be slaves of Jesus.

Paul gloried in being a "fool for Christ's sake." Peter later wrote, "Yet if anyone suffers as a *Christian*, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God." We should consider it an privilege to bear shame for Jesus sake.

Verse 27, "And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch." Prophets uttered impromptu, extemporaneous messages from God. They would deliver a *specific message for a specific circumstance*.

The gift of prophecy is a spiritual gift available to us.

"Then one of (the prophets), named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar."

The gift of prophecy is exciting. It's a direct word from God's Spirit. Here's a gift that keeps the church on the edge of its seat - and their ear to the heavens...

But Agabus' prophecy was a warning. Dire economic times were ahead. Agabus foretold of a global famine.

The Jewish historian Josephus mentions this famine in his "*Antiquities of the Jews*." All across the empire communities

were effected. The famine produced high prices and food shortages. People starved to death.

The church though was somewhat insulated.

They shared and took care of each other. Not only from *person to person...* but from *church to church*.

“Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.” Here the church in Antioch decides to help Jerusalem. A daughter church helps the mother-ship.

Often our church has helped pastors and other churches when they’ve fallen on hard times.

You never know when we might need the help!

So they took an offering for the church in Jerusalem.

Verse 30, “This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”

Galatians 6:6 teaches us, “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.”

Antioch understood their debt to the Jewish Christians in Judea. The Jerusalem Church had sent them Barnabas. Now it was time for them to return the favor. They send Barnabas back with a few bucks.

Chapter 12, “Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his hand to harass some from the church.*” When it rains it pours... On top of the famine a wave of persecution also struck the Jerusalem Church.

And the Jewish King Herod was the culprit.

The NT is full of men called “Herod.” The first was *Herod the Great*. His rule ended shortly after Jesus’ birth. His kingdom was divided among his three sons.

One of the sons was named Aristobulous, who had a son named “Agrippa” - who is the Herod here in Acts 12. Herod Agrippa was Herod the Great’s grandson.

This Agrippa was a haughty man. He was schooled in Rome, where he made friends with a guy named Caligula. Later Caligula became emperor, and promoted Agrippa to king of Judea. His friends in high places, and Roman education made Agrippa arrogant.

And he was a shrewd politician. He worked hard to win over the Jews. So when it dawned on him how much they hated Christians, he tried to rack up political points by mounting a crusade against the Church.

Verse 2, “Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.” This was the Apostle James, one of the original twelve. Tradition says he was beheaded.

And his execution no doubt elated the Jews. They couldn’t have been happier. The Jerusalem Post announced Agrippa’s approval rating had climbed 20%.

So he decides to go after the Christian’s ringleader.

“And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also.” He arrests Peter. Agrippa should’ve known this was not the way to keep getting a head! “Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread.” Evidently, Agrippa would’ve killed Peter immediately, if it hadn’t have been the Passover.

“So when he had arrested him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.” The Greek word translated “squads” is the word “*tetrads*” which denoted a group of four soldiers.

Four squads of four soldiers each were dispatched to stand guard over Peter. This was maximum security.

Someone may’ve told Agrippa about the earlier time when the Sanhedrin had arrested Peter, and God sent an angel to bust him out. King Herod wanted to make sure that Peter wasn't going anywhere this time.

So around the clock there were two soldiers chained to Peter - and two more standing watch. As if four soldiers would be a match for a battle-angel from God!

“Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.”

Peter is surrounded by trouble! Literally, his head is on the chopping block. *And what does the Church do?*

They pull out the big guns. They pull out all the stops. Rather than write letters, or picket, or protest, or sue - they prayed! It was the Puritan preacher, Thomas Watson, who wrote, “The angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer that fetched the angel.”

Nothing is more powerful than a praying church!

“And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the

prison.” Put yourself in Peter's sandals... You're awaiting execution on death row. The hangman's due at any moment. You're under heavy guard. There seems to be no possibility of escape...

What would be your disposition? There's one certainty... *you wouldn't be sleeping peacefully!*

The next day Peter is scheduled to get *sawn in two*, and the night before he's *sawing logs*. What amazing peace... Peter had a supernatural composure!

Again Peter is in a storm surrounded by the wind and the waves, but this time he keeps his eyes on Jesus. He remains unshaken. He stays above the situation.

Keep in mind, every miracle recorded in the Bible started out as a problem. *We all need to get your eyes off our circumstances and fix those eyes on Jesus.*

Once you do, God can stop working on your attitude and can start working on the miracle. Peter had learned... Rather than *asking whys*, he's *cutting z's*.

Peter is walking on water again, and enjoying a supernatural peace - *but remember he's not doing it alone*. There's a praying church in his corner!

Verse 7, “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!” Notice, Peter is snoozing so soundly the light doesn't bother him. The angel has to slap him to wake him up... “And his chains fell off *his hands*.”

One commentary makes the observation that throughout the Scriptures angels are always in a hurry.

Only once is God depicted in a hurry - that's when He rushes down the road to greet His prodigal son.

But angels seem to always be in a hurry. *And we can guess why!* If heaven and the presence of God were your home, and you were dispatched to this earth, don't you think you'd want to tie up business as quickly as possible to get home? Angels never dilly-dally!

“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.” You'd think if the angel unlocked the chains on Peter's wrists he could just as easily slip on Peter's shoes for him and wrap his coat around his shoulders. **But there's almost always two parts to a miracle.** God will shoulder the heavy lifting, but He usually gives us a small part to play.

Verse 9, “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.” At first, Peter thought he was dreaming. He's still in that early morning fog between the time you wake up and your first cup of coffee... Peter is pinching himself.

It reminds me of the lady who had a strange dream. She said afterwards, “I dreamed I was eating spaghetti. But when I woke up, my pajama string was gone!”

Verse 10, “When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city,

which opened to them of its own accord.” It was like an electronic door before electricity.

“And they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.” Peter is shaking his head - finally waking up a free man.

“And when Peter had come to himself, he said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and *from* all the expectation of the Jewish people.”

Peter is rescued by another angelic jailbreak! Ole Peter keeps getting thrown into prison, and His God keeps breaking him out. Our Lord is so faithful!

“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.” This was probably the same house that hosted the Last Supper and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. It’s now the site of the prayer meeting where the church asks God to deliver Peter from jail.

“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.” Rhoda was so excited at what God had done, she forgot Peter! Left him at the door. *But that’s the point of prayer - not the answer, but God.*

“But they said to her, “You are beside yourself!”

They didn’t believe it was Peter knocking. They’ve been praying for a jailbreak, *but without a lot of faith!*

“Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, “It is his angel.” Evidently, the early church believed in guardian angels - that everyone has an angel assigned to them. We all have our own heavenly bodyguard.

I’m not sure there’s one angel for every believer, but the Bible does teach, and the early Church definitely believed in the reality of angelic activity in our lives.

Verse 16 brings us back to Peter. “Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened *the door* and saw him, they were astonished.” The Church in Jerusalem had prayed for Peter, but apparently they prayed some pretty puny prayers. Their prayers weren’t laced with much faith, *but at least they prayed!*

Which teaches us a lesson... You don’t have to pray impressive prayers. Jesus said a puny prayer - just the size of a mustard seed - moves mountains! A prayer with a tinge of faith will move the hand of a willing God.

Certainly, God answers mighty prayers of faith, but He answers frail, feeble prayers too. **The only prayer He doesn’t answer is a prayer that was never prayed!**

Verse 17, “But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, “Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.”

This was another James - the brother of Jesus.

He too was a leader in the Jerusalem church... “And he (*that is, Peter*) departed and went to another place.”

“Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.

But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed *there*.”

Remember, the beautiful seaside Caesarea was the Roman capitol of Judea. It served as Herod’s retreat.

“Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king’s personal aide their friend, they asked for peace because their country was supplied with food by the king’s *country*.” Luke gives us the political background for what’s about to happen.

The Phoenicians had bribed Herod’s aide. They sent lobbyists to grease his palm - gain a political favor.

Israel was an agrarian society. Tyre and Sidon were sea merchants. Israel looked to their northern neighbors for trade. The Phoenicians needed Israel for food, so they bribed Blastus to win favors from Herod.

Just goes to prove that what goes in Washington is nothing new. *Herod needed to drain the swamp*.

The problem though is that Herod was the swamp!

“So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them.” This was a political rally held in the seaside theater at Caesarea.

When we go to Israel we stand in the exact spot where Herod sat. You can see the perch for dignitaries.

What a spectacular venue this was and is today! A hundred yards away waves slap the beach.

On that day the sky was clear. The sun was high in the sky. The seats in the theater rose upwards. Today, among the ruins entire upper decks are missing. The original theatre had a seating capacity of 4000 people.

Josephus, records this incident and dates it 44 AD.

He says Agrippa wore a robe made entirely of silver. And he entered the theater early that day. Josephus writes, "At which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those who looked intently upon him." It made their eyes hurt.

Agrippa's silver threads caused Elton John to look like a thrift store shopper. He was full of himself. He was pompous and arrogant. On this day, he tried to dazzle the crowd with beauty and eloquence. He wore an outfit he borrowed from "Dancing With the Stars."

And the people started to chant... "And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"

Here Josephus adds the kicker, "upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery." The crowd that day hailed Agrippa as a god and he does nothing to stop them or set them straight!

Beware, never ever stand in God's place. As the ole saying goes, "Never take the bows for God!" When God is being praised our place is in the shadows!

And what's ironic, nobody took the praise seriously except Agrippa. All the crowd was up to was flattery.

The visitors from Tyre and Sidon were manipulating the king's ego to get a favorable trade agreement.

Someone observed, "Flattery is like bubble gum - enjoy it for a moment, but don't swallow it." Don't fall for flattery! Herod's belly was full of too much of something. He came down with a severe bellyache.

Verse 23 tells us, "Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God.

And he was eaten by worms and died."

That's Luke's play-by-play, but listen to Josephus for the color commentary. He's more graphic! "A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner... He was carried into the palace... and rested in a high chamber... and when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age..."

How ironic, the crowd in theatre said he was divine, immortal - yet just five days later and he was dead.

Herod's plight is a commentary on Isaiah 42:8. God declares, "I am the LORD, that is my name; and my glory I will not give to another." It should make us all *sick to our stomach* when someone steals God's glory!

Verse 24, "But the word of God grew and multiplied."

At the beginning of chapter 12 Agrippa is cutting down Christians, and the Church is behind closed doors. At the end

of the chapter this same Agrippa is cut down himself, and the word of God has multiplied.

We need to always look past whoever might be sitting on the earthly throne to God's throne in heaven. God is the one who ultimately calls the shots.

Years later Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:12, "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." I'm sure he was thinking of this day.

“And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.”

Barnabas and Saul had delivered an offering - some famine relief - to the church at Jerusalem.

Now they return to Antioch with Mark, *but not for long*. In Acts 13 the outreach shifts from the Jews to the Gentiles, and Saul is about to take center-stage.