

GOD'S UNEXPECTED PRESENCE III

Peter's jailbreak Acts 12: 1-11

The book of Acts has some amazing stories recorded therein. One thing for sure it was an exciting time to be a Christian in some parts but downright deadly in other areas. The sick were healed; the dead were raised again to life, and best of all, scores of souls saved. A small band of men reordered the whole world in a few centuries by preaching a simple message about Jesus. Acts 12 records one of the dramatic episodes of deliverance. It was a systematic plan of attack: during a Jewish feast, Herod knew that Jewish leadership and some people were adamantly opposed to the teachings of the Gospel, so he used their anxiety to lay his hands on Christians for evil. As we read in Acts 9, if you put forth your hands to touch Christians you are in fact reaching forth to attack the Lord Jesus—Act 9:5.

James had been killed with a sword. This means he was beheaded as a traitor and not treated as a blasphemer. I can still remember the first beheading I witnesses in Saudi Arabia. The horror of it all yet remains with me. Observing how pleased the Jewish sect was with a Christian's death, Herod apprehended Peter too. There had to have been some idea as to who the leaders of the early church were and surely Roman spies were everywhere. Yet when they took Peter, the church went to prayer. They certainly prayed for James also. But here we learn to pray again and again. Even if it does not work out as you desire the first time: keep praying!

Because the saints prayed, Peter could rest. Anyone with sense would wonder how someone could sleep through a period of confinement when in a few hours or days one will face execution. In truth, the only ones who know this are those who have been imprisoned for nothing more than loving Jesus. The spirit that animated the Jews of the first century (an anti-Christ spirit mentioned in I John) is still with us now in the world in the form of any religion or ideology which is opposed to Jesus. Peter slept and an angel came and awakened him. Startled but finding it all to be surreal, he moved slowly and cautiously. But in the end he found himself standing outside of the prison fully clothed and very free.

It is amazing the things God will do when we least expect it. It is not that we do not believe but that we cannot perceive-(I Cor. 2:9).