

Acts 069
Angels Among Us
Acts 12:5-11
March 5, 2025
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Let's take our Bibles this evening and open them to Acts 12:5. Last week we started to get into the 12th chapter of the Book of Acts, which is a contrast, if you will, to the beauty that you see in Acts 11. In Acts 11 you see the Jerusalem church praising God because the gospel is now open to the Gentiles; you see the growth and the benevolence of the church at Antioch up north; and then you get to Acts 12, and it is one of those "back to the ranch" kind of chapters.

Acts 12 is a record of first-century Israel and its hatred for Jesus. When I say that, I am talking about the nation's leadership. That hatred for Jesus and for the early church leads to the fourth persecution of the Jerusalem church by the Israeli authorities.

Fourth Persecution of Jerusalem Church (Acts 12:1-25)

- I. James' Death (12:1-2)
- II. Peter's Imprisonment (12:3-5)
- III. Peter's Deliverance (12:6-17)
- IV. Results of Peter's Escape (12:18-25)

This chapter has four parts. You have the death of James (Acts 12:1-2); Peter's imprisonment (Acts 12:3-5); and then we are going to see Peter miraculously escape from prison (Acts 12:6-17); and by the time you get to the end of the chapter, you see the good results of Peter's escape (Acts 12:18-25).

Acts 12:1-2 is tough because what happened there is first-century Israel took out an apostle—they just had him martyred. There have been a lot of generic persecutions against the church by Israel up to this point, but this is the first time they have killed an apostle (his name was James). This particular James is the brother of John, one of the sons of Zebedee, called the "Sons of Thunder."

Peter's Imprisonment (12:3-5)

- A. Peter's arrest (3)
- B. Peter's incarceration (4)
- C. Church's reaction (5)
 - 1. Circumstances (5a)
 - 2. Prayer (5b)

He is killed and then they take the most prominent apostle up to this point in time, and they throw him in prison with the intent of killing him (Acts 12:3-5). They arrest him (Acts 12:3); and they incarcerate him (Acts 12:4).

The incarceration is pretty rigorous. He is assigned to four squads of soldiers to guard him. There are four soldiers on him that rotate every six hours, so that he is watched over constantly by these soldiers—two are chained to him, and the other two are watching him. He is incarcerated and he is going to be killed—he is scheduled for execution by Herod Agrippa I, who is orchestrating all of this.

If you look at Acts 12:3, it says,

"...Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread."

Then if you look down at Acts 12:4, it says,

"... intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people."

The Jews wanted him dead and Herod knew that this pleased the Jews if he would execute Peter just like he executed James. He is waiting for the religious cycle to run its course. There is going to be the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover. Once all of that is over, he is going to bring Peter before the Jews to be executed. Peter is a marked man. From a human perspective, it looks like he is going to die a very early death, just as his contemporary and colleague, fellow apostle James experienced martyrdom back there in Acts 12:1-2. It is a pretty dark situation, spiritually speaking.

What is the rest of the church in Jerusalem doing? They are protesting, sending emails, complaining to their congressmen and women (congressperson). No, none of that—they are in prayer. It is interesting how the early church saw prayer as a first resort in times of emergency, when our typical M.O. is to look at prayer as a last resort.

I am like that in my own life. When I get into trouble, I try to figure my way out of it. Then when I cannot figure my way out of it, I say, "Well, I guess I had better pray." Prayer is my last option. "It is really getting bad. I need to pray." However, when you look at the early church here, prayer was their first option.

Church's Reaction (12:5)

1. Circumstances (5a)
2. Prayer (5b)

You see their prayer life in Acts 12:5, where we pick it up from last time. First, the circumstances for the prayer: *"So Peter was kept in the prison."* He is being kept until after Unleavened Bread, Passover, to be martyred, as James was.

Look at the reaction of the church in Acts 12:5:

"...but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God."

That is intercessory prayer, where you are praying on behalf of a third party—you are praying to God for someone else—intercessory prayer. *"But prayer for him was being made fervently by the Church to God."* It was not just prayer, but it was fervent prayer.

When Paul talks about prayer, as you read his epistles, he talks about agonizing in prayer. So there is prayer, but there is a certain level that you can go to where you are literally in

agony before the Lord, asking Him to move His hand. That is the type of thing that the early church moved into here. That is what is meant by the English translation (NASB95) of the word "fervently." They weren't just praying, but they were praying fervently.

That reminds me of what the Lord's half brother, James, would write in James 5:16. It says,

"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

Then he gives, of course, Elijah as an example, who was able to change meteorology. Elijah was able to change weather simply by praying. Even though Elijah was a man just like us—he had the same human limitations we have; the same sin nature we have; he put his shoes on one foot at a time, just like we do. Yet, this normal person could change weather patterns as he petitioned God for that.

It rained for three and a half years; and then there was a drought for three and a half years, which was interrupted, finally, by prayer. That is who James uses as an example of fervent prayer in James 5:16-17. It is a great example for us in terms of the power of prayer; and that is what the church here is doing on behalf of Peter.

Then, as you might expect, Peter is delivered from prison (Acts 12:6-17). You will notice how the Lord dealt with James and Peter differently. James was allowed to experience martyrdom; Peter, on the other hand, was delivered from prison. Why was James martyred and Peter delivered? I do not know if I know the answer to that other than Jesus made a prophecy about Peter and said of Peter in John 21:18:

"...when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go."

Peter was not old yet, and it was not time for the fulfillment of that prophecy. Peter had to be kept alive so that that prophecy in John 21 could be fulfilled.

It is very interesting how God does not treat everybody the exact same way. He loves us all the same—we all have the same value before Him—but there is a plan for James (it was martyrdom at this particular point), and there was a plan for Peter, which was a miraculous escape.

One of the problems we get ourselves into as Christians is that we like to look over the shoulder and compare ourselves to other people. That is a part of our human nature that does that. We really should not be that way as Christians, because God's plan for you could be completely and totally different from the person you are sitting next to.

It reminds me of Jesus telling Peter in John 21:18,

"When you were younger, you did what you wanted. When you are old, they are going to take you to where you do not want to go."

Speaking of Peter's martyrdom, most believe this was fulfilled as he was crucified upside down, according to church tradition, about 30 years later around A.D. 67.

When Jesus made that prophecy about Peter in John 21, Peter looked over at John, and said of John to Jesus. "Well, what is going to happen to him?" Jesus basically said, "It is none of your business."

"If I want him to remain alive until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me" (John 21:22).

"You" is singular, speaking to Peter. "Do not worry about My plan for John. What you need to worry about is pressing into your purpose that I have for you."

Of course, John was treated completely differently from Peter. Peter was executed in AD 67. According to tradition, most believe he was crucified upside down. John, by contrast, was kept alive. They tried to kill John several times. The church fathers talk about how they tried to boil John in oil, but he would not die. He was a very stubborn person, I guess, so they threw him out on this island called Patmos. (This is what Domitian did to people, when you look at the extra-biblical evidence of how Domitian treated rebels in Rome.)

They threw John out on this island, and left him out there to die—marooned him out there. That was God's purpose for him, because it was there that John would receive a vision that we call the Book of Revelation. Jesus knew exactly what He was going to do with John; He knew exactly what He was going to do with Peter; He knew exactly what He was going to do with James; and He knows exactly what He is going to do with you, and with me, and with the person you are sitting next to.

We should not get into this business of comparing ourselves to other people when God has totally different plans and programs for each of our lives. Peter is treated in one way; he is going to escape from prison. James is treated a different way; he has already been executed.

We come now to Acts 12:6-17, where it looks like there is no way Peter is going to get out of this. Being stationed by these guards (four per shift, in six hour shifts), and yet Peter will escape. We see here part three of the chapter: Peter's miraculous deliverance. We see Peter's escape (Acts 12:6-11). Then once he gets out of jail, he heads to a house that is owned by someone named Mary. It is there that he reunites with the other apostles (Acts 12:12-17).

Peter's Deliverance (12:6-17)

A. Peter's Escape (12:6-11)

1. Circumstances (6)
2. Preparation (7-8)
3. Escape (9-10)
4. Peter's realization (11)

Notice first of all, his escape. Look at the circumstances in Acts 12:6:

"On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward. Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison."

That is a strange way to act when you know you are about to be executed.

The first thing you notice here is this:

"On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward."

That refers back to the end of Acts 12:4 with Herod Agrippa's intention when he arrested Peter:

"intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people."

As we talked about last time, Herod Agrippa was a half-breed Edomite in his genetics. Deuteronomy 17:15 says that the king over Israel should be one of your own. If you are Jewish (which they were), if they were of the physical descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (which they were), then the king over them should have been full Israeli. However, Herod was not.

Because of this, Herod was always insecure about his own throne. (All the Herods were.) Remember, this is the grandson of Herod the Great. Herod the Great was the Herod that we read about in the birth of Christ, who was very, very worried about the Magi coming from the East and wanting to know where the King of the Jews was going to be born. He wanted to know where this king was going to be born so that he could kill him, because he was very insecure over his own throne.

The Herodian dynasty was a puppet regime controlled by Rome. They were Edomite—they did not fulfill Deuteronomy 17:15—and they were always worried that the Jews were going to revolt against them at any moment. As a result, they did whatever they could to make the Jews happy.

The reason that Herod wants to bring Peter out to be killed is because he knew it would make the Jewish people happy. You see that in Acts 12:3:

"When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also."

That is why he is going to roll Peter out at just the right time—after Unleavened Bread and Passover—when all of that is over he is going to have him martyred, just like James was martyred.

Peter, knowing this in prison, was sleeping. Would you be sleeping knowing you were about to die? That certainly adds a lot of weight to what Peter writes in his epistle much later, about three decades later in 1 Peter 5:7:

"casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."

Isn't it nice that the person that tells us to cast our anxiety upon God is a person who did it himself? It is one thing to read 1 Peter 5:7 and say, "That is nice. We should cast our anxiety on the Lord because He cares for us." It is a totally different matter to read those words from a guy who was marked for martyrdom and was sleeping like a baby. Here is a guy that really practiced what he preached.

Another reason that Peter is sleeping is that Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is inside of him. Do you remember what Jesus did during the storm on the Sea of Galilee? What was He doing? He was asleep. Mark 4:38 says,

"Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?'"

Then Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves, and it became calm and placid there on the Sea of Galilee. Then He rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith, because they should have believed what He said. He said, "We are going to the other side." If He is saying, "We are going to the other side some way, somehow," then a storm is not an impediment.

Jesus is asleep, the disciples are panicking, and then Jesus rebukes the wind and the waves. Now the disciples are really afraid, because what kind of man can do that, can rebuke the wind and the waves? "Who are we dealing with here?" They are growing in their understanding of exactly who Jesus is. It is one thing to be afraid of the wind and the waves; it is another thing to be afraid of the guy who speaks and the wind and the waves stop.

This is a tremendous example that Jesus gives here, about how we can be calm in the midst of the storms of life. Jesus was calm in the midst of a physical storm. Pray tell, where is Jesus right now? To some extent He is inside of you through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 2:20 Paul is going to write,

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."

Do you see that? The same guy that was asleep in the midst of a storm, now through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, is inside of Peter and Paul, and is inside of you, which is what gives us the ability to be calm in the midst of the storms of life. It is not us doing it; it is us drawing upon the resources of Jesus, who is like that anyways. That is how you, as a Christian, can walk through tribulations and trials and circumstances that would put unbelievers into fear. You can be calm in the midst of it because it is not you doing it—it is Jesus living inside of you that is doing it. You are just relying upon His strength, because your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

This is what Paul means when he says things like this in Philippians 4:6-7:

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

What does he mean, "the peace of God that surpasses all comprehension"? It is tranquility in the midst of a storm, as Jesus demonstrated. As that same Jesus is living His life out now through Peter, Peter (marked for execution) is sleeping like a baby. See how this works? This is the power of the Spirit. It is mentioned among the fruit of the Spirit—Peace. It is the Greek word "eirene."

What is God called in Isaiah 9:6-7? He is called the coming Messiah, the Prince of Peace. If He is the Prince of Peace, then one of the things He wants to do is to bring into the life of the Christian an inner sense of calmness that is not contingent upon external circumstances. The world will let you have peace as long as the external circumstances are working out; but what happens when you lose the job, finances run low, you get a negative report from the doctor, a relationship goes astray, or your health starts to decline? What do you do then?

The world will say, "Go to the bar and fill your mind with some kind of mind-altering substance to help you get through it." When a Christian reaches for the bottle, the Holy Spirit says, "You do not need that. What you need is Me living out My life through you. I am inside of you via the power of the Holy Spirit. I already demonstrated what I do in the midst of a storm. I just become calm and fall asleep."

That is how we are to walk out the Christian life, to the point where the world cannot even figure out what is wrong with us. It does not make any sense to them, because they are saying, "You can only have internal peace as long as there is external peace." We all know that formula does not work well, because we are living in a fallen world where things go awry in our lives, constantly. I do not have to push the panic button every time something goes awry. I could just say, "Lord, I am nervous about this. I am worried about it, but I am just going to turn it over to You."

Philippians 4:6-7 is a good one to memorize. I cannot tell you how many somewhat sleepless nights I used to have, worried about this or worried about that; but then I memorized Philippians 4:6-7. Now when I wake up at night worried, or I am trying to go to bed at night worried, I will just recite from memory Philippians 4:6-7.

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

You would not believe how fast I fall asleep when I do that. It is even better than taking a pill or something like that. I do not need the pill, I just need to calm down. God has given us promises and resources by which we can calm down. We can be just like Peter, sound asleep, although he is marked for martyrdom.

There is something else that Jesus said to Peter, which may also explain why he is sleeping. Peter knows he is not going to be martyred. I made reference to this a few moments ago: in his post-resurrection ministry, Jesus said this to Peter,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.' Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me'" (John 21:18-19).

That is when Peter looked at John and said, "What is going to happen to him?" Jesus basically said, "That is none of your business; you follow Me."

I think Peter, in the back of his mind, knew he was not going to die here. He was not going to be martyred, because if he was martyred, it would violate this prophecy—he has to grow old first, and then be taken to where he does not want to go. He is not old yet.

It is clear, as you look at the end of Acts 12:6, that Luke wants to communicate that there is no explanation for this escape that is about to happen, other than God. It says at the end of Acts 12:6,

"Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison."

If he is going to escape, it has to be a God thing because, humanly speaking, it is impossible for him to get out of this. Not even Houdini could get out of this.

He was being guarded around the clock (and it may have something to do with the fact that Herod already knew he had escaped from prison in Acts 5). It is as if Herod Agrippa is saying, "We are not going to let that happen again. We are going to assign him four guards every six hours." So, if Peter is going to get out, it has got to be God. And guess what? God shows up through one of his ministering servants called an angel.

Preparation (12:7-8)

- a. Angelic Visitation (12:7)
 - i. Arrival (7a)
 - ii. Awakening (7b)
 - iii. Removal of chains (7c)
- b. Instructions (12:8)
 - i. Gird (8a)
 - ii. Sandals (8b)
 - iii. Garments (8c)

We have an angelic visitation here in Acts 12:7. You have the arrival of the angel; the angel has to wake Peter up; and then the angel removes Peter's chains. Notice the arrival of the angel (Acts 12:7):

"And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, 'Get up quickly.' And his chains fell off his hands."

It is a pretty good alarm clock right there—an angel pokes you in the side, or strikes you in the side. You see the arrival of the angel (Acts 12:7): *"And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared, and a light shone in the cell."*

Here is where we can get a little bit into the doctrine of angels. The Bible talks about angels all over the place. When I was teaching at the College of Biblical Studies, I taught a class called "Angels, Church, and Prophecy." Every semester I was interacting with the massive amount of detail in the Bible concerning angels. If you are a first-timer with the

doctrine of angels, I recommend Billy Graham's book. He wrote a wonderful book on angels describing everywhere angels appear in Scripture—"Angels: God's Secret Agents." Renald Showers's book, "Those Invisible Spirits Called Angels," is also a great book on the subject.

When you get into the subject of angelology, it is stunning how much of the Bible is devoted to angels. Angels help us constantly. Hebrews 1:14 says of angels,

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?"

There, salvation is our future glorification. As we are being fast-tracked to glory—and you know that as a Christian, you are on a fast track to glorification (Romans 8)—as you are moving towards your final destination, living in this fallen world, God is dispatching angels constantly to help us and to serve us.

They are ministering spirits in the sense that they are invisible—we cannot see them—but God uses them all the time. He particularly uses them in the life of the Christian as we move into glorification, reaching our final destiny. How many angels are there? They are innumerable. There are so many, and that is why they are called stars many times. They are called that in Job and Revelation 12.

I would ask you, "How many stars are there?" If you go down through history, the philosophers all thought that they could count the stars. What a laugh that was, because now with the Hubble telescope and all of the things that we have, we know that there are so many stars in our solar system and then in the galaxy that you cannot even, from a human perspective, number them. I have a tendency to think angels are the same way. It is like God taking Abraham outside and saying, *"Count the stars, if you are able to count them"* (Genesis 15:5); meaning you cannot. That is why angels are called stars—they are innumerable.

We know that a third of the angels fell with Lucifer's rebellion. Those fallen angels, I believe, are what the New Testament refers to as demons; but the nice thing about it is two thirds of them are on our side. Isn't that a comforting thought? Of all of the angels out there, two thirds of them are under God's authority. Many of them are dispatched to assist us as we inherit future glorification. Here is just one example of it:

"And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell" (Acts 12:7).

What is this light business? I think it has something to do with the Shekinah glory of God. We know from 1 Timothy 6:16 that God is clothed in *"unapproachable light."* In fact, if you go to the beginning of the Bible, you will see light. *"Then God said, 'Let there be light'"* (Genesis 1:3), yet the sun, the moon, and the stars do not even come into existence until the fourth day of Creation. If the light came into existence on day one, before the fourth day of Creation, then God was exhibiting light without the help of the sun, the moon, and the stars.

That is the folly of people throughout biblical history: worshiping the sun, the moon, and the stars. That is condemned in Deuteronomy 4:19, because God is the source of light. He does not need the sun; He does not need the moon; He does not need the stars. He chooses to use them, but He does not need them. In fact, when you go to the end of the Bible you will discover that there is no sun in the eternal state (Revelation 21-22). Did you know that? There is no S-U-N because the S-O-N will illuminate everything.

God is always described as being clothed in light—His Shekinah glory—it does not really stand to question as to why one of His agents, an angel, would appear in Peter's jail cell and he would be accompanied by light. By the way, Satan hates this. Satan wants to be God, so he masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). Here is light in the pure sense—God is light. When the angel that works for God shows up in Peter's cell, light is illuminated all around the cell.

However, the light does not wake Peter up, so the angel has to strike him. He must have been a heavy sleeper. It says

"And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared, and light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, 'Get up quickly.' And his chains fell off." (Acts 12:7)

Not to do too much of an excursus on this, but that word quickly becomes important. It is the Greek word "tachos," as in a tachometer that measures speed in your automobile. That word "tachos" is a big deal because we today have preterists. Have you heard of preterists? These are people that think the Book of Revelation already happened—R.C. Sproul, N.T. Wright, Hank Hanegraaff, and Kenneth Gentry, among others.

Preterism Advocates

Recent Preterist Commentators

R.C. Sproul
N.T. Wright
Scott Hahn
J. Massyngbaerde Ford
David Chilton
Hank Hanegraaff
Kenneth Gentry

There is full preterism, meaning that all of the Book of Revelation already happened; and there is partial preterism, meaning that most of the Book of Revelation already happened. Their big argument is the word "tachos."

The word "tachos" will show up in Revelation 1:1; 2:16; 3:11; 22:6, 7, 12, 20. The preterists will say, "If John was told that these things are going to come to pass "tachos" (meaning shortly or quickly), then the Book of Revelation had to have been fulfilled within the lifetime of the apostles." They think that Nero was the Antichrist, and everything that we take futuristically they put it into the past. Their big argument is that these things had to have been fulfilled in the lifetime of John.

As a result, they take a very strange date of the Book of Revelation, in the mid AD 60s, and they try to argue that the Book of Revelation was fulfilled when Rome sacked Jerusalem in AD 70. There is no future Antichrist; there is no coming New World Order. That is all in the past. Obviously, they have to greatly allegorize the Book of Revelation to get that to work. How does the whole sea turning blood red be in AD 70? They say, "John is being given a vision hyperbolically." They really make a big deal out of this word, "tachos," because they think "tachos" has to mean "time, chronology," and it has to be fulfilled within John's lifetime.

<p align="center">"TIME-TEXTS" IN REVELATION R.C. Sproul, The Last Days According to Jesus, p.139</p>	
<u>SHORTLY, QUICKLY</u> "TACOS"	
1:1	...Things which must shortly take place
2:16	Repent, or else I will come to you quickly.
3:11	Behold, I come quickly!
22:6	...Which must shortly take place.
22:7	Behold, I come quickly!
22:12	Behold, I am coming quickly!
22:20	Surely, I am coming quickly!
<u>NEAR, AT HAND</u> "ENGYS"	
1:3	The time is near.
22:10	The time is at hand.
<u>ABOUT TO, ON THE POINT OF</u> "MELLŌ"	
1:19	Write...the things that are about to take place.
3:10	...the hour of trial...is about to come upon the whole world.

The preterists will look at the word "tachos" chronologically, but there is a completely different way to look at the word "tachos." You can look at it as an adverb. An adverb modifies a verb, and in English adverbs typically end in -ly. For example, "Joe ran quickly." "Ran" is the verb, "quickly" describes how Joe ran. He ran fast. It is not so much a statement of chronology, as it is a statement of an adverbial use of "tachos."

You go to fill up your car with gas, you put your credit card in there, and it will say "remove card quickly." It does not mean that if you do not remove the card within the next half of a second, it is going to be stuck there forever. It is not talking about chronology, it is talking about the speed at which the card is removed. In other words, when you remove your

card, do not do it slowly, do it quickly. That is an example of how "quickly" can be used as an adverb.

I think that is how "tachos" is being used in Acts 12:7:

"and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, 'Get up quickly.'"

In other words, as you are getting up, do it fast. He is not using it chronologically, he is using it as an adverb. That defeats the whole preterist argument, does it not?

When Revelation 1:1 uses this word "tachos," it does not mean that these prophecies have to be fulfilled within John's lifetime or lifespan. What it means is, when the prophecies start to happen, they are going to happen in rapid succession. The Book of Revelation could easily be a prophecy about something 2,000 years into the future (which is what we largely believe). It is not saying that the Book of Revelation had to happen within John's lifetime. It is saying that when the events of the Book of Revelation happen, they are going to happen quickly—they are going to happen fast. That is how "tachos" is used as an adverb.

This explains why the Book of Revelation keeps saying, "Repent now," because once these events happen, they are going to be so sudden that you are not going to have time to repent. I think that is how "tachos" is used here. It is not used in a chronological way; it is used in an adverbial way. *"Get up quickly."* That debunks the whole preterist interpretation.

I go into little things like this because preterism is all over YouTube; it is all over the internet. A lot of people are sucked into it, and the preterist gets in front of the camera, and says, "It says 'quickly,' so it had to happen within John's lifespan." "Not necessarily, Mr. Preterist. "Tachos" can be used as an adverb, because that is how it is used in Acts 12:7: *"Get up quickly."*

The end of Acts 12:7 says,

"And the chains fell off his hands."

You see what God just did there with Peter? "You have to obey Me first before you see results." The chains did not fall off first, and then the command was given to get up quickly. It is the other way around: "Get up quickly," and then the chains fell off.

Many times, when God prompts us to do something He wants us to obey Him first and then trust Him with the results. If He prompts you to go share your faith with your neighbor, you may be waiting around for a sign as if the neighbor is going to come out of the house and say, "Hey, can you come over and share the gospel with me?" It does not work that way.

What God says is, "Step out and obey Me first, and then trust Me for the results." So, you step out and obey God, and God does a work. He opens the person's heart, they receive the gospel, and they get saved. You did not know on the front end that was the way it was going to work, because God is looking for a step of obedience.

It is a lot like Joshua crossing the Jordan River. He was told to go out into the water, and then the waters started to abate. They did not abate at first, which is the way I would have preferred it. "God, if you want me to step out in the water, cause the waters to part first." "No, it does not work that way. You step out and obey Me, and then trust me with the results." Only then the water started to abate. That is how Peter is being dealt with here. He had to get up first—and get up quickly—then the chains fell off.

The chains falling off is a great metaphor for the Christian life, isn't it? Isn't that what Christianity is? The chains fall off.

John 8:32:

"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

John 8:36:

"So if the son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

Second Corinthians 3:17:

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Jesus is not about incarcerating people; He is about emancipating people in every way that a human being could be emancipated from sin, from all kinds of things that chain us down. Of course, I am using the word "chains" metaphorically, and they are being used literally here; but I find that to be a great description of the Christian life.

We have the angelic visitation, and then we have some specific instructions given to Peter in Acts 12:8:

"And the angel said to him, 'Gird yourself and put on your sandals.' And he did so. And he said to him, 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.'"

Peter is a smart guy—he did what he was told.

The first thing the angel says is, "Gird yourself." The verb for "gird" that is used here is "zonnyimi." It is only used in one other place in the whole New Testament. It is used in John 21:18-19, in the verse I read to you earlier, where Jesus said,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself"—that is the verb "zonnyimi"—"and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you to where you do not wish to go."

Those are words that Jesus spoke to Peter, so it is interesting that the only other time that the verb "gird" is used is in another conversation that Jesus had earlier with Peter.

"And the angel said to him, 'Gird yourself and put on your sandals.' And he did so. And he said to him, 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me'" (Acts 12:8).

Now comes the actual escape (Acts 12:9-10).

Peter's Escape (9-10)

- a. Peter's state of mind (9)
- b. Peter's exit (10)
 - i. 1st guard (10a)
 - ii. 2nd guard (10b)
 - iii. Gate (10c)
 - iv. Angelic departure (10d)

First of all, we have a statement about Peter's state of mind as this is happening. Acts 12:9 says,

"And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision."

Peter wasn't sure. "Is this a dream, is this a vision, or is this really an angel talking to me, telling me to leave prison?" Why was Peter confused here? Because when God spoke to Peter in Acts 10 it was a vision. Do you remember the vision with the sheep and the animals in Acts 10? When Peter saw that, he fell into a trance. That was not an actual sheet in his reality; that was something that he saw in a vision.

Acts 10:10 says,

"But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance."

Acts 10:17 says,

"While Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate."

In Acts 10:10 it says that he was in a trance. In Acts 10:17, with the sheet, it is clearly called a vision. Now he is wondering, "Is this another vision or am I literally being escorted out of this prison by a real angel?" That is what he is grappling with. It is an honest inquiry, but he is going to learn very fast that this is actually real. This is a real angel taking him out of a real prison, and that becomes clear in Acts 12:10 as you see a description of Peter's exit.

There are several guards he has to get through—the first guard, the second guard, the gate. Only after Peter gets through all three does the angel depart. Notice Acts 12:10:

"When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him."

He gets through the first guard. Remember, this is a guy that has four guards on him, six hours per shift. He gets through guard one; he gets through guard two; and then he gets

to the gate of the prison and the door opens automatically. It says, *"[it] opened by itself."* The Greek word translated "by itself" is the word "automatos," where we get the word "automatic." It is like going to the store and you do not have to open the glass doors—the sensor picks up the signal and the doors open automatically. That is what happened to Peter without all the camera stuff. It was an automatic door that God opened through an angel.

Do not ever doubt that God can open doors in your life. Maybe you will get to walk through a physical door that opens; or maybe it will be an opportunity that opens up. It is like what the Lord said to the church at Philadelphia: "What I have opened up—the door I have opened for you, and what I have placed before you (a little group)—is a giant door of opportunity that no man can shut."

Of course, Jesus describes Himself as the door, opening the gate of salvation to the human race; but this is a physical door. Peter just steps in the right place, and the thing "automatos"—opens automatically. Then the angel leaves. I would be saying, "We are just getting going here. Where are you going?"

You see at the end of Acts 12:10 and it says,

"... and immediately, the angel departed from him."

Why would the angel leave? Because the angel is not needed anymore. This is how God uses angels. They are not around us 24/7; they are there when needed, and when not needed anymore there is no need for him to be around.

Do not get weird—do not get into angel worship and wanting to talk to angels. Do not get your theology from the movies. Do you know the TV series "Touched by an Angel"? I remember when that series came out, it was angelmania. Everybody wanted to talk to an angel, touch an angel. Why would you do that when you can talk to the Creator, God?

Angels are just agents—supernatural agents, more powerful than we are, but worship God. Two times in the Book of Revelation the angel has to tell John this, because John is so enthralled by the vision that he has seen (Which we call the Book of Revelation) that he wants to worship the angel. The angel in Revelation 19:10 says, "Knock it off! I am a fellow servant." Then again, in Revelation 22, John wants to worship the angel, and the angel says, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant."

It is interesting how John, in his little epistle, in 1 John 5:21 says,

"Little children, guard yourselves from idols."

John himself became an idolater. He started to worship an angel twice instead of the Lord, and he had to be rebuked by the angel.

This is one of the ways to determine that some of the angelic manifestations in the Old Testament are not just angels, but they are the Angel of the Lord, a preincarnate appearance of Jesus—Jesus before the manger. If you read Ron Rhodes's book, "Jesus Before the Manger," he will give you all the examples where the Angel of the Lord

appeared. Each instance could very well be a theophany, or a Christophany, or a preincarnate appearance of Jesus (all called the Angel of the Lord).

You know it is not an ordinary angel when the angel receives worship. An ordinary angel will not receive worship. John tried to worship an ordinary angel twice, and was rebuked twice for it; but in Joshua 5 you will see an angel there, as the children of Israel are entering the land. Joshua worships the angel, and the angel does not rebuke Joshua. You are not dealing with an ordinary angel there, you are dealing with a theophany, or a Christophany, or a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ.

The angel leaves, and then Peter figures out that this is no dream, this is no vision—this really happened. You see that in Acts 12:11, related to Peter's realization. He figures out, number one, that God used an angel to get him out of jail; and number two, that angel actually delivered him from Herod and the Jews.

Herod Agrippa I was ready to kill Peter, because Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread had run its course, and Herod was trying to make the Jews happy by having Peter martyred. Peter figures out that, not only did an angel just get him out of jail, but it also delivered him from Herod and the Jews.

Look at Acts 12:11. It says,

"When Peter came to himself, he said, 'Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel.'"

"This is not what happened in Acts 10. This is not a trance; this is not a dream; this is not a vision. There really is an angel that woke me up." Sometimes I will wake up and I will not know I have woken up. Has that ever happened to you? I will be in a deep sleep, and I will wake up and look around and think to myself, "Am I really awake?" Those kinds of things can help you understand where Peter is coming from. He wakes up and he wants to know if he is really awake, particularly when he has seen some visions earlier.

Now he figures out that he was awake, he was sprung from prison, and God dispatched an angel to help him in his time of need. That need is over, so the angel leaves. Peter realizes he has been delivered from Herod and the Jews. Acts 12:11:

"...and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." "I have been delivered from Herod, who was seeking to please the Jews by having me executed."

If you go back to Acts 12:3, it says, *"When he saw it pleased the Jews."* Herod, not being fully Jewish, is trying to make the Jews happy so that they will not revolt against his throne (he is part of the puppet Herodian dynasty). He figured out one of the ways he could make them happy is to kill Peter, just like he killed James.

This shows you the guilt of first-century Israel. It shows you why God is raising up the church, which consists of anyone who is trusting in the Messiah, whom national Israel rejected. Why is God raising up the church? Because He cannot use Israel at this point.

God never leaves the earth without a witness of Himself, so He raised up a new man called "the church."

He will use Israel again, yet future; but for this generation, nationally, it is over. They are careening off into AD 70 discipline. The fact that the Jews have this bloodlust to see Peter dead, in stark contrast to the beauty of the church at Antioch in the prior chapter, shows you why God is taking His hand off first-century Israel. They are going into timeout for 2,000 years, and they are still in timeout—in a state of blindness.

Of course, the day is going to come, post-rapture, when their blindness will be lifted, but in the meantime they are in a state of blindness. This bloodlust that they have to see Herod martyr Peter, just like he did James, explains why the nation is in the condition that it is in here and has been in for the last 2,000 years.