

# Is This Really Happening? (Acts 12:1-24)

What do you do when an egomaniac who dresses like a rock star is so threatened by the message about Jesus he kills one of your leaders and imprisons another? Filled with tragedy and triumph, irony and humor, Acts 12 shows us what the First Followers of Jesus did when a political leader turned violent against them. It also shows us who's really in control when everything seems out of control.

## 1. Violent Opposition (Acts 12:1-4)

King Herod tries to shut down the message about King Jesus.  
James (bro of John, a disciple of Jesus and Apostle of the church) is dead!  
Peter is in prison awaiting a public trial that will most likely lead to his public execution.  
Herod actually thinks the fate of the church is in his hands.

## 2. Intense Prayer (Acts 12:5)

This was EARNEST prayer = literally means "stretched out" - the idea here is continuous, wholehearted, urgent pleading. Intense, agonizing prayer.

**Core Desire: Expectation and Dependency** We believe God will do great things for our good and His glory. We want to trust him and lean on him through prayer in every way.

## 3. Divine Rescue (Acts 12:6-19)

**God intervenes and Peter can't believe it!** Filled w/ irony and humor.  
Peter thought it was a dream!

**God intervenes and the church can't believe it!**

God is not ours to control like a divine butler or genie.

Prayer is a gift and it's about relationship - an invitation to join God on his mission!

God isn't hindered by opposition, death sentences, imprisonment or even our struggle to believe.

**God intervenes and I imagine Herod can't believe it!**

## 4. Divine Opposition (Acts 12:20-24)

King Herod is shut down and the message about King Jesus spreads.

Jewish Historian Josephus described Herod dressed like Elton John = wore a silver threaded costume that sparkled and gleamed when the sun hit it.

An intentional contrast between VV23 and 24 drives home the point.

The one with "the voice of a god" set in stark contrast against THE word of God. King

*"BUT the word of God continued to increase and spread."*

Isaiah 40:7-8; 55:10-13; 2 Timothy 2:9 "But God's word is not chained."

Jesus is in control and his word is moving forward regardless of who tries to stop it.

## QUESTIONS

1. What's happening in this passage? Sum it up in your own words.
2. How does Herod strike at the church? What is the church's immediate response?
3. When have you prayed fervently and then had trouble believing that God was answering or had answered? Why is it sometimes hard for us to believe God has answered our prayers?
4. One of our "Core Desires" as a church is "Expectation and Dependency." What will it take to have a "culture of prayer" here at Local Church St. Pete? How will you contribute to that culture?
5. What contrast does Acts 12:23 and 24 set up? What point is being driven home?
6. How does the first half of the book of Acts inspire you and us as a church in our witness and service for Jesus the King here in St. Pete?
7. What has the book of Acts taught you / driven home about being a disciple of Jesus?