

## The Hidden Hand

### Acts 12:1-25

#### Aim

The goal of the study is to answer the following questions:

- Who rules?
- Why does God allow one Christian to die and another to be released?
- What is God's ultimate purpose?
- What is the impact of the praying church?
- How does God deal with those who oppose the gospel?

*Herod is flexing his political muscle*

#### Study

1. What motivated Herod to kill James and imprison Peter?
2. To what extraordinary lengths did Herod go to ensure Peter's secure imprisonment?
3. Why is verse 5 key?  
James had been killed, Peter was in prison, everything was against the church: "but the church was earnestly praying ..." Everything depended on God, and so the believers had hope and God answered their prayers. The prayer is powerful as God answers.
4. What do verses 13-16 tell us about the quality of the church's prayer?  
Their prayers were imperfect. They were praying for Peter but did not believe the servant when she said he was there. The believers thought she was crazy, or he was already dead. When they finally open the door they are astonished to find Peter standing there - it's unbelievable! Apparently God has answered unbelieving prayer!
5. Why do you think Peter was miraculously rescued while James was not?  
God had more work for Peter to do, but James' ministry was over and it was time to take him home.
6. What sort of man was Herod and why did he deserve his end?
7. Why are verses 24 and 25 such a significant conclusion to the chapter?  
In spite of opposition, God continues to advance his Word.

#### Application

- What does the chapter teach us about God and prayer?
- Dark days come to all of us. How do we find reassurance from this chapter?
- What should our attitude be towards the death of a Christian, young or old?

Give thanks.

God buries his messengers but not his message. God's greater purpose than our longevity and safety on earth is his glory through the advance of his Word. His messengers come and go, and then enter their eternal reward, and God's gospel continues to advance.

- What fruit should this chapter produce in our lives?

*We need reminding that God rules, that prayer works because you can only see these things through eyes of faith.*

*God allowed the situation to get this bad. He wanted the church dependant on Him in prayer.*

*Rhoda was a servant, young and a woman. She is referred to by name and is the only believer to believe God answered the prayer. All the others were doubtful pray-ers.*