

The background features a complex, abstract design with organic, flowing shapes in shades of green, orange, and red. These shapes are filled with various patterns, including small white dots, larger white ovals, and vertical white lines. The overall effect is a vibrant, textured composition.

The CHURCH Series

Part 11 – Prayer times Prayer



Introduction...

- Last session, we stopped where Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to Antioch to check out the new surge of Believers that were becoming converts.
- Barnabas was the excellent choice, and he was of great encouragement to the New Believers that mostly non-Jewish.
- Tonight, we have to make a slight detour because the Holy Spirit is changing course before we get back to that story line.
- This change in our journey is typical of how God changes or 'diverts' sometimes from a particular focus unto something else. We need to learn how to follow the Spirit.

Introduction

- Our lesson tonight is going to be about prayer and the supernatural.
- Everything we read in the scriptures happened as written; And because God is the same yesterday as He is today, the same principles and patterns apply.
- Please open your heart to the great gemstones embedded within this chapter and collect them for yourself and your spiritual journey.



Anti-Christ...

- *Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church.*
- *² Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.*
- *³ And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also.*
- *Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread.*
Acts 12:1-3



Reflect...

- Before we get into the main story of chapter 12, let us reflect on something remarkable.
- Our last story was positive!
- Non-Jews were flooding into the Kingdom!
- Cornelius had started a trend which opened the floodgates for evangelism to breakout into Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch.
- The Kingdom was expanding and suddenly we see this reaction from the realms of darkness opening chapter 12.



We Wrestle...

- Let's reflect a little going back
- Chapters 1-3; we see Pentecost, thousands converted and the Crippled healed at the Gate Beautiful
- Chapter 4 – Reaction from High Priest and rulers, leading to their arrest. They pray and get filled with the Spirit
- Chapter 5 – Ananias & Sapphira, followed by Peter's shadow healing the sick, followed by second arrest, followed by Angel deliverance from prison, followed by third detention, followed by Gamaliel deliverance



Wrestling...

- Chapter 6-8 – Division in the camp, Followed by Stephen's miracles ministry, followed by persecution and killing of Stephen, Followed by more persecution, Followed by Samaria revival and vast Samaritan revival.
- These series of events shows the cyclical spiritual battles we all face. Action and reaction.
- YOU CANNOT ESCAPE FROM THIS BATTLE!! It is a reality for all true Christians.
- As you expand in God and His Kingdom, the enemy comes with a reaction.
- Understand it, accept it but be PREPARED!!

...not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Ephesians 6:12



Anti-Christ spirit...

- Herod was the King of the Jews during this time and he became the 'host' for an antichrist spirit to harass the church.
- He captures and kills James one of the key Apostles.
- James the son of Zebedee and older brother of John the Beloved.
- He was one of the three whom Jesus took everywhere (Peter, James, John)
- The enemy knows how to target key figures in a movement, a church or family that is making waves for the Kingdom.





The enemy...

- It pleased the Jews, the leadership opposed to the Church.
- So he proceeds further...
- The enemy comes to take ground, and when he succeeds, he always moves further to capture more ground.
- *he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four [a]squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.*

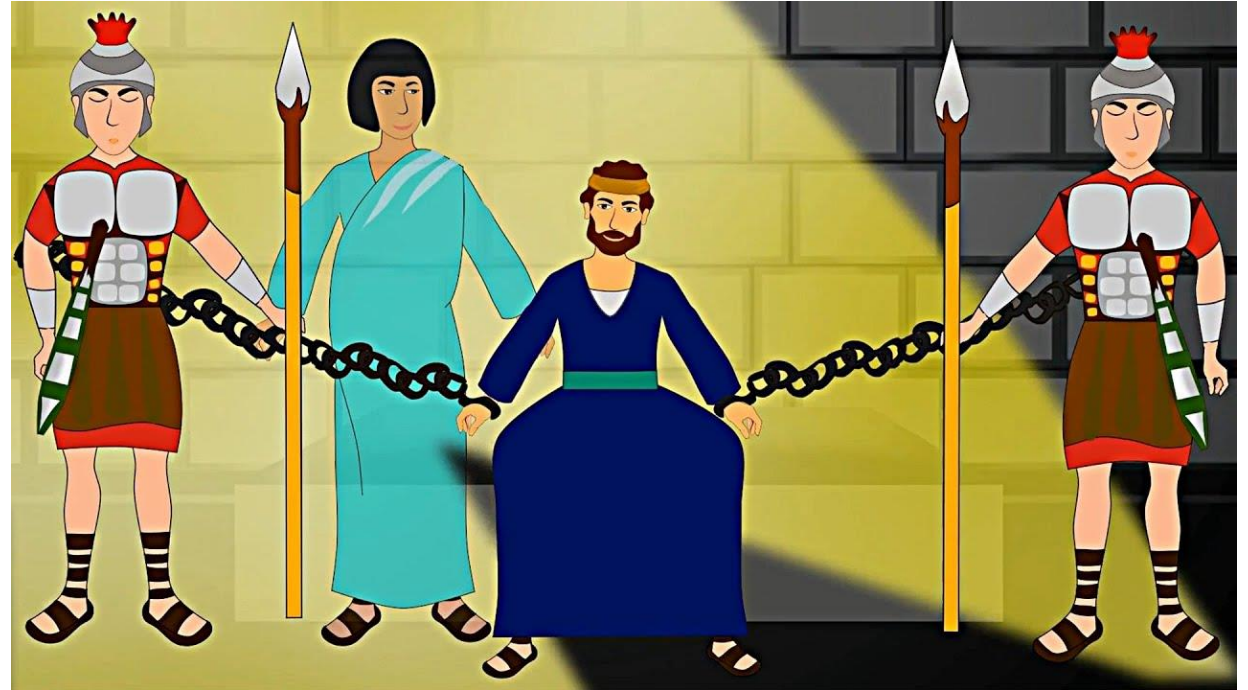
The enemy..

- ..he put him in prison...
- This is both a literal and spiritual statement.
- The devil likes to imprison leaders
- *Revelation 2:10 - The devil is about to cast some of you into prison...*
- Sometimes this not just a literal prison but a stronghold over your mind, soul or body and spirit.
- Addictions, mental health issues, pornography, lust, anxiety etc can be all types of prison



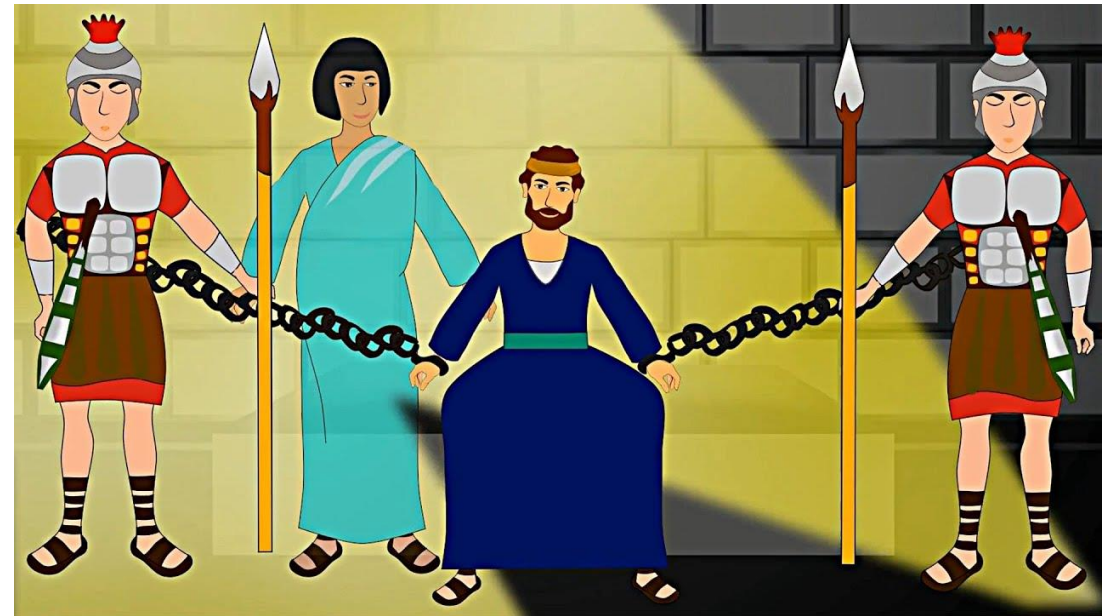
Peter...

- ⁵ Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.
- ⁶ 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. 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!"
- And his chains fell off his hands. Acts 12:5-7



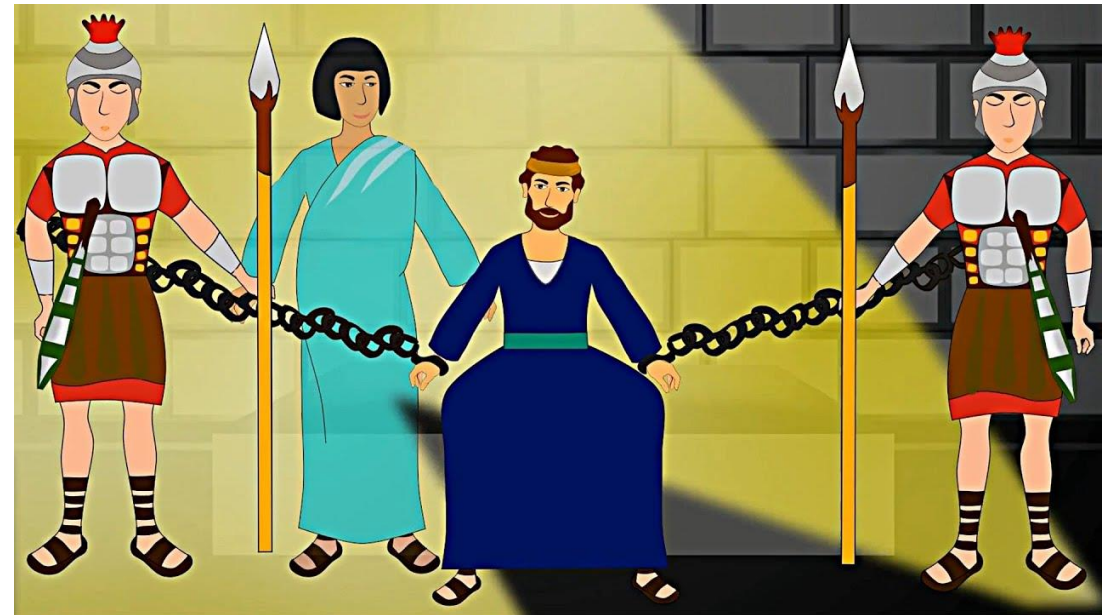
Prayer...

- A literal translation of verse 5 is “Prayer came onto the stage!”
- In other words, prayer became the main priority of the church.
- Sometimes its only when an extreme matter visits us that we discover prayer!
- The Early church became a Prayer Factory; they began to manufacture prayer!!
- Their prayer was directed to God. This is significant because it shows us a principle.
- Put your total trust in God, direct all your prayers to Him and watch Him respond.



Peter...

- Bound between two soldiers and extra guards at the doors.
- Sometimes, the enemy goes to extreme to keep us locked in and chained down!
- Herod was taking no chances!!
- Now behold! (suddenly!!) an Angel stood by him.
- The prayers of the Saints made Heaven respond.
- They did not give up!!



Deliverance..

- Light shone in the darkness of the cell.
- God's deliverance brings light into our dungeon no matter how hopeless the situation.
- When God saves, He saves to the uttermost!
- All his chains fell off!!
- God's deliverance is total so that all associated strongholds are uprooted.
- No prison of man or the devil can withstand the visitation of God!
- All the doors opened, whilst the prison guards' faculties were suspended during the Angels visit.



Sober Reflection...

- James was killed but Peter is saved.
- This does not mean James' life was inferior to that of Peter's
- This the mystery of God in the business of answering prayer.
- Sometimes God moves and sometimes He doesn't.
- Stephen was killed, whilst others lived through the persecution.
- One of the key foundations of our faith is to TRUST in God no matter the outcome; good or bad.



Rhonda...



- ¹² 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.
- ¹³ And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer.
- ¹⁴ 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.
- ¹⁵ But they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel."

Rhoda...

- Rhoda had the privilege of being the first to see the answer to prayer.
- Yet when she came to tell the Church who were in prayer, they didn't believe her!
- This does not mean that the Believers were in unbelief, it just shows our limited humanity.
- They were probably thinking that Peter's trial would go a particular way.
- They had also forgotten how they had been released from prison by an Angel.
- This shows that many times our expectation of God and His ability to do anything is limited or low.





Peter...

- *¹⁶ Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.*
- *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." And he departed and went to another place.*
- *¹⁸ Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.*
- *¹⁹ 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. Acts 12:15-19*

Peter...

- Just imagine your joy and feeling in seeing the answer to your prayers being delivered this way!
- This singular incident would have shaped the faith of the Church from that moment.
- There would be absolutely nothing that they wouldn't believe God can do!!
- Go tell James...
- This James is another from the James in verse 2 of this Chapter. This is James who is considered the cousin to Jesus. He is the one who wrote the Epistle of James.
- He played a major leadership role in the Church at Jerusalem as we will find out in Chapter 15.





Herod..

- ²⁰ 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*.
- ²¹ So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. ²² And the people kept shouting,
- "The voice of a god and not of a man!" ²³ 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.
- ²⁴ But the word of God grew and multiplied.

Herod...

- Herod was a charismatic leader.
- This is a parable for all gifted people
- They do great feats but can end up on the wrong side of God.
- In the natural, we hail these gifted men in the world or in the Church
- Yet sometimes these gifted individuals do not pass on the adulation they receive unto the God that endowed them with the extraordinary abilities.
- An Angel struck Herod
- May heaven not strike us!
- May we be on the right side of God at all times!!



The WORD!

- But the WORD of GOD grew and multiplied.
- No man can withstand the Will of God.
- The Gospel shall cover the Earth.
- Nobody can stop the agenda of God and what He has predetermined.
- Kings and Governments come and go but GOD remains.
- His Word remains

