

ACTS 12:1-25

It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. ² He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. ³ When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

⁶ The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance.

⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

⁸ Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. ⁹ Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹ Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen."

¹² When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.

¹³ Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

¹⁵ “You’re out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.”

¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. “Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this,” he said, and then he left for another place.

¹⁸ In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. ²⁰ He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king’s country for their food supply.

²¹ On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. ²² They shouted, “This is the voice of a god, not of a man.” ²³ Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

²⁴ But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.

²⁵ When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

Have you ever found yourself in a situation when your only hope was prayer?

What happened to James and Peter? Who was the leader who was persecuting the church? Why do you think the Lord saved Peter but allowed James to be killed?

While Peter was in prison, what was the church doing? Why is this important? How were their prayers answered?

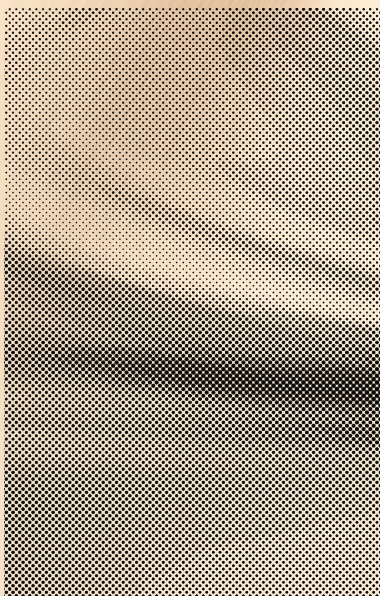
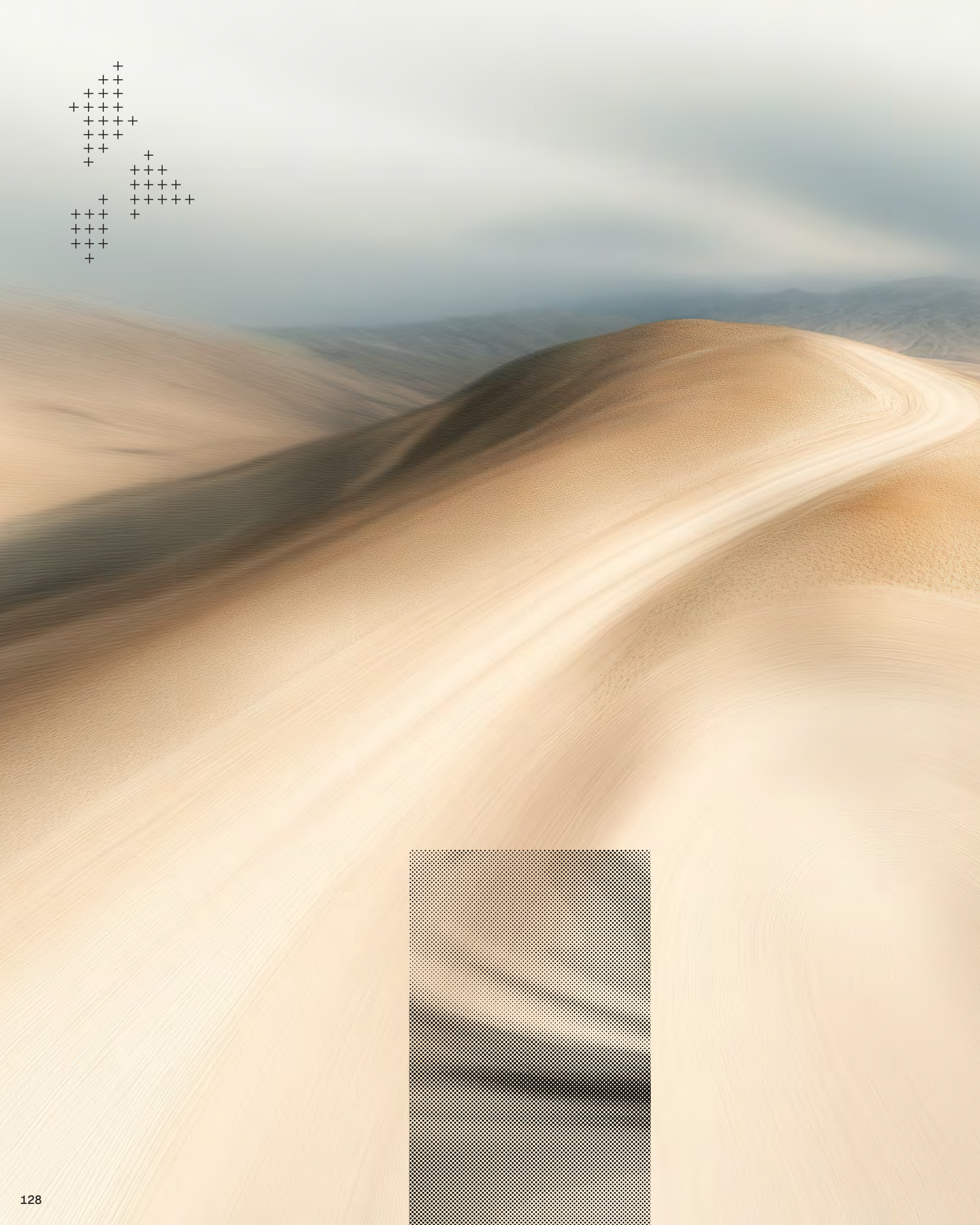
How are God's fingerprints all over the story of Peter's rescue? Why do you think the church had trouble believing it was true? Do you ever question that God would answer your prayer?

What happened to those who persecuted the church? To the guards? To Herod?

Charles Spurgeon said: "God's power is not limited by human circumstances. When we pray, we invite Him to work beyond what we can imagine." How can we be praying for God to work in a mighty way in our lives, our families, and our church?

DAILY READINGS

1. DANIEL 4:28-37
2. PSALM 91:1-16
3. PSALM 6:1-10
4. JOHN 6:1-15
5. JOHN 6:25-40
6. ACTS 12:1-19a
7. ACTS 12:19b-25





ACTS 13

THE SENDING OF MISSIONARIES & THE PATTERN OF GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

Acts 13 marks a major turning point in the history of the early Church. Up to this point, the gospel had primarily spread through the witness of apostles and scattered believers in response to persecution. But here, we see the intentional, Spirit-led commissioning of missionaries to take the gospel beyond the boundaries of Judea. What begins in the multicultural city of Antioch becomes a pattern for global missions: Paul and Barnabas are set apart, sent out, and strategically proclaim the gospel to Jews first, and then to Gentiles. This chapter initiates a rhythm that Paul would follow throughout his ministry—and one that echoes God's larger plan for redemption through Christ, reaching all nations and peoples.

Acts 13 opens in the city of Antioch with the selection of two of the church leaders by the Holy Spirit for missionary work: "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'" (v. 2). This moment is significant because it represents the first intentional sending of missionaries by a local church. The church in Antioch, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, models the New Testament church in prayer, worship, sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, and active participation in God's mission.

The act of laying hands on Paul and Barnabas was not just symbolic—it affirmed the authority and unity of the church behind this mission (see also Acts 6:6, 2 Timothy 1:6). This special commissioning is the first of many in church history where the work of missions is rooted in the local church and led by the Holy Spirit.

As Paul and Barnabas begin their journey, an intentional missional strategy unfolds. In each new city they visited — Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and beyond—Paul began by preaching in the synagogue to the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles. This pattern first appears in Acts 13:5: “They proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.” This was not merely a matter of convenience. Paul believed the gospel should first be offered to the Jews, as God’s covenant people through whom the Messiah had come (notice what Paul later wrote in Romans 1:16: “to the Jew first and also to the Greek”).

This approach continued throughout Paul’s journeys. In Thessalonica: “Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (Acts 17:2). In Berea and Corinth, the synagogue remained his first stop (Acts 17:10; 18:4). Paul’s method underscores the theological conviction that the gospel fulfills Jewish expectation and is rooted in the Old Testament promises.

In Acts 13:46–47, when Paul and Barnabas face rejection from Jewish leaders in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch, they respond boldly:

“It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.”

This turning point is both strategic and theological. Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6 to show that God’s plan has always included the nations: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” The Gentiles’ positive response in verse 48—“when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord”—serves as evidence of God’s expanding kingdom beyond Israel.

This pattern—offer the gospel to the Jews, then turn to the Gentiles—would be repeated throughout Paul’s ministry (see Acts 18:6; 28:28). It also reflects the mystery now revealed in Christ: “This mystery is that through the gospel the

Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 3:6). God’s redemptive plan, once revealed through a chosen people, was now breaking open to include all peoples, languages, and nations – just as Jesus had foretold in Acts 1:8.

Acts 13 is far more than a travel itinerary; it is the launching pad of a worldwide gospel movement. Through the Holy Spirit-led commissioning of Paul and Barnabas, the early church begins to truly embrace its mission to the nations. Through Paul’s synagogue-first strategy, his commitment to honoring God’s promises to Israel becomes the priority. As the mission faces opposition and pivots to the Gentiles, God’s eternal plan unfolds in which He will gather to Himself people from every tribe and nation. The principles found in this chapter shape the remaining fifteen chapters of Acts – and remains the model as the Church engages in missions today.

PASSAGE INSIGHT

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