

Acts 12 notes

Hallel Fellowship (<http://hallel.info>)

Jeff Quackenbush (jeff@hallel.info)

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King Herod

- King Herod Agrippa I (11 B.C.E.- 44 C.E.), ruler of all Israel, 41- 44 C.E.¹
 - grandson of Herod the Great (Matt. 2:1) through a son (Aristobulus) not mentioned in the New Testament
 - father of Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25:13-26:32).
- Acts 12 might have been before Herod Agrippa's death, in which case this event could have been in A.D. 44.
 - However, the account of Herod's run-in with the people of Tyre and Sidon (Acts 12:20-25) could have been a long while after Peter prison break.
 - Josephus has a quite similar account of Herod's blasphemy and death at age 53 (*Ant. of the Jews* 19:8:2).

“had [Ya'akov] the brother of [Yochanan] put to death with a sword” (Acts 12:2)

- Adam Clarke suspects that the note of the death penalty by sword for Ya'akov son of Zebedee and brother of Yochanan highlights the charge against him of corrupting the people²:
 - By killing with the sword we are to understand beheading. Among the Jews there were four kinds of deaths: Stoning; burning; killing with the sword, or beheading; and, strangling.
 - The third was a Roman as well as a Jewish mode of punishment. Killing with the sword was the punishment which, according to the *Talmud*, was inflicted on those who drew away the people to any strange worship, *Sanhedr.* fol. iii. James was probably accused of this, and hence the punishment mentioned in the text.

“it was during the days of Unleavened Bread” (Acts 12:3)

- These leaders couldn't wait a few days until the festival was over to act. What was so urgent?
- Israel's leaders should have purged the malice and wickedness out of their hearts before Passover.
 - Just as the lesson of the Lamb of God being led to slaughter (Isaiah 53) coincided with God's lamb-centric appointed time of Passover, so too the “puffing up” lessons of unleavened bread are emphasized in the treatment of the Lamb's apostles.
 - Removal of leaven has been part of Passover since God delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt.
 - ▶ Those observing the Passover had to remove leaven from within their homes (Ex. 12:15-20) and the borders of Israel (Ex. 13:3-7).
 - חַמֵּץ *chamets*, Strong's 2557 — It literally means “soured,” i.e., “fermented.”³
 - שֵׂאֵר *se'or*, Strong's 7603 — Often translated “leavened” as is *chamets*, the Easton dictionary says *se'or* connotes, “the remnant of dough from the preceding baking which had fermented and become acid.”⁴
 - Seen as “fermented wine” in the Nazirite rules:
 - “When a man or woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to dedicate himself to the LORD, he shall abstain from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar [חֶמֶץ *chomets*], whether made from wine or strong drink, nor shall he drink any grape juice nor eat fresh or dried grapes.” (Num. 6:2-3)
 - The Septuagint uses the word ὄξος *oxos* (Strong's 3690) to translate *chomets* here as “sour wine” and in Ruth 2:14 as “vinegar.”
 - *Oxos* also is used for the sour wine described in what the Roman soldiers gave Yeshua during the crucifixion (Matt. 27:34,48; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36; John 19:29).
 - *Chomets* is used in prophecy of sour wine at the stake (Psa. 69:22).
 - Interestingly, instead of *oxos* for rendering *chomets* as “vinegar” in Prov. 10:26, the Septuagint uses ὄμφαξ *omphax*, which means “unripe grapes.”

1 Stern, David H. “Acts 12.” *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc. 1996.

2 Clarke, Adam. *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library <<http://www.ccel.org>>. 1831.

3 Brown, Francis; S.R. Driver, and Charles Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Scribe, Inc.

4 Easton, M.G. “Leaven.” *Easton's Bible Dictionary, Third Edition*. Thomas Nelson, 1897. *Bible Foundation e-Text Library*. <<http://www.bf.org/bfetexts.htm>>.

“the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting” (Acts 12:11)

- This should have put the people and Herod on notice that they were battling with the power of God.

“after Easter” (Acts 12:4 KJV)

- This is the only use of the word *Easter* for πάσχα (*pascha*; Strong’s Greek No. 3957) in the KJV.
- It’s interesting that Petros was to be tried after Passover/Unleavened Bread, while Yeshua was tried before the festival.