

Program: SS Panel 2025 2 Q

Quarterly title: Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy

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Lesson Title: #12 Precursors

For Lesson Dates: *June 14-20, 2025*

Section title: Wednesday - Early Church Persecution

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Note: This color and font = quarterly text

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Question:

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Lesson 12

*June 14–20

Precursors

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Dan. 2:31–45; Dan. 3:1–12, 17, 18; Rev. 13:11–17; Rom. 1:18–25; Acts 12:1–17; Matt. 12:9–14.*

Memory Text: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love

and of a sound mind”

(2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV).

WEDNESDAY

June 18

Early Church Persecution

READ

It's not just the Old Testament that gives us precursors to final events, but the New Testament does, as well. Life was not easy for first-century Christians. They were first hated by many of their own fellow religionists, who saw them as a threat to the faith of Moses. They also faced the wrath of the pagan Roman Empire. **"The powers of earth and hell arrayed themselves against Christ in the person of His followers. Paganism foresaw that should the gospel triumph, her temples and altars would be swept away; therefore she summoned her forces to destroy Christianity. The fires of persecution were kindled."**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 39.

There is a story in the book of Acts that demonstrates, quite powerfully, what God's people might expect as we head toward the scenario found in Revelation 13.

Read Acts 12:1–17. What elements of this story might foreshadow last-day events?

Acts 12:1–17 1 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.

4 So when he had arrested him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

From: Barnes

To four quaternions of soldiers - A "quaternion" was a company of "four"; consequently the whole number employed here was sixteen.

Acts 12:5 Peter was therefore kept in prison, **but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.**

2Ch 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Acts 12:6 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.

8 Then the angel said to him, “Gird yourself and tie on your sandals”; and so he did. And he said to him, “Put on your garment and follow me.”

9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

11 **And when Peter had come to himself, he said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people.”**

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.”**

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.

James had been beheaded, and Peter was to be next; there was a death penalty against Christians. Perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of this story can be found in the fact that Peter is *sleeping* on what should be the worst night of his life—so soundly that the angel actually has to strike him to wake him up!

Peter, of course, was miraculously set free and found his way to a meeting of believers who had trouble believing that he had really been delivered, even though they had been praying. The Bible says they were *astonished*—which makes one wonder how often we pray and scarcely dare to believe that God will actually answer us.

*****READ*****

Some believers were spared, others were killed. As we approach the end time, the same thing will happen. Even Peter, though spared then, eventually died for his faith. Jesus Himself even told him how: " 'Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.' This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me' " (*John 21:18, 19, NKJV*).

Notice that Jesus, after telling Peter how he would die, nevertheless still says to him, " 'Follow me.' " What should this tell us about why even the threat of death should not keep us from following the Lord?