

James and Peter

In Jerusalem

Foundation

Bible passage : Acts 12

After Stephen had been killed all the followers of Jesus had fled from Jerusalem except for the Apostles. Two of those were James, the brother of John and Peter, who had both previously been fishermen.

A few years later, Herod Antipas, who was King under the rule of the Roman Emperor, had James killed with the sword (v2). Early Christians said that James had been beheaded. He was the first of the Apostles to die.

Not long afterwards Peter was arrested (v3), seemingly with the attention that he too should be put to death it was the intention that he also should be put to death.

Although Peter was very well guarded during the night an angel appeared to Peter and enabled him to escape from the prison without anyone noticing. Peter thought it was all a dream until he realised that he was standing out in the street alone.

He therefore made his way to a house where he knew some other followers of Jesus lived and others would be staying. They had obviously been praying late in to the night, no doubt including praying for Peter, fearing that he might be put to death too. What follows is amusing. The servant girl who heard Peter knocking did not let him in, possibly because she would not be allowed to. But when she announced to those present that Peter, who they had been praying for, was actually standing outside knocking on the door, they did not believe her. They had been praying hard for



Peter and Rhoda.

Peter for be released don't believe their prayer has been answered and that he could possibly be standing at the door.

“Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me...” Acts 12.11

We see in this chapter that God rescued Peter, but he did not rescue James in the same way. It can be hard to understand and accept why God should do this, rescuing one and not another. Stephen (see Unit 6) and James were the first of many followers of Jesus through the ages who have been killed for spreading the light of Christ. We might wonder why God let this happen and we don't know the answer. But often we can see that when followers of Jesus were willing to die just so they could spread the light of Christ, people who opposed them came to faith themselves as they saw how important the message about Jesus is. It is not that James and Stephen died fighting in a battle, but because they trusted in the promises of God they were not afraid of death and thought that spreading the light of Christ was more important than their own life and comfort.



The message about Jesus is so important that His followers have been prepared to risk their lives to tell others.