

# WESTERN WISDOM BIBLE STUDY

## THE BOOK OF ACTS

### Fruitage of the Ministry

CORINNE HELINE

*Martyrdom of James;  
Peter in Prison*

Acts 12:1-3

Now about that time Herod, the king, stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.

And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also, (Then were the days of unleavened bread).

Herod intended to crucify Peter also, after the Passover was finished. Peter was bound in prison between two guards and four others were placed on duty outside. During the night an Angel appeared, a great light shone through the cell, the chains fell from Peter's hands, the doors opened of themselves and, as the guards were asleep, Peter was free.

This was an actual occurrence in the life of Peter, an Initiate who had risen to an elevation whereon he was able to control the operation of physical law. The incident also symbolizes freedom from the physical body. It is what early Christian Initiates knew as the Way. The *power of faith*, represented by Peter, breaks all shackles, transcends ordinary limitations of consciousness, overcomes all barriers that bind man to the physical plane, setting the neophyte free as a conscious visible and invisible helper. The sleeping soldiers symbolize the lower nature under control. The iron gates represent obstructions set up by the concrete mind.

Acts 12:10

When they were past the first and the

second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of its own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

The first and second wards signify the physical and desire bodies. When the mind has been awakened spiritually, the Teacher may then leave the pupil, as the Angel did Peter, for the pupil has become a law unto himself.

Peter proceeded to the upper room of Mary's house where all the disciples remained in constant prayer for his return to them.

Acts 12:13-15

And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then they said, It is his angel.

The "Angel" referred to in this passage is the soul body. The Disciples were accustomed to appear at various centers in many lands in the etheric or finer bodies which they had built through their dedication to the things of the spirit and their life of selfless service. The soul body is formed of higher light essences and is a prime requisite for Initiation.

Herod slew all the guards in a frenzy of rage over his thwarted plans, after which he returned to the Roman capital of Caesarea.

**Acts 12:21-24**

And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

But the word of God grew and multiplied.

Josephus states that Herod was arrayed in his gorgeous attire of silver tissue and, while demanding that the people worship him as a god, was stricken with a terrible malady and died after five days of excruciating torture. Surrounded by obsequious multitudes, with the wealth and power of the Roman Empire behind him, Herod died a miserable death. Peter himself, lowly and alone, surrounded by enemies and exposed to every possible danger, was protected by an angelic host. So works the great laws of love and justice. "The Lord (cosmic law) ever keepeth His beloved sheep."

## THE EPISTLES OF THE DISCIPLES

### *The Epistle of James*

According to Jerome, James and Jude were cousins of Jesus. By a common usage of their time, cousins were often referred to as brethren. The epithets used to describe James were "the just" and "the righteous." He was generally referred to as James the Just to distinguish him from the other James.

A prophet is without honor in his own country. The family of Jesus did not believe Him to be the Messiah, and any faint hopes they may have secretly entertained were shattered with His Crucifixion.

James had sworn that he would not eat bread from the hour when he drank from the cup of the Lord till he should behold Him rising from among them that slept. When the Lord appeared to James, He said: "Bring a

table and bread." He took the bread, blessed and brake it and gave it to James, saying: "My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among them that sleep."

James became prominent among the early Christians and for many years was the head of the church in Jerusalem. He was considered holy from birth; he never ate animal flesh; never drank wine or wore woolens; his garments were of linen. He spent much of his time in the Temple in prayer for the people and in worshiping and praising God.

In the Epistle of James there are no direct references to Christ Jesus and His Ministry upon the earth, He does not refer to the Crucifixion or the Resurrection; there is no mention of esoteric truths such as are included in the epistles of Peter, John, and Jude. The Epistle of James may be termed a synthesis of spiritual life. Its keynote is sounded in the words:

### James 1:27

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

The Epistle of James has been conceded to contain more echoes of the teachings of the Master than any Book of the New Testament excepting the Gospels themselves. James stresses the importance of faith, chastity and humility as essential requisites for attainments.

### James 1:5-8

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

James constantly emphasizes the importance of active service.

[To be continued]