



A just weight  
and balance

are the  
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

- As we begin our study in Acts 12 we discover there is a king stretching forth his hands to vex certain of the Church.
- His first act of aggression was directed against an apostle.
- "He killed James the brother of John with the sword."  
(Acts 12:2)

- Such is the short record of the **first and only apostle** to die a martyrs death of which we have any record in Scripture.
- Far more was told of the martyrdom of the **Stephen** in **Acts 7..**
- One thing is **dwelt** upon and another **briefly** told.

- The fate of the next destined victim is widely different.
- He too seems to be marked out for martyrdom.
- The appetite for blood is ever whetted by its indulgence.

- It was Passover time in Jerusalem.
- Strangers from all parts of the world have come for this festival;
- And the spectacle of an apostle's execution was to be their pastime.

- How strangely our prayers are sometimes answered!
  - James and John had prayed that they might sit, the one on the right and the other on the left in the Lord's kingdom.
- And now the cup and the baptism came to James in the form of a terrible martyrdom.

- May we covet the best gift,  
not the most  
conspicuous position.  
(**1 Corinthians 12:31**)
- May we keep in remembrance  
that they at the front fall first.
- But may we not shrink  
from the front if it be  
the will of the Lord  
to assign us that position.

- **“Peter was kept in prison.”**

**(Acts 12:5)**

- All work  
**suspended,**  
and apparently  
**all usefulness**  
at an end.
- **Peter,** the most  
active of them.



- What does the Lord mean?
- This question comes up so often.
  - To allow James to be killed and Peter to be imprisoned is not our way.

- Isaiah 55:8  
For my thoughts  
are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways,  
saith the LORD.

- May we never be scared for the cause of Christ.
- Let us learn from Peter.
- That the Lord may not always keep me out of the hands of the enemy,
- But, He will keep the enemy from destroying me.

- David wrote  
**“I will fear no evil.”**  
**(Psalms 23:4)**
- The world is **full** of evil.
  - **Don't** let the Devil make you afraid.
- The **unseen forces** of God are stronger than the visible agents of the “Roaring Lion”.

- Let us look at the deaths of James and Stephen.
- The death of one is told over two chapters,
- The death of the other is crammed into a few sentences.

- One an apostle.
- The other was a simple preacher of the Word.
- The Bible cares so little about names because its true theme is the work of God, and not of man.

- What is the reason years are leaped over in silence and moments are spread out in detail,
- But that the death of a man is only a death,
- But the death of the Christ is the life of the world.

- Another lesson which may be learned is, how small a thing death really is!
  - We need to revise our notions if we would understand how trivial death really is for the Christian.

- **Psalms 116:15**

**Precious**

**in the  
sight of the LORD  
is the death  
of his saints.**

- Do we **believe** it?



- Why should James be slain,  
and  
Peter miraculously delivered?
  - A question easily asked;
  - A question not to be answered  
by us.

- **We may be sure of this**,  
that James was as dear  
to Christ as Peter was,
  - And that there was  
**no greater love shown**  
in sending the angel  
that delivered the one
- But **failed** to deliver the other.

- Did I say “failed”?
- Our Lord never fails!
- James escaped from Herod just as Peter did.
  - His deliverance just as sweet.
  - “**Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.**  
**(Psalms 116:15)**

- But let us remember,  
that the two though  
equally beloved,  
were dealt  
two different fates,
- It must be that death  
is not bitter  
to the believer.
  - But sweet!

- There is no evil in God's ways.
- May this lesson teach us of the equal love that presides over the life of the living and the death of the dying.

- **Mark 12:24**

**And Jesus answering said unto them,  
you therefore err, because**

- **you know not the scriptures,  
neither the power of God?...**
- **12:26 And as touching the dead...,  
have you not read  
in the book of Moses,  
how in the bush God  
spake unto him, saying,  
I am the God of Abraham,  
and the God of Isaac,  
and the God of Jacob?**
  - **In the eye of God  
there are NO dead!**

- James,  
a son of thunder.  
(Mark 3:17)
- So energetic,
- So boisterous.
- “Grant that we may sit,  
the one on Thy right hand  
and the other on Thy left,  
in Thy kingdom.”  
(Mark 10:37)

- That was what he wished for.
- So, be careful for what you wish!
- He got some years of service,
- And a taste of persecution,
  - And finally the swish of the sword.
  - Yes! Our dreams do get disappointed,
  - And their disappointment is often the road to their fulfillment.



- For Jesus Christ was answering the prayer,
- “Grant that we may sit on Thy right hand in Thy kingdom,”
- So let us leave that question of living or dying to Him who is the Almighty.

- Only let us be sure that whether our lives be long like John's,

or

- short like James's,

- “Living or dying we are the Lord's.”

(Romans 14:8)

- Herod, the king, had much in common with Pilate.
- Mild in his natural temper, but fond of popularity.
  - The persecution was but to please the Jews, as was the case with Pilate.

- The Church had learned to walk by faith, and even the fall of an apostle will not crush them now.
- In the case of James, the Lord shows that He will not always interfere to protect His servants.

- This first apostolic martyrdom marks a law of the kingdom, and illustrates the Master's word, "My kingdom is not of this world."  
(**John 18:36**)

- Not an inch of territory will Christ maintain for Himself by the sword.

- Observing that no Divine power was put forth, either to protect James or to avenge him, and finding that one murder procured him favor, Herod determined to perpetrate another murder.

- **“Peter was kept in prison, but prayer was made,”**  
**(Acts 12:5)**

- **Man** proposes,
- **God** disposes.

- **James** was suddenly seized and murdered.
- But there was time to pray for **Peter**.
  - God opened the **door of opportunity** through Herod's desire to keep all quiet till after the Passover;
- The Church eagerly **entered that door** by way of prayer.



- Peter meanwhile was sleeping, and his sleep brought as much glory to God as his wakefulness,
  - He slept in Gethsemane through weakness of the flesh:
    - He sleeps here through the strength of his faith.
  - How sweet to lie down and if the Lord will, to awake in heaven.

- A child's prayer.
- A saints wish.
- **Now, I lay me  
down to sleep.**
- **If I should die  
before I wake.**
- **I pray the Lord,  
My soul to take.**

- We have observed the dark side of the picture.
- Now, let us observe the bright side of the picture.

- "**But there was fervent prayer going on by the Church unto God concerning him."**  
(**Acts 12:5**)

- Is there not great meaning in that little word "**but**"?

- The Church below **was calling in a helper.**

- Little was Herod aware that unseen forces were mustering on the horizon.
  - He who neither slumbers nor sleeps has gathered His forces.
- And let no man presume to say, what one day or one night may bring forth!

- Peter sleeps,  
while the Church prays:
- It is their time for action,
- It is his time for peace of mind.
- "In quietness and in confidence  
shall be your strength".  
(Isaiah 30:15)
- "Cast all your care upon Him,  
for He careth for you."  
(1 Peter 5:7)

- "And, behold  
an angel of the Lord  
stood near,"  
(Acts 12:7)

- God does nothing in vain:

- He begins where man must **end**,

- And ends where man  
can only begin.

- Herod thought he was king;  
in reality he was a slave.
- Sometimes the judge  
is the prisoner.
  - Sometimes  
the conqueror  
is the loser.
  - What is about to unfold?



- Herod's political motto is found in "It pleased the Jews."
  - He thought he had made a hit when he slew John's brother.
  - But even in that crime he only helped to fulfill a prophecy of Christ (**Mark 10:39**).

- **Mark 10:38**

**But Jesus said unto them,  
(James & John)**

- **You know not what you ask:**
  - **can ye drink of the cup  
that I drink of?**
- **and be baptized with the baptism  
that I am baptized with?**

- **And they said unto him,  
We can.**
- **And Jesus said unto them,**
  - **You shall indeed drink  
of the cup that I drink of;**
  - **and with the baptism that  
I am baptized with  
shall you be baptized:**

- The all-wise God permits sin to move on for a while,
- But He may be trusted to interpose when the time for restraining wrath arrives.
- **for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.**  
**(Hebrews 13:5).**

- David penned these words:  
**“He prepares a table before me,  
in the presence of my enemies.”**

- Peter must have understood  
that he was now

- in the grip of a mad man.**

- He could not expect  
**to fare any better**

- than did James.

- But he was  
**not** in the least troubled.

- This old fisherman meant to have as easy a night of it as was possible with the poor accommodations.
- He took off his outer garments and sandals before he lay down, as was his habit anywhere.  
(**Acts 12:8**)

- Peter went quietly into a sweet good sleep as usual.

- Psalms 34:7

The angel of the LORD  
encampeth round about them  
that fear him,  
and delivereth them.

- The angel had nothing to fear.
  - Peter could take all of time and care he needed without danger.
    - It was not necessary that he should dress in the dark;
- The messenger from heaven lit up the room for him,
  - And the apostle put on his shoes and garments before he started.



- The **chains** were removed so cautiously that they **made no clanking.**
- There was **no hurry** nor confusion;
- When God **takes care** of His servant,
- He takes **good** care.

- If you were to stand  
upon a cliff  
on a stormy day  
beneath lowering clouds  
and gaze upon  
the lightning bolt  
and think you might  
grasp one in your hand  
and cast it back  
into the heavens.

- Still more foolish and vain his thought, he who fancies that he can turn aside

the purpose of God, saying,

- **"What is the Almighty that we should serve Him?  
(Job 21:15)**

## Psalms 2:2

The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together,  
against the LORD, and against his  
anointed, *saying,*

2:3 Let us break their bands asunder,  
and cast away  
their cords from us.

2:4 He that sitteth in the heavens  
shall laugh:

- **Zechariah 2:8**

**Whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye**

- There is no organ

**so delicate**

as the apple of the eye.

- The smallest puncture there

**will give pain**

over the whole body.

- And our Savior says that it would be better for a man who persecutes the saints of God "that a millstone had been hung around his neck, and he had been cast into the depths of the sea."  
(Matthew 18:6)

- Blessed

are they  
who are

"persecuted for  
righteousness' sake,"

(**Matthew 5:10**)

- But woe be  
unto them  
that persecute them.

- **Acts 12:21**

And upon a set day **Herod**, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne...

- **12:22** And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the **voice of a god**, and not of a man.
- **12:23** 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.



- **How little the new testament** makes of the martyrdom of even the best of men.
- Only two words in the Greek describe James's execution:
  - "**killed — sword**."
  - The Bible does not dwell upon the deaths of Christians **so much as upon their lives**.

- How vain are swords to slay
  - And prison doors to confine the truth of God!

- A James may be killed
- A Peter imprisoned,
  - But the chapter which narrates these incidents of human tyranny does not close without recording that "the Word of God grew and multiplied." (Acts 12:24)

**The doors of the church  
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride  
Say  
“Come”.**

**Revelation 22:17**



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