

PRAYER THAT REACHES AND STRETCHES

Acts 12: 1-17, 13: 1-4

1-3-10

The Apocalypse is a fusion of vision and prayer. When the seventh seal is opened, there is silence in heaven for about half an hour. A climax has been reached. The silence prepares the imagination to receive an incredible truth. While conflicts raged between good and evil, prayers went up from devout bands of first century Christians all over the Roman empire. Massive engines of persecution and scorn were ranged against them. They had neither weapons nor votes. They had little money and no prestige. Why didn't they have mental breakdowns? Why didn't they cut and run? They prayed.

It was in order to hear those prayers that there was silence in heaven. Out of the silence, action developed: an angel came before the altar of God with a censer. He mixed the prayers of the Christians with incense and combined them with fire from the altar. Then he put it all in the censer and threw it over heaven's ramparts. The censer, plummeting through the air, landed on earth. On impact there were 'peals of thunder, voices, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake' (Rev. 8: 5). The prayers which had ascended, unremarked by the journalists of the day, returned with immense force – in George Herbert's phrase, as 'reversed thunder.' Prayer reenters history with incalculable effects. Our earth is shaken daily by it.

Eugene Peterson, **Reversed Thunder**



1. Why Pray? _____

"It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword...He proceeded to seize Peter also." (Acts 12: 1-3)

2. Why Pray? _____

"Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off." (13: 1-3)

3. What Kind of Prayer?

Prayer that is to _____.

"So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him." (12: 5)

4. What Kind of Prayer?

Prayer that is done _____

"So Peter was kept in prison, but **the church** was earnestly praying to God for him." (12: 5)

5. What Kind of Prayer?

Prayer that is _____

"So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was **earnestly praying** to God for him." (12: 5)

6. What Kind of Prayer?

Prayer that is _____ and _____

"So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God **for him**." (12: 5)