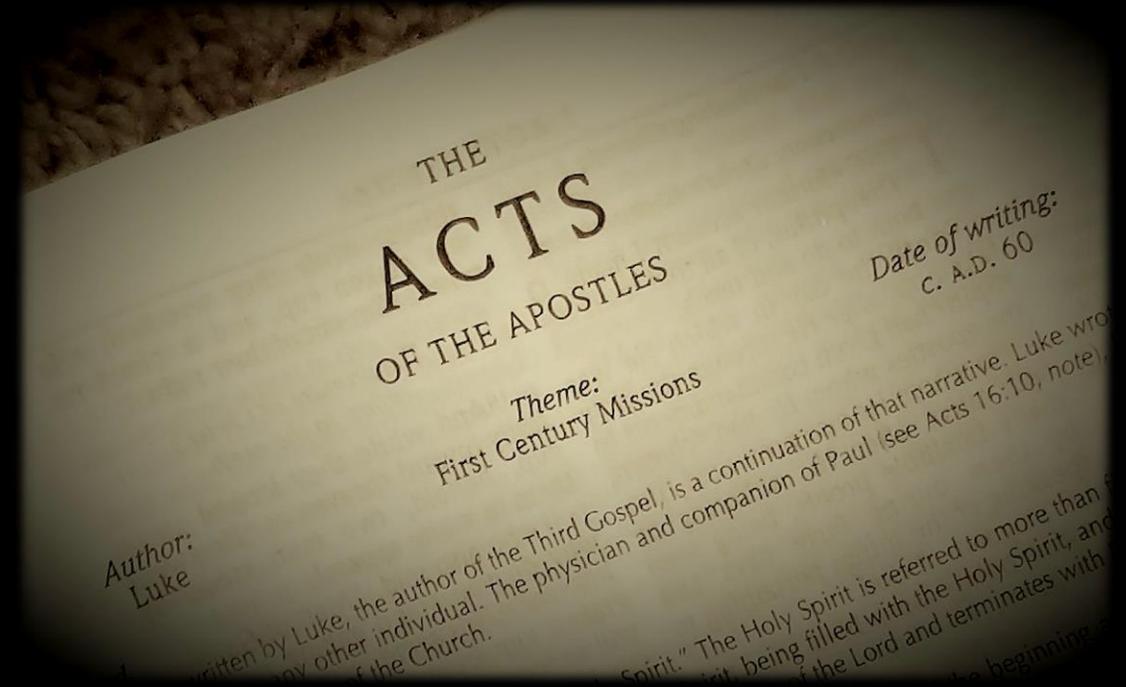


# Verse by Verse

## Acts 12



Previously in *Acts*

## Previously in Acts

- We have been watching the expansion of the church among the Gentiles.
- We saw the conversion of Cornelius the Roman along with his family and friends.
- The church expanded as far as Antioch in Syria where Paul and Barnabas served as leaders.
- What is happening back in the original Jewish church?

# Acts 12 Introduction

## Acts 12 Introduction

- Our author, Dr. Luke, now takes us back to Israel where **Herod Agrippa I** is on the throne.
- Agrippa was the grandson of **Herod the Great**, who ruled at the time Jesus was born.
- He was raised in Rome and so was very well connected in Roman political circles.
- As a result, though only in his early thirties, he became a very powerful king.

# Acts 12    Key Verse

## Acts 12 Key Verse

- Acts 12:24 (ESV)

But the word of God increased and multiplied.

# Acts 12 Outline

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1. Herod's Persecution 12:1-5
2. Peter's Release 12:6-19
3. Herod's Death 12:20-24
4. Meanwhile ... 12:25

# 1. Herod's Persecution 12:1-5

# 1. Herod's Persecution 12:1-5

- 12:1-2 Stephen, one of the Seven, was the first martyr, as we read in Acts 7.
- Now James the son of Zebedee becomes the first of the apostles to die for his faith.
- His brother John will live a long life and die a natural death in a distant land.

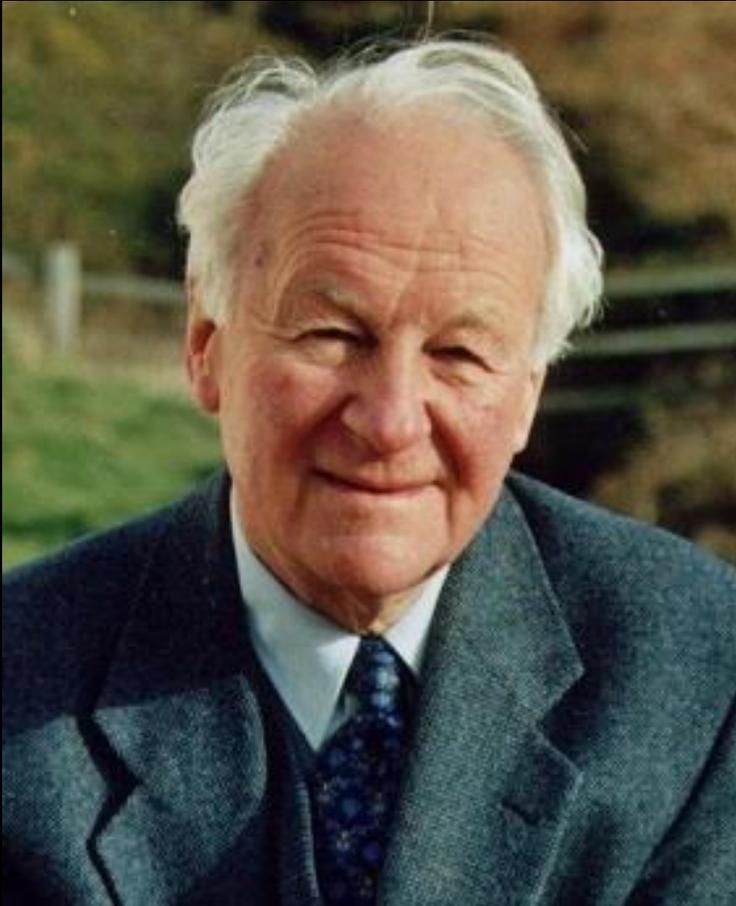
# 1. Herod's Persecution 12:1-5

- 12:3-4 Peter has now been arrested multiple times.
- In Acts 5, he and the other apostles were arrested but then miraculously freed.
- Four squads of soldiers
- Each squad had four soldiers, so this is a total of sixteen soldiers to guard one man.

# 1. Herod's Persecution 12:1-5

- 12:5 earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.
- One thing we can always do is pray.
- It is far better to put ourselves in the hands of a merciful God than a wicked king.

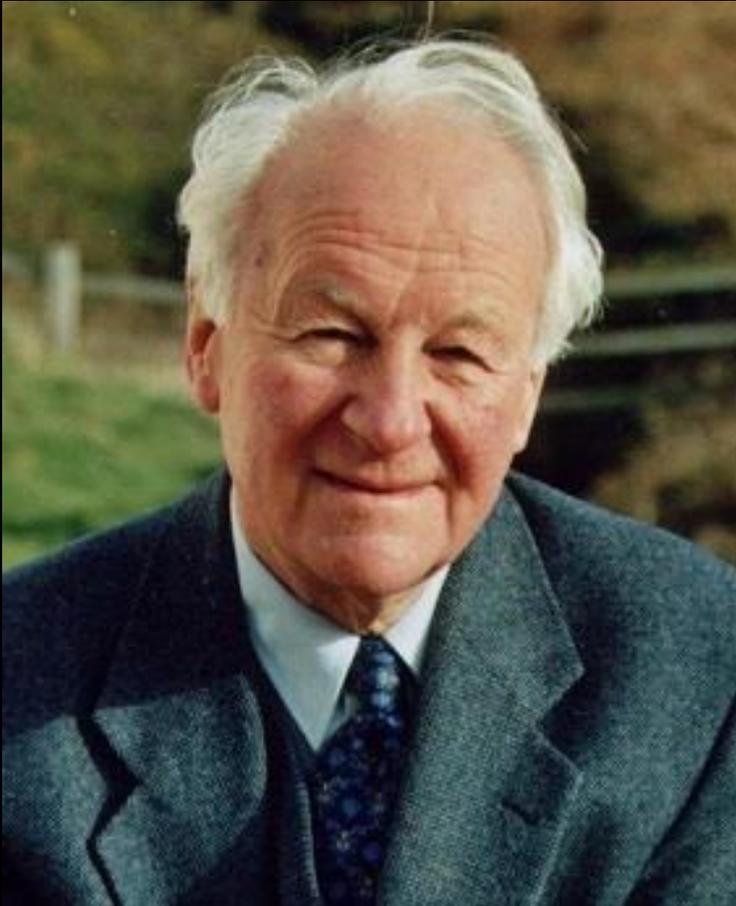
## 2. The 11:19-26



*Here then were two communities, the world and the church, arrayed against one another, each wielding an appropriate weapon. On the one side was the authority of Herod, the power of the sword and the security of the prison ...*

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),  
All Souls Church, London*

## 2. The 11:19-26



*... On the other side, the church  
turned to prayer, which is the only  
power which the powerless possess.  
– John Stott (1921 – 2011),  
All Souls Church, London*

# 1. Herod's Persecution 12:1-5

Obedience and the Sovereignty of God

# 1. Herod's Persecution 12:1-5

## Obedience and the Sovereignty of God

- Why was **James** killed early on while his brother **John** had a long life and an effective ministry?
- The honest answer is that **we do not know**.
- We have to trust that God's plans are best.

# 1. Herod's Persecution 12:1-5

## Obedience and the Sovereignty of God

- Our job is to walk in obedience and trust God with the outcome of that obedience.
- Consider the response of the **three friends of Daniel** to **Nebuchadnezzar's** threat of the fiery furnace.

# 1. Herod's Persecution 12:1-5

- Daniel 3:16-18 (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

- 12:6 sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains
- Normal practice would have been to chain the prisoner directly to the soldiers (usually just one).

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

- 12:6 and sentries before the door were guarding the prison.
- Remember there were a total of sixteen soldiers assigned to Peter.
- They could take turns sleeping and standing watch through the night.

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

- **12:7-9** Peter is experiencing all these things and does not realize that it is actually happening.
- **12:10-11** Only when the angel disappears and leaves him on a street corner does he know it is real.

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

- 12:12 John whose other name was Mark
- Make a note of John Mark.
- He is featured later in Acts.
- We also know him the author of the Gospel of Mark.

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

- 12:12 many were gathered together and were praying.
- Peter must have known where the church would be gathered and so he went straight there.

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

- 12:15 It is his angel
- Many Jews at this time had some very specific beliefs about guardian angels.
- These beliefs obviously did not disappear when people became Christians.
- Unfortunately, there is not a lot of biblical data to work with, so we are just going to bypass this topic.

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

- 12:13-16 Remember what it said back in v.5 about earnest prayer for Peter?
- Do you think at least some of those prayers might have been for Peter's release?
- Yet they don't believe it's real when it actually happens and Peter shows up at the door!
- More on this in a bit.

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

- **12:17** James – or Jacob – the brother of Jesus and author of the book of James.
- As the apostles left Jerusalem, James took on the status of an apostle in the Jewish church.
- We will see more of him later in Acts.

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

- 12:19 Herod ... examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death.
- This was in accordance with normal Roman practice.
- If a soldier let a prisoner escape, then that soldier was subject to the prisoner's anticipated sentence.
- We may conclude that Herod intended to kill Peter.

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

Prayer can accomplish more than we realize.

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Prayer can accomplish more than we realize.

- One of the reasons we may not pray enough is that we harbor doubts as to the effectiveness of prayer.
- And when we do pray, we may not really be expecting any kind of answer.
- This may be due to a lack of experience with amazing answers to prayer.

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

Prayer can accomplish more than we realize.

- This can become a vicious circle.
- We lack experience of amazing answers, so we doubt the effectiveness of prayer, so we don't pray (much).
- And how then do we expect to see amazing answers to prayer?

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

*It was God who unrolled the blueprint for the foundation of the world before history's dawning. It was God who called the cosmos out of chaos with his own voice ... It was God who sent the earth spinning on its axis ... Do you know who you are talking to when you pray?*



*H. B. Charles, Jr., in  
It Happens after  
Prayer*

## 2. Peter's Release 12:6-19

### Conclusion:

1. Pray
2. Pray often
3. Pray earnestly

Prayer can accomplish more than we realize because God can accomplish more than we can imagine.

### 3. Herod's Death 12:20-24

### 3. Herod's Death 12:20-24

*Now when Agrippa ... came to the city Cesarea ... there was a certain festival ... a great multitude was gotten together ... he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful; and came into the theater early in the morning. At which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflexion of the suns rays upon it, ...*



Flavius Josephus  
(~ 37 – 100 AD)

### 3. Herod's Death 12:20-24

*... shone out after a surprizing manner ...  
And presently his flatterers cried out ...  
that "He was a God." ... Upon this the  
King did neither rebuke them, nor reject  
their impious flattery. But as he presently  
afterward looked up, ... A severe pain also  
arose in his belly; and began in a most  
violent manner ...*



Flavius Josephus  
(~ 37 – 100 AD)

### 3. Herod's Death 12:20-24

... Accordingly he was carried into the palace: ... Now the King rested in an high chamber: ... And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly, for five days, he departed this life.



From: <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-19.html>

Flavius Josephus  
(~ 37 – 100 AD)

### 3. Herod's Death 12:20-24

- Mary, in her prayer of praise at Elizabeth's house, said,
- Luke 1:51-52 (ESV)

<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

<sup>52</sup> he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;

### 3. Herod's Death 12:20-24

- James the brother of John was killed early in this chapter by Herod.
- Peter was imprisoned by Herod but miraculously released.
- John, the brother of James had a long and effective ministry, though he suffered along the way.
- And Herod died a miserable and humiliating death.

### 3. Herod's Death 12:20-24

*God always has the last word. If this does not seem to be the case, it is because the last word has not yet been said.*

*– Ajith Fernando,  
Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka*



### 3. Herod's Death 12:20-24

- Dr. Luke our author gives us more of a last word to this entire chapter in our Key Verse.
- **Acts 12:24** (ESV)

But the word of God increased and multiplied.

4. Meanwhile ... 12:25

## 4. Meanwhile ... 12:25

- This verse prepares us for the next chapter and the next phase of the church's ministry.
- Make another note of [John Mark](#).
- He comes up again in the next chapter.

# Acts 12    What We Just Read

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1. Herod's Persecution    12:1-5
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# Acts 12 Key Verse

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# Acts 12    Key Points

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1. Our job is to walk in obedience and trust God with the outcome of that obedience.
2. Pray, pray often, and pray earnestly.
3. Prayer can accomplish more than we realize because God can accomplish more than we can imagine.
4. God always gets the last word.

## Acts 12    Key Points

5. (And if it doesn't look that way, it just means the last word has not yet been said.)

# Acts 12    A Prayer

# Acts 12    A Prayer

- Dear Father in heaven,
- We thank you for these wonderful examples from the life of the earliest church.
- Help us to have a spiritual life that would be as vibrant and active and real as that which we see in the book of Acts.

# Acts 12    A Prayer

- Give us the ability to walk in obedience and all the while trust you with the outcome of that obedience.
- Show us how to be people that would be more devoted to prayer and people who would pray bold prayers – because you can do more than we can imagine.

# Acts 12    A Prayer

- Then please, let us see amazing answers to those prayers once we offer them up.
- Help us also to remember that you always get the last word – and if it doesn't look that way, it only means that the last word has yet to be said.
- In Christ,
- Amen

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