

Subject	Lessons from Acts Series	4402
		Acts 2
Title	7 Lessons from Acts 12	
Proposition	To study Acts 12.	
Objective	To consider seven lessons which Acts 12 helps me to consider and appreciate and apply in my own life.	

7 Lessons from Acts 12

Introduction:

1. **We are so blessed by the record that Luke provides of the history of the NT church!**
 - 1) **He was guided, in his writing, by the Holy Spirit of God.**
 - 2) **APPLICATION of the words written by Luke should be made to my life as a Christian.**
2. **All of us are different and we can read through a historical record like this and glean many differing lessons to be applied to our own individual lives.**
3. **This series of lessons in which we are noticing SEVEN LESSONS from each of the 28 chapters of Acts is only intended to get you to thinking about what YOU might learn to AID your own walk with the God who guided Luke and the other inspired men of the 1st Century.**
4. **Let's truly be thankful for the Bible!**
 - 1) **Let's NEVER develop the idea that we know it all.**
 - 2) **Most of us have studied the Book of Acts many many times.**
 - 3) **Yet, there is still an abundance of benefit for us to study it over and over again!**
5. **Refer to STPO.**

DISCUSSION: Acts 12 Helps me to know that—

I. **CONTRAST is a Great Teacher (Acts 12).**

*This chapter demonstrates Luke's understanding of the nature and location of **true** power.¹*

EIGHT GREAT CONTRASTS IN ACTS 12...

1. *James is executed by Herod (v. 2); Peter is MIRACULOUSLY DELIVERED by God (12.6-11).*
2. *Herod exercises BRUTE FORCE against the Christians (12.1-3); but is unable to withstand the POWER of God at the end (12.20-23).*
3. *Herod hatches an elaborate scheme to keep Peter in prison (12.4-6), but God sends SPECIFIC instructions that lead to his release (12.6-11).*
4. *The church prayed for Peter (12.5b), BUT found it difficult to accept that its prayers had been answered (12.12-17).*
5. *Peter is passive and drowsy (12.6-7), but the angel of God is quick and decisive (12.6-10).*
6. *Peter's release is secured with precision and haste (12.6-10), but the church is slow and confused in its comprehension of his release (12.12-17).*
7. *Herod sought the favor of the Jews (12.3), BUT he lost the favor of God (12.23).*
8. *Peter was STRUCK to life and freedom by an angel (12.7), BUT Herod was STRUCK to death by an angel of the Lord (12.23).*

¹ Mikeal C. Parsons, [Acts](#), Paideia Commentaries on The New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 170.

9. Yes, **CONTRAST** is a great teacher and you and I, as Christians, must learn to appreciate its teaching.
- 1) The Bible teaches me that my life as a Christian should **STRONGLY CONTRAST** with the lives of those of the world!
 - 2) **1 John 2:15-17** *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (17) And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*
 - 3) **1 Peter 2:9** *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*
 - 4) **Colossians 1:13** *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*
 - 5) I think most of us would agree that one of the MAJOR reasons the church is not growing as it should is that there is NOT ENOUGH **contrast** between us and the world!

Acts 12 Helps me to know that—

II. It is NOTHING NEW that the church of Christ is HATED & HARASSED (12.1-3).

Acts 12:1-3 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. (2) And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. (3) And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

1. Herod had a **PURPOSE** in doing what he did in Acts 12!
 - 1) **TO VEX CERTAIN OF THE CHURCH...** It was his purpose to VEX certain members of the church.
 - 2) The NKJV uses the word **HARASS; PUT FORTH HANDS TO AFFLICT (ASV); LAID VIOLENT HANDS ON (ESV);**
2. There is that **OLD JOKE**, so old that it is older than me.
 - 1) St. Peter is at the gate of heaven.
 - 2) A Baptist, Methodist, Catholic come in and Peter escorts them one by one to their room, instructing each to be especially quiet when passing one of the rooms.
 - 3) The Catholic asks the question of Peter: **WHY?** and the answer is: *that's where the church of Christ is and they think they are the ONLY ONES HERE.*
3. It **COSTS** to take a stand for the uniqueness of the church.
 - 1) When we do so, it is because we are **ABIDING IN** the doctrine of Christ—**2 John 1:9** *Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*

- 2) We are simply holding to the authority of Christ—Colossians 3:17 *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*
4. Those who did the exact same thing in the 1st Century were the ones who got harassed by Herod.
 - 1) Here in Jerusalem in the 1st Century the nation of the Jews were so violently opposed to Christianity that the King who ruled over them would actually be doing them a favor—*HE SAW THAT IT PLEASED THE JEWS*—to kill an apostle of Christ.
 - 2) We haven't reached that state of desperation yet, but it could be coming.
5. What are Christians to do?
 - 1) We must pay attention to the last few verses of Luke 14 (26-35), and KNOW that being a Christian is costly.
 - 2) It cost Jesus His life for us to be able to belong to Him.
 - 3) We must be willing to follow His teaching without compromise, even when it is NOT EASY to do so!
 - 4) Our examples are those 1st Century Christians.

Acts 12 Helps me to know that—

III. God's People are NEVER defenseless against persecution (12.5).

Acts 12:5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

1. Persecution came to the church in the form of Peter being kept in prison just for being a Christian and leading efforts to evangelize.
2. *BUT PRAYER WAS MADE WITHOUT CEASING OF THE CHURCH...*
 - 1) What was it Jesus said at the giving of the GC?
 - 2) Matthew 28:20 *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*
 - 3) McGarvey writes: *This is a PROMISE not of bare companionship, but of full sympathy and support.*
 - 1- Isaiah 43:2 *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*
 - 2- Moses knew very well the VALUE of having God with the people--Exodus 33:15 *And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.*
 - 3- And words from the Lord must have been greatly comforting to Joshua: Joshua 1:5 *There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*

3. Paul knew the power of prayer and asked his brethren to pray for him—Ephesians 6:18-19 *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (19) And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,*
4. There are many enemies of the truth and there are many who would seek to drive us away from faithfulness to the Lord.
5. However, we have the wonderful blessing of prayer.
6. It has ALWAYS been a source of encouragement to me that when Paul listed the armor of the Christian in Ephesians 6.13-17, the first 2 words in the next verse were *PRAYING ALWAYS*.
7. Power is out there AGAINST US and yet we have PRAYER.

Acts 12 Helps me to know that--

IV. Some Men are Willing OPENLY to Oppose the Will of God (Acts 12.6).

Acts 12:6 *And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.*

1. In the last part of this verse Luke seems to be stressing a message.
 - 1) It seems to me the message is that the authorities were expecting something to happen.
 - 2) Here is a peaceable man who has no criminal record and has done nothing illegal.
 - 3) Yet he is being treated as if he was the most dangerous criminal ever.
 - 4) WHY does Peter get such attention as this.
 - 1- Well, when we read chapters 4 and 5, the answer becomes obvious.
 - 2- Peter had been teaching something that was opposed by the Jews—Acts 4:1-3 *And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, (2) Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. (3) And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.*
 - 3- Preaching the resurrection of Jesus had irritated these Jews whom Herod wanted to please (v. 3).
 - 4- The power of God had been demonstrated by the healing of the lame man.
 - 1] Peter had clearly informed the authorities BY WHAT POWER the lame man was now walking (4.8-10).
 - 2] Let's read Acts 4:8-10 *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, (9) If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; (10) Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that **by***

the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

3] That revelation to the authorities **MADE NO DIFFERENCE**.

2. Here we are in Acts 12 finding these same Jews in the position of **BEING PLEASED** by the murder of a Christian (James), and the powers that be committing the murder simply to please them!
3. Herod was intending to kill Peter for the very same reason (v. 3).
4. When men boldly **PROCLAIM** their opposition to God, what response can God's people have?
 - 1) We still have the obligation to obey civil authorities so long as they do not require us to disobey God (Romans 13).
 - 2) **BUT** the boldness of ungodly men to defy Almighty God **OUGHT TO EMBOLDEN CHRISTIANS TO BE BOLD** in response!
 - 3) That was indeed the response of the Jerusalem Christians.
 - 1- When Peter knocked at the door of Mary's house, where Christians were gathered, what did they do?
 - 2- Did they turn him away because of fear of Herod?
 - 3- No, they let him in and followed his instructions to tell the brethren about what had happened—Acts 12:17 **...Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.**
5. With this knowledge that some men are willing even to fight against God, we must acknowledge that we are in a spiritual battle.
 - 1) The Holy Spirit pictures us as the army of God (Ephesians 6.10-18).
 - 2) We are at war with falsehood.
 - 3) We are at war with those who deny the existence of God.
 - 4) We are at war with those who claim they have a superior system of ethics to that given by the God of the universe!
 - 5) We cannot compromise God's truth because we know that a Judgment Day is coming—John 12:48 **He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.**

Acts 12 Helps me to know that—

V. God sometimes **WAITS to the very last Minute to bring Our Needed Blessing (12.6).**

Acts 12:6 **And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.**

1. Herod was just about to take the life of the Apostle Peter.
2. That very night of the rescue Peter's life was in jeopardy!
3. Yes, God's timetable and ours is not always identical.
4. We must never get discouraged or **THINK** that God does not care!

5. **We must continue to trust in Him and know that He knows better than we JUST HOW to answer our prayers.**

Acts 12 Helps me to know that—

VI. Like 21st Century Christians sometimes are, these 1st Century Christians Prayed and Were SURPRISED at God's Answer (12.15-16)

Acts 12:15-16 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. (16) But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

1. **Can we not see ourselves in these verses?**
2. **They had prayed that God intervene in the life of Peter (v. 5).**
3. **Had they truly believed He would do it?**
 - 1) **We really don't have enough information to make that claim.**
 - 2) **But, Luke seems to be pushing us as we read this account to draw that conclusion.**
 - 3) **Perhaps he does so to get us to think about our own prayers.**
4. **Really it is WISE for you and me not to anticipate God's answer to our own prayers.**
 - 1) **That is, we should not feel we KNOW what God will do.**
 - 2) **We do not have God's knowledge.**
 - 3) **BUT God knows what is best for us.**
 - 4) **Our task is constantly to TRUST in Him that He will do that which is best for His people.**

Acts 12 Helps me to know that—

VII. Though Evil is Prominent, there Is Coming a Day of Reckoning (12.18-25).

Acts 12:1-2 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. (2) And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. **/// Acts 12:21-25** And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. (22) And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. (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. (24) But the word of God grew and multiplied. (25) And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

1. **This chapter could serve as a REMINDER that though things may be looking mighty GRIM for truth and that which is right—A DAY IS COMING when justice will be forthcoming!**
2. **At the beginning of the chapter (1-2), ONE OF THE SPECIALLY SELECTED APOSTLES OF CHRIST was brutally killed by the Civil Rulers—BUT, by the end of the chapter, that same evil man who caused it to be so was judged by God (23).**

Conclusion:

- 1. What an AMAZING book is the Book of Acts.**
- 2. The history book of our family, the family of God.**
- 3. Let's study it and appreciate the multitude of lessons it gives for our benefit and encouragement!**