

**LEAVING THE OUTCOME TO GOD!**  
**ACTS CH12:20-25**

**ILLUSTRATION**

Chapter 12 opens with Herod Agrippa 1<sup>st</sup> using violent hands against the Church, killing James and arresting Peter! It initially appears that Herod is triumphing! However, the chapter closes with Herod dead, Peter released and the Church thriving through God's Word triumphing!

**THE ANGRY KING'S RULING! V20**

This Herod is Herod Agrippa 1<sup>st</sup>. **Herod Agrippa 1<sup>st</sup> (ruled from A.D. 37-44 including in Judea A.D. 41-44)**, the grandson of "Herod the Great" and nephew of Herodias, Herod Antipas's wife! Eventually ended up ruling over even more territory than his grandfather, "Herod the Great." In the book of Acts, he is known as the one who put Peter in prison (Acts 12:1-5) ..... although he couldn't keep him there (12:6-17)! Also..... "He did not give God the glory" when referred to as a god by the people of Tyre and Sidon and was thus struck by an angel and "eaten by worms" (Acts 12:20-23).

The chapter begins with Herod killing James the apostle of the Lord Jesus (v. 2), and ends with the angel of the Lord killing Herod (v. 23). Piper states "the main point of the chapter is plain: ***if you oppose Jesus, you lose!*** Luke put this chapter together to make this plain for the early church: you may feel small and insignificant in the Roman empire; you may think that you are overpowered when some of your best leaders are killed on a political whim. But the truth is: if you stay with Jesus, you win, and if you oppose him, you lose. So be encouraged. Be bold and courageous to spread the Word of truth and leave the outcome to God" (Cited by John Piper – December 1991).

***What else do we know about Herod?***

1. V1 He loved violence!
2. V2 He picked on the minorities and treated them ruthlessly!
3. V3 He was a people pleaser!
4. V20 He had anger issues!
5. V20 He misused his power!
6. V23 He robbed God of His Glory!

According to John Stott "Herod had been quarrelling with the people of Tyre and Sidon on the Phoenician coast, or was furiously angry with them. So they now joined together and sought an audience with him. For this they needed an intermediary. So having secured support (perhaps with a bribe) of Blastus, who is identified as a trusted personal servant of the king or the royal chamberlain, they asked for peace. It was urgent for them to be restored to Herod's favour, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply, especially Galilean corn" (Cited in John Stott, Commentary on Acts page 212).

**THE ANGEL'S KING'S RULING! V21-23**

**Flavius Josephus**, original name **Joseph Ben Matthias**, (born AD 37/38, Jerusalem—died AD 100, Rome), Jewish priest, scholar, and historian who wrote valuable works on the Jewish Revolt of 66-70 and on earlier Jewish history. His major books are *History of the Jewish War (75–79)*, *The Antiquities of the Jews (93)*, and *Against Apion*. According to John Stott "Josephus also described in graphic detail the circumstances surrounding Herod's death. His account and Luke's differ from one another in a few details, which shows they are independent. But their general outline is the same. Both agree that Herod was in Caesarea at the time, although Josephus said he had gone there to participate in a

festival in honour of Caesar, which was attended by a large crowd of leading citizens. Both mention the royal robes he was wearing, while Josephus adds the detail that his garment was made wholly of silver and of a texture truly wonderful, which shone so brightly in the morning sun that the people hailed him as a god. Upon this, Josephus continued, the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. Luke and Josephus agree, therefore, that God's judgement fell upon him because he glorified himself instead of God. Although Luke says he was eaten by worms, Josephus is content with more general statement that a severe pain ..... across his belly, which became so violent that he was carried into his palace where five days later he died” (Cited in John Stott, Commentary on Acts page 213).

### **THE ADVANCING KING'S RULING! V24-25**

Luke closes the chapter with another set of “summary verse” that show God's Word continuing to spread and the Church growing. Although Luke at this point does not say how many people are “saved” chapter 21:20 suggests “many thousands” have turned to Christ through the preaching and spreading of God's Word!

In his presentation of the advance of the Christian Mission, ***Luke follows an essentially geographical outline that moves from Jerusalem (Ch2:42 – Ch6:7), through Judea and Samaria (Ch6:8 – Ch9:31), on into Palestine-Syria (Ch9:32 – Ch12:24), then to the Gentiles in the eastern part of the Roman empire (Ch12:25 – Ch19:20), and finally culminates in Paul's defences and the entrance of the Gospel into Rome (Ch19:21 – Ch28:31).***

Luke includes 6 summary statements or “progress reports” (Ch6:7; Ch9:31; Ch12:24; Ch16:5; Ch19:20; Ch28:31), each of which seems to conclude it's own “panel” of material. Taking all these literary and structural features into account, we may conclude that Luke developed his material in Acts along the following lines:

Introduction: The Constitutive Events of the Christian Mission (Ch1:1 – Ch2:41)

### **PART 1**

1. The Christian Mission to the Jewish World (Ch2:42 – Ch12:24)
2. Panel 1 – The Earliest Days of the Church at Jerusalem (Ch2:42 – Ch6:7)  
Summary statement: “So the Word of God spread. The number of Disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of Priests became obedient to the faith” (Ch6:7).
3. Panel 2 – Critical Events in the Lives of Three Pivotal Figures (Ch6:8 – Ch9:31)  
Summary statement: “Then the Church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord” (Ch9:31).
4. Panel 3 – Advances of the Gospel in Palestine – Syria (Ch9:32 – Ch12:24)  
Summary statement: “But the Word of God continued to increase and spread” (Ch12:24).

### **PART 2**

1. The Christian Mission to the Gentile World (Ch12:25 – Ch28:31)
2. Panel 4 – The First Missionary Journey and The Jerusalem Council (Ch12:25 – Ch16:5) Summary statement: “So the Churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers” (Ch16:5)
3. Panel 5 – Wide outreach Through Two Missionary Journeys (Ch16:6 – Ch19:20)

Summary statement; “In this way the Word of the Lord spread quickly and grew in power” (Ch19:20).

4. Panel 6 – To Jerusalem and Thence to Rome (Ch19:21 – Ch28:31) Summary statement; “Boldly and without hindrance he preached the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (Ch28:31) (Cited in Richard Longenecker, Commentary on Acts, pg233-234).”

### **APPLICATION**

In the words of John Piper “The lesson for us is plain: if we oppose Jesus we lose. We may feel small and insignificant; we may think that we are overpowered when some of our best leaders are killed on a political whim. But the truth is: if we stay with Jesus, we win, and if we oppose him, we lose. So be encouraged. Don't be impressed by temporary worldly triumphs over the gospel. Be bold and courageous to spread the Word of God and leave the outcome to God.”