

Acts of Jesus, Lesson 24: This World Needs a "But"!

What's in a name? Our series in the book of Acts and considering the first place where followers of Jesus were called Christians.

1. **Acts 12:1**

- The name Herod is a name that is pretty much synonymous with bad people in history.
- 1. Herod the Great – had his wife (one of many) murdered and then had his two sons executed because they found out about his part in the murder.
 - The Emperor of Rome at the time joked that it was safer to be Herod's pig than to be his son.
 - He did lots of other atrocities not the least of which was having every male child in the vicinity of Bethlehem killed in an attempt to kill the baby Jesus.
- 2. Herod Archelaus – (Son of Herod the Great) his cruelty was the reason God sent Joseph and Mary back to Nazareth instead of Bethlehem after they left Egypt.
- 3. Herod Antipas – (Son of Herod the Great) was the guy who stole his brother Phillip's wife against which John the Baptist preached for which Antipas had his head removed from his shoulders.
- 4. Herod Agrippa I – (Son of Antipas and grandson of Herod the Great) is the villain of this story.
- 5. Herod Agrippa II – is the Herod we find mentioned at the Paul's trial
- 6. at the end of the book of Acts.

2. **Let's take a look at what I think is an all-important question "Does our world have a 'but'?"**

- "But" as in a conjunction not a part of the anatomy.
- As we're going to see it is a "but" that makes all the difference in our story and all the difference in our lives and the world we live in.
- **Acts 12:1-2** --These two brothers form the book ends if you will for the ministries of the apostles James is the first of the apostles to die (in 44 A.D. – we know the year because it's the same year Herod dies which is well documented in Roman and Jewish history) John is the last near 100 A.D.
- **Acts 12:1-11**
- This little conjunction "but" is the all important word in this story.
- Not to say they didn't pray, but this is the first time we hear of the church concertedly praying for one of theirs who's in a tight place.
- This stands out especially in the contrast in this story:
 1. James is imprisoned and there is no indication of prayer - James loses his head.
 2. It is very clear that the Spirit intended for us to "blame" the release Of Peter on the prayers of the church.
 - What would be the likely outcome be of this story? Peter dies....**BUT!!!!**
 - James' death got the church's attention.
 - The difference between James and Peter is that Peter had a "BUT".!!!
 - God has chosen to limit Himself and the ministry He does to the prayers and ministry of His people.
 - This fact is demonstrated in several places and in various ways:
 1. The Church is called the Body of Christ, the Spirit of Christ dwells in her.
 - Likewise, Jesus does almost everything He does through His Body.
 2. There is something in Jeremiah that is very provocative: Jer. 14:11 Why? How do our prayers affect the Almighty???? ... James 4:2!!!
 - Do we realize how a large a part believers' play in the goodness and blessings that our world enjoys?
 - Jesus said we are light of world and the salt of earth.
 - Without believers praying and caring and ministering, the world comes apart.
 - Bad people get worse/ cruel and horrible things increase/ no one intervenes for the helpless/ lives that are messed up never get fixed.

3. **We are the only chance for a "but" that this world has.**

- We need to be a "but" for each other.
- We need to be the "but" for our world.
- God has no other program of ministry but His church!!
- The only light the only salt, the only chance at a "but" that our world around us has is us