

LESSONS THIS QUARTER

- 1) 02 June 2024..... Acts 1 Commissioned
- 2) 09 & 16 June..... Acts 2a..... Empowered
- 3) 09 & 16 June..... Acts 2b..... United
- 4) 23 June..... Acts 3 Placed
- 5) 30 June & 07 July..... Acts 4a..... Emboldened
- 6) 30 June & 07 July..... Acts 4b..... Accountable
- 7) 14 July..... Acts 5 Worthy
- 8) 21 July..... Acts 6-7 Serving
- 9) 28 July..... Acts 8 Baptizing
- 10) 04 & 11 Aug..... Acts 9a..... Calling
- 11) 04 & 11 Aug..... Acts 9b..... Healing
- 12) 18 Aug..... Acts 10-11..... Including
- 13) 25 Aug..... Acts 12..... Praying

INTRODUCTION

- We see a stark contrast with Apostles James and Peter. Both are jailed. Assuredly the church along with the rest of the Apostles prayed for both. Yet, James is killed and Peter is released. If they prayed the same for James & Peter, why wasn't James released?

Passage	Comments
12:24	<p>And The Word of God Grew and Multiplied</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice the political turmoil the early church endured <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A tyrant (Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great) ruled them ◆ Rulers were unjust and got away with murder ◆ Divorce was common; and so was living together, adultery, prostitution, homosexuality, and pedophilia ◆ Slavery and racial bigotry were the norm ◆ Life was cheap, and Christians were expendable ◆ Persecuting and even killing Christians pleased many who were in power • Yet, the church grew exponentially as God's word spread from one town to the next WHY? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The church grew without having a music program ◆ The church grew without having indoor plumbing, the internet, a nursery, or even a formal building ◆ The church grew without elaborate preaching ◆ So what is the secret to grow a church God's way? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Unadulterated teaching/preaching of God's word? 6. Righteous people living righteously 24x7? 7. Other Reasons: _____

Passage	Comments
Acts 12:1-23	<p>We Have a Dilemma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presumably the church prayed for both James and Peter when they were each imprisoned. So why was James beheaded while Peter was released? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Did ALL the believers lack faith or stopped abiding in Christ? Not likely. James, Peter and the other Apostles, at least, would have prayed appropriately • Some say James was killed before people knew of it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Consider this. Since the early Christians met daily "in the temple and in every house" (Acts 5:42) it is no stretch of the imagination that James' imminent death was no secret, so they prayed fervently. ◆ And consider this. If their praying did lack faith, then it should've been Peter who got beheaded since it could be reasoned those praying for him in John-Mark's house had weak faith since they disbelieved Rhonda's report of Peter being outside (which was quite comical) • Here's the Dilemma. Either we have contradictions in Scripture, or God changed the rules of the game, or we are misinterpreting Scripture. Which one is it? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Look at some of the promises we have for positively getting our prayers answered: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. John 14:13 WHATEVER YOU ASK in My name, that will I do.... 2. John 15:7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ASK WHATEVER YOU WISH, and it will be done for you. 3. John 16:23 If you ASK THE FATHER FOR ANYTHING in My name, He will give it to you. 4. John 16:24 ...ASK AND YOU WILL RECEIVE, so that your joy may be made full. ◆ To put these "asking/receiving" passages in the proper context we need to consider, John 16:25. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you in figures of speech (HSCB), figuratively (NASB), in proverbs (KJ), parables (Amp), in similitudes (YLT)" ◆ So, these promises should be viewed not with an earthly focus but with a heavenly kingdom focus ◆ Therefore, we do not have contradictions in Scripture, & God has not changed the rules of the game • We have to acknowledge it is God's prerogative to allow James (and many other Christians) to die ignoble deaths to further His kingdom and to bring Him glory

CONCLUSION / APPLICATIONS

- The early believers did not oppose Roman rule with violence but with prayer.
- In our day of turmoil and confusion where the rest of the world is contending with terrorism while Americans wrestle with which bathrooms to use –shouldn't we be more devoted to praying?

NEXT WEEK: 1Samual 1-2. We are introduced to Elkanah, his two wives, Peninnah and Hannah, to the High Priest, Eli, and his two wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas, and we see God providentially answering prayers for a baby who would be a new prophet-leader to help reverse the ineffective and even decadent priesthood.

