

Acts 12:1-25 –

Date: The events in this chapter occur exactly 13 years after the resurrection. The Great Famine occurred in 44 AD. This is when Queen Helena from northern Mesopotamia came to help the Jews. Herod Agrippa I died in 44 AD. James would have been decapitated in 43 AD. Paul and Barnabus would have arrived in Jerusalem in 43 AD with financial aid for the believers.

Focus: God protects church and eliminates the political threat.

Question: Why does James get killed, but Peter receives angelic assistance?

12:1 – King Herod Agrippa I

- Grandfather was Herod the Great
- Grandmother was Mariamne, the Hasmonean princess, Herod the Great's favorite wife.
- Father was Aristobulus who was born in 10 BC, but drowned in the baths at Jericho by Herod's soldiers on Herod's orders because Herod consider the son of a Hasmonean princess a threat to his Jewish crown. Agrippa was 3 years old at the time
- Agrippa was raised in Rome and grew up with the future Roman emperor **Claudius** (41-54 AD) and Drusus, the son of the current emperor **Tiberius** (14-37 AD)
- Agrippa overspent his money and returned to Israel poor and held no significant position
- Agrippa had become friends with **Caligula** who became emperor in 37 AD. Emperor and friend **Caligula** gave Agrippa the title "king" and placed him in charge of territory in northern Israel in 37 AD
- When Herod Antipas (ruled Galilee, Perea; decapitated John Baptist) died in 39 AD, **Caligula** added Galilee and Perea to Agrippa's territory.
- When **Claudius** became emperor in 41 AD Agrippa's was given Samaria and Judea
- Because of his Jewish genealogy and being the grandson of a Hasmonean princess the Pharisees embraced Agrippa.
- Josephus says, "Agrippa loved to live continually at Jerusalem, and was exactly careful in the observance of the laws of this country. He therefore kept himself entirely pure: nor did any day pass over his head without its appointed sacrifice."
- Agrippa's motivation to arrest and kill James is not clear, but must have been to please the Pharisees, etc.

Augustus	31 BC-14 AD	("friend" of Herod Great)
Tiberius	14-37 AD	Friend of his son Drusus
Caligula	37-41 AD	Friends of Caligula
Claudius	41-54 AD	Grew up together
Nero	54-68 AD	

12:2 – last mention of John in the book of Acts. John will end up in Ephesus and write from there.

- Agrippa had been granted "the law of the sword," or *ius gladii*, since he executed James.

12:3 – Feast of Unleavened Bread makes this event exactly 13 years to the day after Jesus' arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection. Passover was celebrated by slaughtering a lamb and eating the Passover meal on Nisan 13 (date of Last Supper). The Feast of Unleavened Bread began the next day on Nisan 14 (date of crucifixion). The Feast of First Fruits would be two days later on Nisan 16 (date of resurrection). Peter was to be killed on Nisan 14, or, more likely, after the seven day feast of Unleavened Bread ended on the Nisan 21.

12:5 – Peter would have been kept at Fort Antonia with the Roman Guards

12:6 – prisoners had to be "fully secured by bonds" at night according to Roman historians. And, all the more, the Christians who had previously escaped from prison during the night

12:7 – The angel "struck" or, Greek *patasso* which means a strong blow used other places in the context of a blow in a battle and in the Septuagint *patasso* is used to translate Moses "struck down" the Egyptian slave master in Exodus 2:12.

12:10 – Two iron gates guarded to two exits of the Antonia Fortress: One, led to the Temple Mount; Two, led to the city.

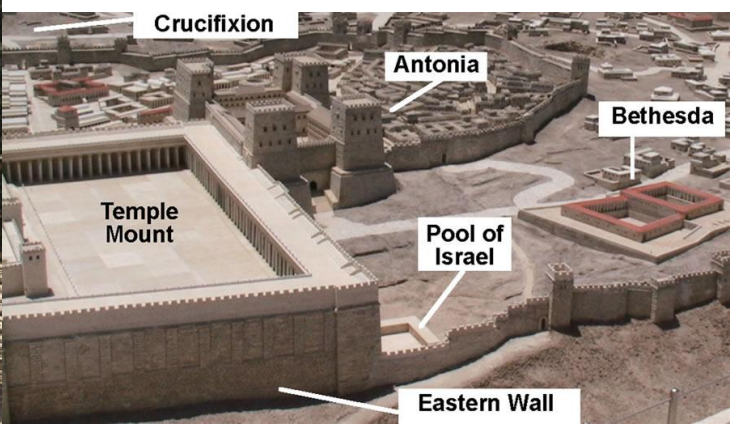
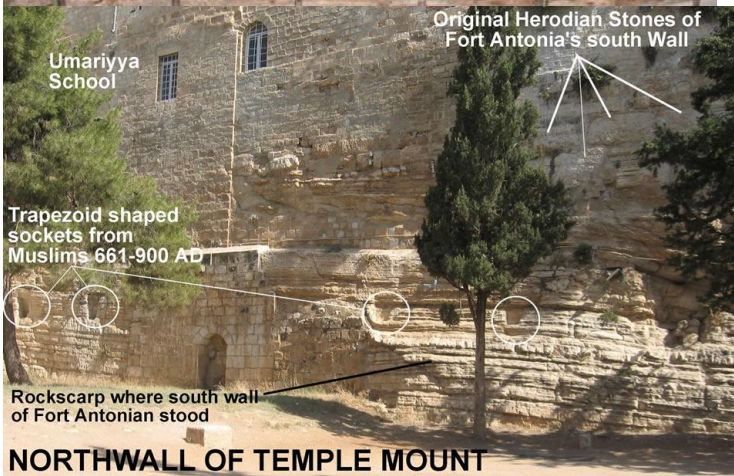
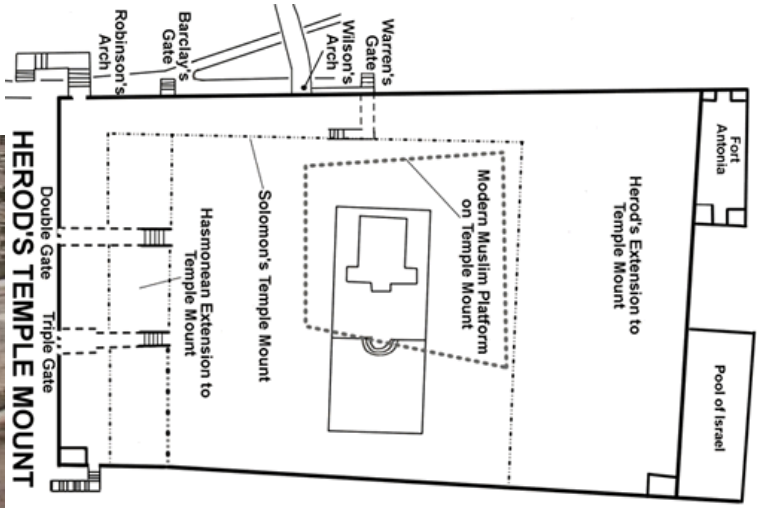
12:11 – Acts begins with everyone favoring the Christians after the first Pentecost, but now Christians are hunted.

12:12 – First mention of this Mary in scripture and her son John Mark. She was wealthy with a large house, a courtyard, in the same neighborhood as the high priest's mansion/palace with its courtyard, and she has servants, with a locked entrance

12:15 – Jews believed everyone has an angel that could look like the person they were assigned to. Jesus in Mat.18:10....

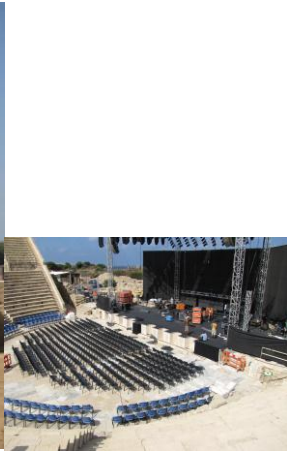
12:20 – Phoenicia (Tyre 50 miles north of Caesarea, Sidon 70 miles north of Caesarea) depended on Galilee for grain. During this famine Phoenicia was struggling.

12:21 – Josephus: Agrippa spoke in morning sun wearing entirely silver robe. Caligula insisted he, the emperor, was a god.



ABOVE: Fort Antonia sets on the NW corner of the Temple Mount. Peter would have been held in the prison of Fort Antonia and the gate that would have opened would have included one of the gates the led into the city streets on the west side. The east gate of the Fort can be seen setting between the two towers on the east side of Fort Antonia.

BELOW: Theater in Caesarea by Mediterranean Sea. Herod Agrippa I would have been speaking on this stage when he was struck with worms.

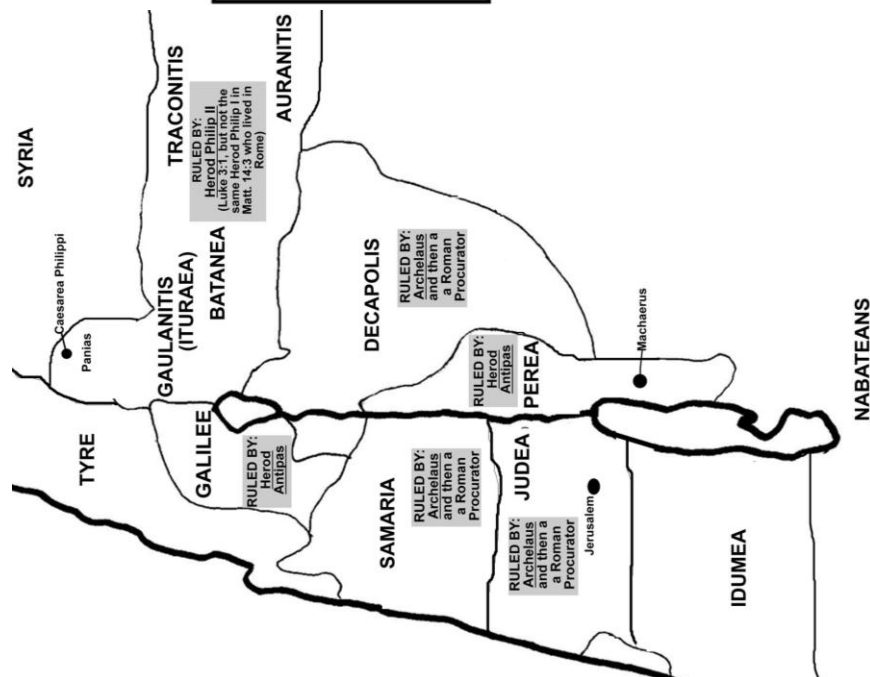
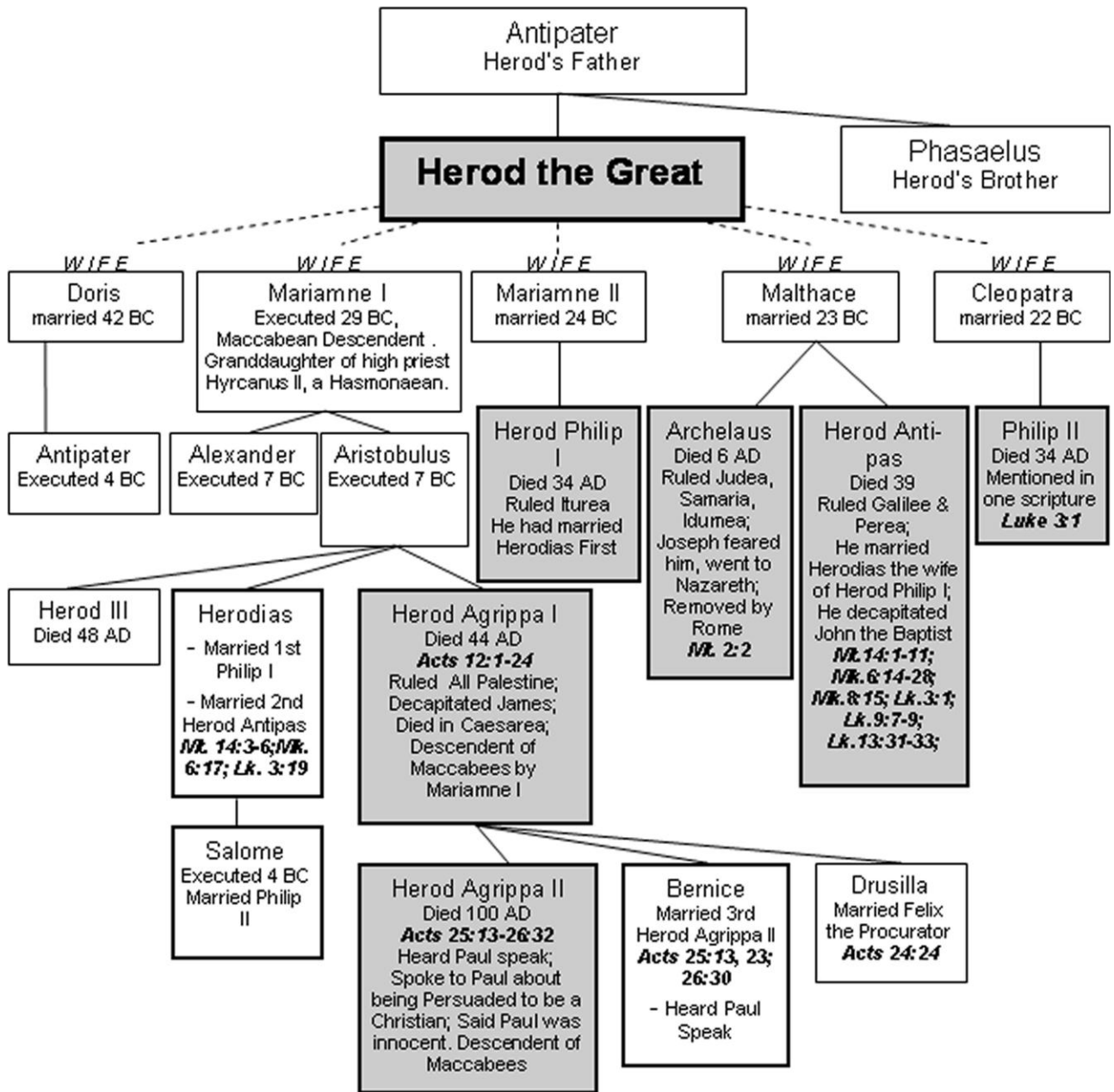


41-44 Pavement work by Herod Agrippa.



Agrippa's Damascus Gate from 41-44 AD





Josephus Account of Agrippa's Death

The account of King Agrippa's death is told by Flavius Josephus:

"Now when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Caesarea [...] There he exhibited shows in honor of the emperor [...] On the second day of the festival, Herod put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a truly wonderful contexture, and came into the theater early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment was illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it. It shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him. At that moment, his flatterers cried out [...] that he was a god; and they added, 'Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.'

Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But as he presently afterward looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and he fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, 'I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner.'

After he said this, his pain was become violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace, and the rumor went abroad that he would certainly die in a little time. But the multitude presently sat in sackcloth, with their wives and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king's recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high chamber, and as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground, he could not himself forbear weeping. And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and in the seventh year of his reign." (Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 19.343-350).