

Acts of the Apostles 12

Herod and St. Peter



Looking Back..



- ▶ In our last lesson:
- ▶ Peter explained to the circumcised Jews from Jerusalem about his vision and the reason for allowing Gentiles to be baptized.
- ▶ Their response was **“God has then granted life-giving repentance to the Gentiles too.”** (11:18)
- ▶ The Church in Antioch was growing and many people were preaching the Word.
- ▶ First Barnabas, and then Saul as well, are sent to Antioch. They stayed for an entire year teaching.
- ▶ A prophet predicted a worldwide famine. The disciples in Antioch collected what they could to provide relief for those in Judea. The collection was sent to the elders (presbyters) in Jerusalem with Barnabas and Saul.

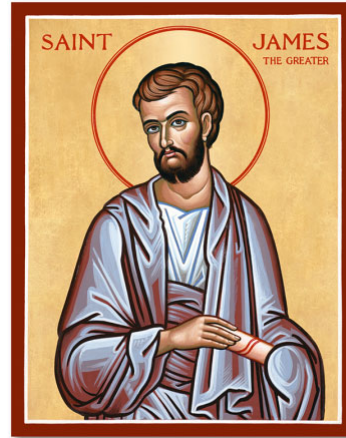
Acts 12:1-5



- ¹ About that time **King Herod** laid hands upon some members of the church to harm them. ² He had **James, the brother of John, killed by the sword,** ³ and when he saw that this was pleasing to the Jews he **proceeded to arrest Peter also.** (It was [the] feast of Unleavened Bread.) ⁴ He had him taken into custody and put in prison under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. He intended to bring him before the people after Passover. ⁵ Peter thus was being kept in prison, but prayer by the church was fervently being made to God on his behalf.

Who?

- ▶ Herod Agrippa I
- ▶ James the Great
- ▶ Peter
- ▶ Peter's Angel



When?

Where?

- ▶ 42 or 43 AD is the time most scholars use for the beheading of James. (Death by the sword)
- ▶ The Reign of **Herod Agrippa I** was 37-44.AD
- ▶ The events in chapter 12 begin during the time of famine prophesied in chapter 11.
- ▶ The arrest of Peter occurs during the Feast of Unleavened Bread which is before Passover. Everything leavened had to be removed from the home. Unleavened bread continued to be eaten for 7 days after Passover, or 8 days in total.
- ▶ Chapter 12 begins in Jerusalem. King Herod Agrippa leaves Jerusalem when he cannot find Peter. He travels to Caesarea where he had a palace. It is there where he is hailed as a god by the people of Tyre and Sidon who wish for peace and the food from Herod's fertile lands.



Who?

King Herod (Agrippa I) 37-44 AD



This is the *third King Herod* mentioned in the New Testament.

He reigned from 37-44 AD.

(He was a favorite of the Emperor Caligula according to some sources)

By 41 AD he ruled the same territories as his grandfather, Herod the Great.

King Herod Agrippa I, had the apostle James, son of Zebedee executed, and arrested the apostle Peter in this chapter. In Acts 12 he died from worms after failing to deny that he was a god.

The Other Kings named Herod...



1. The first was **Herod the Great**, 37-4 BC. Ruler of Samaria and Judea, Galilee and Peraea, Ituraea and Trachonitis. He had many wives and children, some of whom he murdered in his later years. It was this first Herod, whom the wise men visited when searching for the infant Jesus. He was the grandfather of Herod Agrippa from Acts 12.

2. The second King Herod was Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea 4BC-37AD. Herod Antipas married his niece, Herodias, after she left his half-brother Philip and had taken her daughter Salome with her. Herodias was herself a niece to both of her husbands, Philip and Antipas.

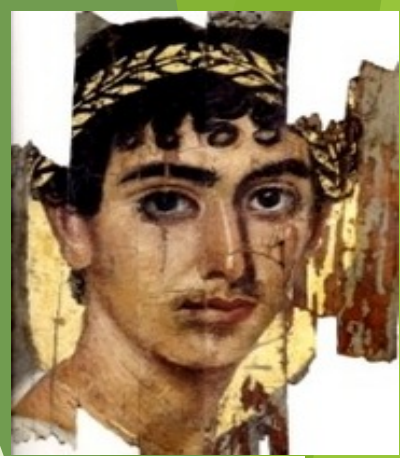
It was criticism of this marriage that led Antipas to arrest John the Baptist and have him beheaded in 30 AD.

Herod Antipas also took part in the trial of Jesus.



The last King Herod

King Herod Agrippa II



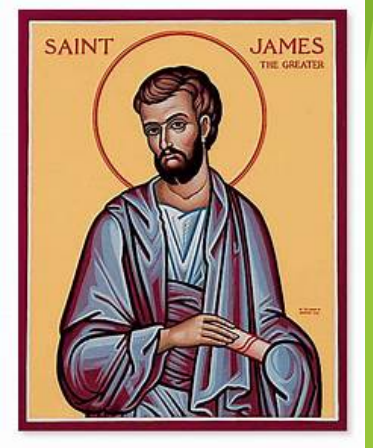
Herod Agrippa II was too young to succeed his dead father in AD 44, and instead was made king of Chalcis in 50 AD. In 53 AD he exchanged this small territory for parts of Galilee and Peraea, and Ituraea and Trachonitis. **He was present at the trial of Paul in Caesarea, in 60 AD.**

Siding with the Romans, he survived the Jewish war and died in Rome, 100 AD.

He will be mentioned in *Acts 25-26*.

Who?

James, the brother of John



- ▶ **James the Greater**- the first *Apostle* to be martyred. It is believed that his death occurred in 42 or 43 AD.
- ▶ **The call of James:** Mk 1:19 ¹⁹ He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets. ²⁰ Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.

James- the brother of John

► The Ambition of James:

- Mk 10:35 ³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ He replied, “What do you wish [me] to do for you?” ³⁷ They answered him, “Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left.” ³⁸ Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

Who?

James the brother of John

► James and Jesus-

Three times James, John, and Peter were invited by Jesus to witness events no one else saw: the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 5:37-47), the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-3), and Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-37).

Mat 26:36-37 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee..




At Gethsemane by Harold Copping

Luke 6:13

Two Apostles named James.

- ▶ When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: ¹⁴ Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, **James**, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵ Matthew, Thomas, **James son of Alphaeus**, Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.



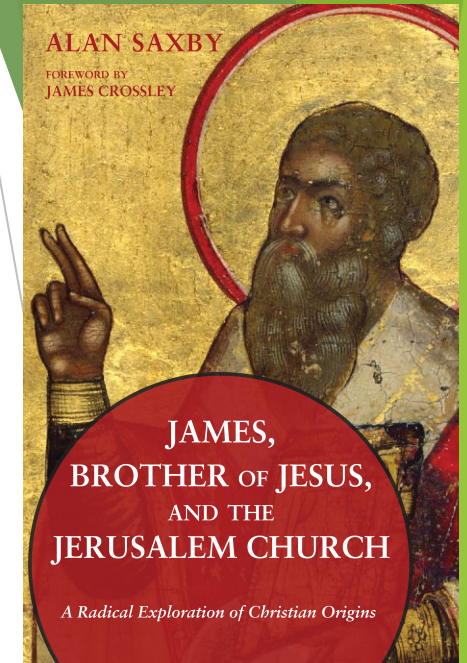
Judas son of James is son of James the lesser, and is also known as Thaddeus

Who? James, the Brother of Jesus

- ▶ Jesus' brothers - James as well as Jude, Simon and Joses - are named in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3.
- ▶ In *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus describes James as "the brother of Jesus who is called Christ".
- ▶ In Acts 21, Paul makes another visit to Jerusalem to meet with the Church leadership and the only name mentioned is **James**.
- ▶ IT IS quite evident that James, although not one of the twelve apostles, was looked up to in the church at Jerusalem, and that his views were highly respected.
- ▶ James, Leader in the Jerusalem Church -ACTS 15:13-20

Which James is Peter referring to in Acts 12:17?

- ▶ Acts 12:17 ¹⁷ He motioned to them with his hand to be quiet and explained [to them] how the Lord had led him out of the prison, and said, “Report this to James and the brothers.”
- ▶ This is James, the brother of Jesus who is depicted as the leader of the Church in Jerusalem in chapters 15 and 21.
- ▶ He is also referred to as James the Just.



Who? Peter!

Peter was among the first disciples called by Jesus, he too was a fisherman. Jesus told Peter and Andrew, his brother, that He would make them “fishers of men” (Mark 1:17).

Peter was part of Jesus’ “inner circle”, with James and John. He witnessed the transfiguration, the healing of Jairus’ daughter and was with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane.

Peter was the first to call Jesus the ***Son of the Living God***; the Messiah (Mark 8:29, Luke 9:20, Matt. 16:16-17).

At the arrest and trial of Jesus, he denied Him three times. (Matt. 16:21-22). In the Gospel of John, Jesus asks Peter three times to **feed his sheep**.

Who? Peter!

▶ **Mt 16:16-19**¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

▶ **Peter is arrested in Acts 4:3, 5:18, and Acts 12:3 and an angel helps him escape twice!**

▶ **God uses Peter to bring a little girl back to life. - Acts 9:40**



Acts 12:6-9

- ▶ ⁶ On the very night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter, secured by double chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while outside the door guards kept watch on the prison. ⁷ Suddenly the angel of the Lord stood by him and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and awakened him, saying, “Get up quickly.” The chains fell from his wrists. ⁸ The angel said to him, “Put on your belt and your sandals.” He did so. Then he said to him, “Put on your cloak and follow me.” ⁹ So he followed him out, not realizing that what was happening through the angel was real; he thought he was seeing a vision.

What?

- ▶ *Peter, secured by double chains, was sleeping between two soldiers-*
- ▶ Josephus and Seneca both report that this was a method of securing a prisoner at the time. Peter was chained to two soldiers.
- ▶ This makes his escape all the more miraculous.



Acts 12:10-11

- ▶ ¹⁰ They passed the first guard, then the second, and came to the iron gate leading out to the city, which opened for them by itself. They emerged and made their way down an alley, and suddenly the angel left him. ¹¹ Then Peter recovered his senses and said, “Now I know for certain that [the] Lord sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people had been expecting.”

These events with Herod and his persecutions mark a real change in the relationship between Jews and Christians.

Persecutions are more severe and more frequent. Prior to this, the Roman Governors protected the rights of Jerusalem Christians.

Acts 12:12-17

- ▶ he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who is called Mark, where there were many people gathered in prayer. ¹³ When he knocked on the gateway door, a maid named Rhoda came to answer it. ¹⁴ She was so overjoyed when she recognized Peter's voice that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate. ¹⁵ They told her, "You are out of your mind," but she insisted that it was so. But they kept saying, "It is his angel." ¹⁶ But Peter continued to knock, and when they opened it, they saw him and were astounded. ¹⁷ He motioned to them with his hand to be quiet and explained [to them] how the Lord had led him out of the prison, and said, "Report this to James and the brothers." Then he left and went to another place.

Who?

What?

- ▶ *John who is called Mark, where there were many people gathered in prayer.*
- ▶ This John became an occasional companion on Paul's missionary journeys. He is thought to be the evangelist/writer of the Gospel of Mark.
- ▶ *¹³ When he knocked on the gateway door, a maid named Rhoda came to answer it. ¹⁴ She was so overjoyed when she recognized Peter's voice that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate.*

Note what the people were doing at this moment of crisis. These people understand the power of communal prayer.

Note the humor as well as the joy in this situation.

Acts 12 15-17

- ▶ But they kept saying, “It is his angel.”
- ▶ “Report this to James and the brothers.”



There is a strong belief in angels in this early Christian Community.


Peter acknowledges the leadership of James in the Jerusalem Church.

- ▶ Then he left and went to another place.

Peter has to leave Jerusalem. It is possible that he went to Antioch for a time.

Acts 12:18-19

- ▶ ¹⁸ At daybreak there was no small commotion among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ Herod, after instituting a search but not finding him, ordered the guards tried and executed.
- ▶ Then he left Judea to spend some time in Caesarea.



In Acts 16,
Paul's
compassion for
his jailer keeps
him from
fleeing prison
even when he
is able.

Acts 12:20-24

- ▶ He had long been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, who now came to him in a body. After winning over Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they sued for peace because their country was supplied with food from the king's territory. ²¹ On an appointed day, Herod, attired in royal robes, [and] seated on the rostrum, addressed them publicly. ²² The assembled crowd cried out, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." ²³ At once the angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not ascribe the honor to God, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. ²⁴ But the word of God continued to spread and grow.

The people of Tyre and Sidon

- ▶ Tyre and Sidon were port cities in Phoenicia. At this time of famine, they were dependent on the territories under Herod's control for food. It is not certain what difficulties had angered Herod, but it is clear that the people from these cities wish to flatter King Herod Agrippa here and make peace. Josephus reported that Herod's garments were made of silver that made him shine in the sun, like a god.



Flattery will take him somewhere he does not wish to go!

- ▶ The assembled crowd cried out, “This is the voice of a god, not of a man.”²³ At once the angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not ascribe the honor to God, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.
- ▶ ²⁴ But the word of God continued to spread and grow.

Persecutions and even the death of the Apostles could not deter the growth of the community.

This is flattery of the most blatant kind. Not denying this is blasphemy.

Josephus reported that it took 5 days from the onset of pain for Herod to die.

Quick Review

- ▶ Herod beheads James, the brother of John and arrests Peter.
- ▶ Peter is chained to two guards in prison.
- ▶ An Angel freed Peter even though he was heavily guarded.
- ▶ Peter appears to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark.
- ▶ He sends a message to James, the brother of Jesus and the others in the Jerusalem Church before he leaves the city.

Quick Review

- ▶ Herod executes the guards who were responsible for Peter in prison.
- ▶ King Herod Agrippa I leaves Jerusalem for Caesarea to deal with the people of Tyre and Sidon. The people flatter him and call him a god. He does not deny it. He is struck down in pain and dies of worms.
- ▶ And the Christian community continues to grow.

Lessons learned

- ▶ The prayerfulness of this early Christian community is an example for us to follow. In times of crisis they come together and pray, pray, pray.
- ▶ Angels protect and assist those involved with God's mission. The first century Christians believed this wholeheartedly.
- ▶ Evil persecutions of the faith in Jesus did not deter the spread of the Word of God, and the message of salvation.
- ▶ It is not good to think of oneself as a god.

Let us Pray.

Dear Lord,

We thank you for the example of the early Christians as we continue to study your Words. May we continue to grow in faith as we gather together in prayer in both good times and during difficult and challenging times.

We thank you for the blessing of angels and the wisdom of the prophets. With grateful and humble hearts we acknowledge our salvation through Jesus Christ.

Be with us as we go out into the world. Send us out with the love of God, self and neighbors always in our hearts.

We ask you this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.