

**CP - 1/22/23**

**Acts 12:1–6 - Persecution Hits Close to Home**

**Sermon Outline:**

**1. The Politician “King” Seeking More Power**

- Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great (See attached family tree); ruled from 37-44 A.D.
- He attacks the church not so much because he hates but because it will benefit him! Agrippa seeks to get more power by pleasing the Jews.  
“Herod wasn’t so much anti-Christian as he was pro-Herod.” (John MacArthur)
- The grandson of the one who tried to kill Jesus now tries to kill the church by killing its leaders. But God has a plan.
- Agrippa was like one of the rulers Psalm 2 was addressed to - warned and exhorted to Kiss the Son! Fear the Lord! He chose to attack God’s people.

\*Fighting against God’s people is an attack against God.  
The promotion of self is rebellion against God.

**2. The Martyr Apostle Faithful to Death**

- Why a sword? Talmud - Deut 13:12–16 - killed with the sword for leading people to false gods (also Talmud); James lost his life because another man wanted political power. Oh, how small the world views God’s sheep!! Oh how precious God views God’s people! (“Precious in His only sight”)
- Matthew 20:23 - James first to die, John last to die. People think they are injuring God but are really carrying out God’s plan - fulfilled Jesus’ prophecy
- Martyrdom advanced the Gospel to Samaria. Martyrdom advanced the Gospel to the Gentiles.
- Church was not born in a place where they had fundamental rights. The church did not grow in a time where they were blessed or enabled by the government but one that openly opposed them and even killed them.

\*When the situation looks bleak, God is still in control and working for His glory and our good. Even the evil actions of men against God’s people work to fulfill the plans of God.

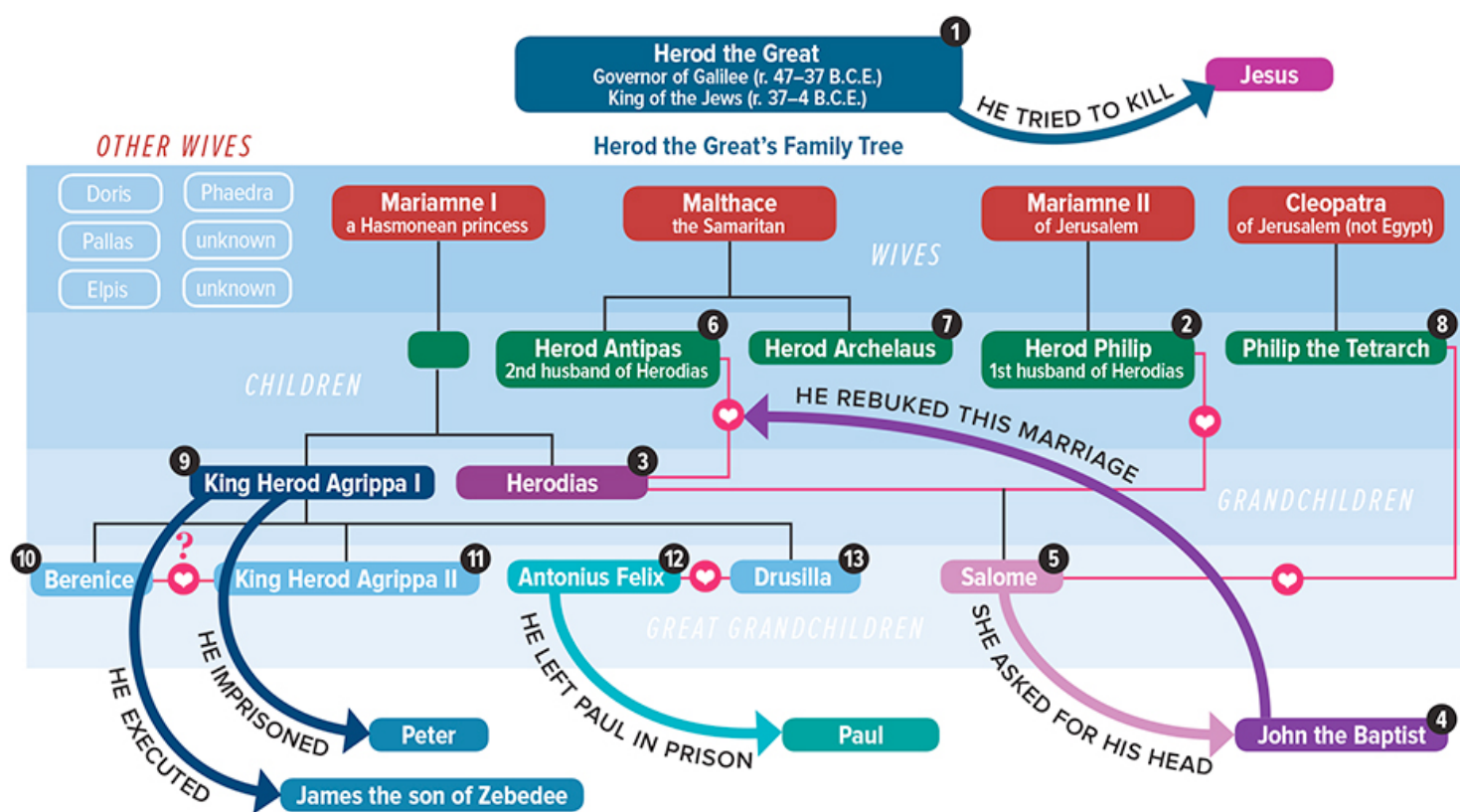
### 3. The Believers' Response to Crisis

- Political expediency to bring Peter out while everyone was in town
- "Earnest prayer" - Would we call the church together to pray? What for? THE CHURCH HERE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING BUT PRAY! THEY HAD NO OPTION BUT GOD!
- "God doesn't answer prayer; He answers desperate prayer." - Ravenhill
- How dare we offer small-faith prayers to the all-glorious, enormous, and eternal God. How often our small view of Him *appears* to shrink His ability and power! BUT HE IS UNAFFECTED BY OUR THOUGHTS! ("I AM WHO I AM")
- Peter's response was restful sleep (in contrast to previous - storms on Sea - like Jesus sleeping) - he knew God was in control - he didn't see James' death as a defeat
- God had made a promise to Peter in John 21:18 - resting in God's promises! He had already been in jail twice! Like Lazarus, "we will kill you!" Really?!?! Been there, got the grave clothes to prove it! Jesus conquered!

\*We can rest in God's promises and peace even in the midst of a bleak crisis. Is prayer our first reaction or our last resort? What are we earnestly praying for?

#### **Small Group Questions:**

1. How did the Holy Spirit speak to you from the Bible passage and sermon?
2. What are some possible reasons Luke refers back to the church at Jerusalem again in chapter 12? What was happening that would cause the Jews to dislike the believers?
3. Who was Herod in this chapter? What do you remember about his character (or lack thereof)? What was his motivation for executing James and arresting Peter? How does Psalm 2 relate to Herod's actions in this chapter?
4. Read Matthew 20:20-23. How does this passage help us understand James' death and who was really in control in Acts 12:1-6?
5. How did the church respond to the crisis? Discuss the concept of corporate prayer. How are you challenged in the ways that the early church prayed? Why was Peter able to sleep the night before his potential execution? How do you respond to crises?



- 1. Herod the Great** - Founder of the dynasty, tried to kill the infant Jesus by slaughtering babies at Bethlehem.
- 2. Herod Philip** - Uncle and first husband of Herodias. He was not a ruler.
- 3. Herodias** - Left Herod Philip to marry his half-brother Herod Antipas. He was the tetrarch of Galilee & Perea.
- 4. John the Baptist** rebuked Antipas for marrying Herodias, his brother's wife, while his brother was still alive—against Scripture.
- 5. Salome** danced for Herod Antipas and, at Herodias' direction, requested the beheading of John the Baptist.
- 6. Herod Antipas** - Tetrarch of Galilee & Perea, was Herodias's uncle and second husband. He executed John the Baptist. He held part of Jesus' trial.
- 7. Herod Archelaus** - Ethnarch of Judea, Samaria and Idumea, was replaced by Roman governors, including Pontius Pilate.
- 8. Philip the Tetrarch** ruled the northern territories. He later married Herodias's daughter Salome.
- 9. King Herod Agrippa I** (r. 37–44 C.E.) executed James the son of Zebedee and imprisoned Peter.
- 10. Berenice**, twice widowed, left her third husband to be with brother Agrippa II (rumored lover) and was at Festus's trial of Paul.
- 11. King Herod Agrippa II** was appointed by Festus to hear Paul's defense.
- 12. Antonius Felix**, Roman procurator of Judea, was Paul's first judge. He left Paul in prison for two years until Porcius Festus became the second judge, and Paul appealed to Caesar.
- 13. Drusilla** left her first husband to marry Roman governor Felix.