

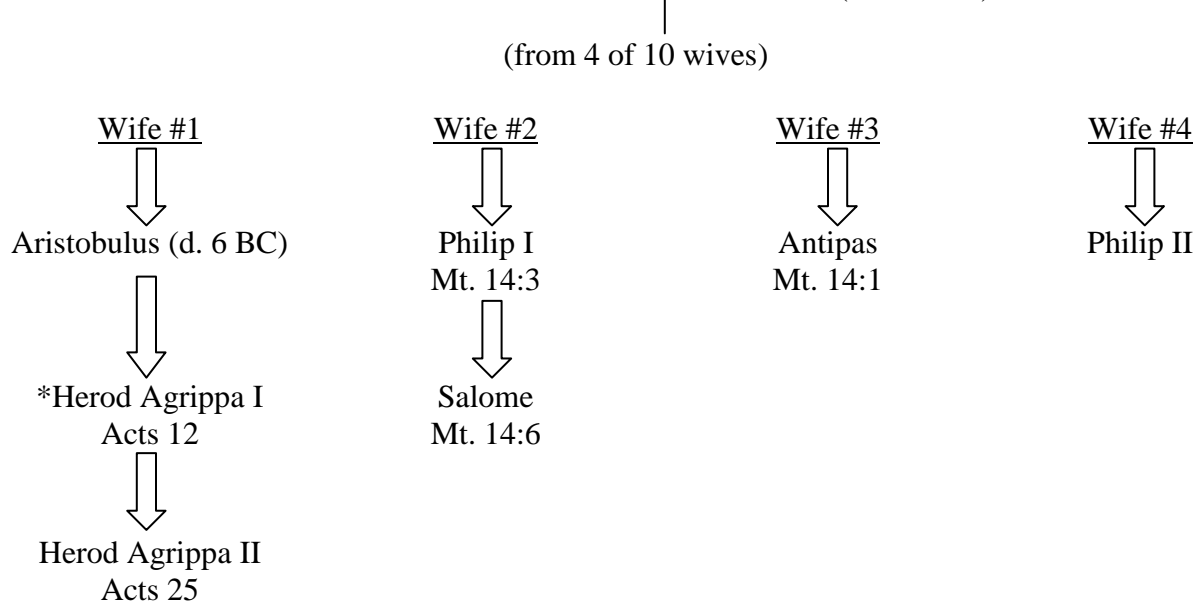
## ACTS 12:1-24 HEROD PERSECUTES, PETER ARRESTED, HEROD DIES

**Chronological Note:** This paragraph is a flashback, a parenthesis in the historical narrative. The prophecy of Agabus (11:28) was in the year 44 AD (the same year that Herod Agrippa I dies). In response to Agabus' prophecy, the church in Antioch gathers relief gifts for about one year and then sends them to Judea on a mission led by Paul and Barnabas (11:30; compare 12:25). The events of 12:1-24, therefore, occur before Paul's relief visit.

### 12:1-4 King Herod Kills James and Arrests Peter

v. 1 "Now about that time (lit. "season") \_\_\_\_\_ *the King\*...*" WHICH \_\_\_\_\_?

#### GENEALOGY: HEROD THE GREAT (Dies 4 BC)



Herod Agrippa I in this passage was ruler from 37-44 AD.

**"stretched forth his hand to vex (harm) certain of the church."** To this point, the church in Jerusalem had been persecuted sporadically by the Sadducees and chief priests who made up the power structure of the Sanhedrin (4:1, 5:17); the Pharisees joined them in the murder of Stephen; and now the King of the Jews, an Edomite, lends his hand to gain Jewish favor. He was a consummate politician.

v. 2 "And he killed \_\_\_\_\_, the brother of \_\_\_\_\_ ..." James, of course, was one of the original 12 Apostles (to be distinguished from the other James, the son of Alphaeus, known also as "James the Less").

v. 3 Herod Agrippa I also arrested Peter in keeping with his political designs of appeasing the \_\_\_\_\_. All the Herods had Edomite ancestry, but they paraded as Jews. Agrippa I, born in 11 BC, was sent to Rome by his mother after his father was executed in 6 BC. At Rome, he grew up with members of the imperial family, became good friends with Gaius, the grand-nephew of Emperor Tiberius. When Gaius (Caligula) succeeds Tiberius as Emperor in 37 AD, he bestowed upon Agrippa I the title of "King" and sent him to Palestine to rule certain territories. At Gaius' assassination in 41 AD, Claudius is declared Emperor and as such, adds Judea to Agrippa's realm. Agrippa set himself seditiously to win and retain Jewish good will. James falls to his sword and Peter is arrested.

(OVER)

- v. 4 **“prison”** = probably the Fortress of Antonia, northwest of the temple.  
**“four quaternions to keep him...”** = 16 soldiers assigned to 4 watches per night, 4 each per watch; Peter was chained to two at all times! He was a high-profile prisoner.  
**“Easter”** = πασχα/pascha = “passover.” *Easter* is a sad, sick translation; it is a pagan word associated with Ishtar, the Babylonian Goddess of fertility, and with the pagan rites of the vernal equinox. At any rate, *pascha* means that we are in the month, April, 44 AD.

### 12:5-18 Peter, Prison And Prayer

- v. 5 **Operation Emergency Prayer:** Believers pray constantly for Peter.
- v. 6-12 **Operation Intercessory Angel:** Peter and the guards (4) were sleeping. Note the detail in this account.
- v. 8 He tells Peter to get dressed - belt, sandals, cloak!
  - v. 9 Peter was in a daze not knowing exactly what was happening.
  - v. 11 Left alone, Peter realizes the Lord intervened for him.
  - v. 12 Peter’s mind is churning as he heads for Mary’s house.
- v. 12-19 **Meanwhile, Back at the Prayer Meeting: Humor and Pathos**
- v. 12 Mary, the mother of John Mark (Gospel writer), was a widow of considerable wealth. Her walled house had a gateway, a street entrance into a courtyard; it was large enough to house a considerable number...it may well have been the scene of the Last Supper.
  - v. 13, 14 Rhoda goes to answer Peter’s persistent knocking, and hearing his voice, gets so excited, she fails to let him in!
  - v. 15 “The Prayer Warrior’s” immediate response to Rhoda’s good news, “YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR MIND!” which being interpreted means, “God could not have answered our prayers!” Rhoda insists (imperfective middle indicative verb).  
Response: “It must be his guardian angel, his spirit-counterpart.” Unbelieving believers!  
MEANWHILE, PETER STANDS NERVOUSLY WAITING AT THE GATE LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER FOR A PURSUING POSSE! Finally, they let him in.
  - v. 16, 17 After instructing them to inform James (half-brother of Jesus) and the brethren, Peter went underground; to this day, no one knows where he successfully hid.
  - v. 18, 19 Herod has the soldier-guards executed, then goes to Caesarea where he will meet his fate. Peter, like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, is spared and the accusers suffer death.

### 12:20-23 Death of Herod Agrippa I

- v. 20 Herod’s federally controlled poverty program called the Great Society had made Tyre and Sidon dependent puppets.
- v. 21-23 **“on a set day:”** probably August 1, 44 AD, Emperor Claudius’ birthday, Herod gives an oration *“the people gave a shout (kept crying out)”* – imperfect active indicative verb  
**“eaten with worms”** = possible rupture of a hydatid cyst tapeworm.

### 12:24 Contrast to Herod’s Words – God’s Word Grows

- v. 24 **“But (contrast) the Word of God kept on growing and multiplying.”** Both verbs are imperfect active indicatives. The words of kings and potentates die with them: God’s words live on!

THOU HAST MAGNIFIED THY WORD ABOVE ALL THY NAME. PSALM 138:2