



Have you ever experienced this?

RELEARNING ANCIENT BIBLE STORIES IN A BRAND-NEW WAY

EPIC TALES

TOO



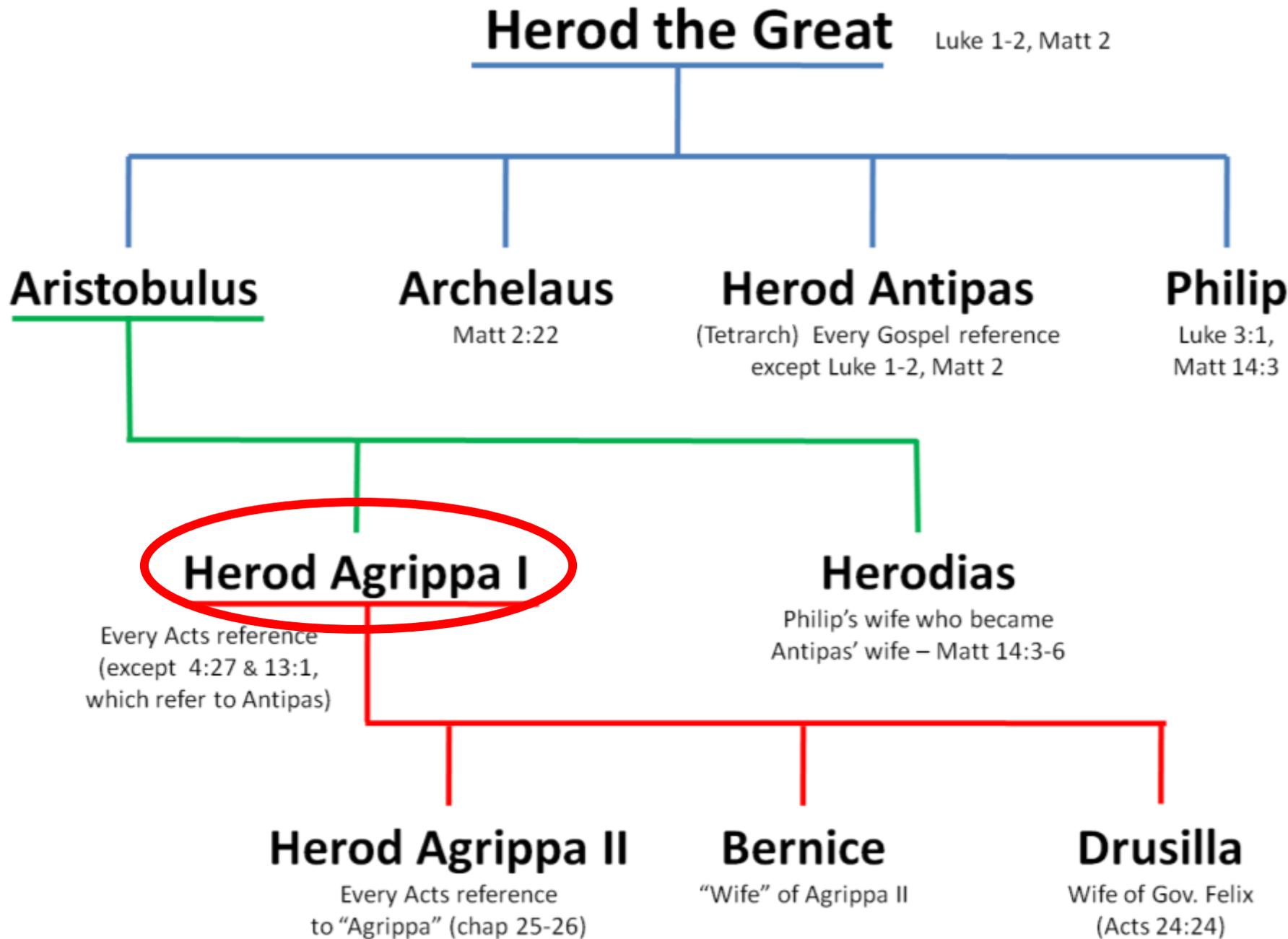
Peter in Prison

Acts 12



Now about that time Herod [Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great] the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat [persecute] them. And he had James [one of the apostles] the brother of John [called the sons of Zebedee] put to death with a sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews [who did not follow Jesus], he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread [following the Feast of Passover]. Acts 12:1-3

***Herod did not want to arouse public opinion against himself by trying a leader of a significant Jewish minority community during the Passover holy season.**



The Herod mentioned here is Agrippa I, a ruler popular with the Jews for he was partly Jewish, being of Hasmonean descent. His kingdom covered basically the same area as that of his grandfather, Herod the Great. He was known for doing everything possible to curry the favor of the Jews, so he found it politically expedient to arrest Christians and to execute James, the brother of John. Herod Agrippa I died in AD 44. His son, Herod Agrippa II, was king of Judea from AD 50–70. Paul was on trial before Agrippa II and his sister Bernice (Acts 25:13–26:32). -Bible Knowledge Commentary

When he had seized him, he [Herod Agrippa I] put him [Peter] in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. So Peter was kept in the prison, but **prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. Acts 12:4-5**

***When was the last time you prayed in such a way about your situation that you agonized and stretched yourself to the breaking point in your prayer life?**

– Jimmy Davis

In Peter's time of need... **“prayer for him was being made fervently [earnestly ἐκτενῶς ektenos] by the church to God”**

And being in agony He [Jesus] was praying very **fervently**; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. Luke 22:44

May we pray for you? Prayer@firstmelissa.com

Based on this example, prayer is to be

- 1. Intense**, not casual
- 2. Ongoing** (“was being made”; γίνομαι *ginomai*, the Greek verb tense implies continuing activity)
- 3. To God**—in genuine contact with the living God (possible through Yeshua, John 14:6), not with empty repetition (Matthew 6:7) and not in unbelief (Hebrews 11:6)
- 4. Specific**, not vague (on his behalf); “you don’t receive because you don’t ask” (James 4:2–3)
- 5. Communal** (by the Messianic community, the church)—believers are not called to an isolated life; even private prayers should be not self-centered but reflective of membership in the Body of the Messiah.

***Do you remember the
last time we talked
about Simon Peter?***

John 21



So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you **love** (agape ἀγαπάω) Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I **love** (phileo φιλέω) You.” He said to him, “**Tend** (bosko βόσκω) My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you **love** (agape ἀγαπάω) Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I **love** (phileo φιλέω) You.” He said to him, “**Shepherd** (ποιμαίνω) My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you **love** (phileo φιλέω) Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you **love** (phileo φιλέω) Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I **love** (phileo φιλέω) You.” Jesus said to him, “**Tend** (bosko βόσκω) My sheep.”

John 21:15-17

On the very night when Herod [Agrippa I] was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands.

Acts 12:6-7

*** Herod made certain that Peter's imprisonment was secure by handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each! Two were chained to Peter, one on each side and two were standing guard outside. – Bible Knowledge Commentary**

*** Four squads of four soldiers each were appointed as guards (16 total) —one squad for each of the four 6-hour watches of the day, so four men were on duty at any given time. – New Bible Commentary**

Guess what? Peter had been in prison previously!
But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. They laid hands on the **apostles and put them in a public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, “Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life.” Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach. Acts 5:17-20**

- So... you can serve God and end up in prison and in need of God's deliverance.
- And... you can serve God and end up in prison AGAIN and in need of God's deliverance.

And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. Acts 12:7

- Do you need the light to shine in your darkness?**
- Are you ready to get up when God calls?**
- Do you feel like you are bound by chains?**

**Antonio
de Bellis**

***The
Liberation
of St.
Peter***

**early
1640s**





**Bartolomé
Esteban
Murillo**

***Liberation
of St. Peter***

1665-1667

Story referenced in church music

**Acts 12:7 is referred to in Charles Wesley's 1738 hymn
"And Can It Be"**

**Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst
die for me?**

**Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's
night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray; I woke, the
dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was
free, I rose, went forth, and followed thee.**

Have you ever been in “prison”?

- **Incarceration**
- **Guilt**
- **Hurt**
- **Financial struggle**
- **Relationships**
- **Selfishness**
- **Loneliness**
- **Greed**
- **Regret**
- **Disappointment**
- **Addiction**
- **Sinful habits**
- **Betrayal**
- **Self-made**



comfortzone

freedom

free indeed

2017

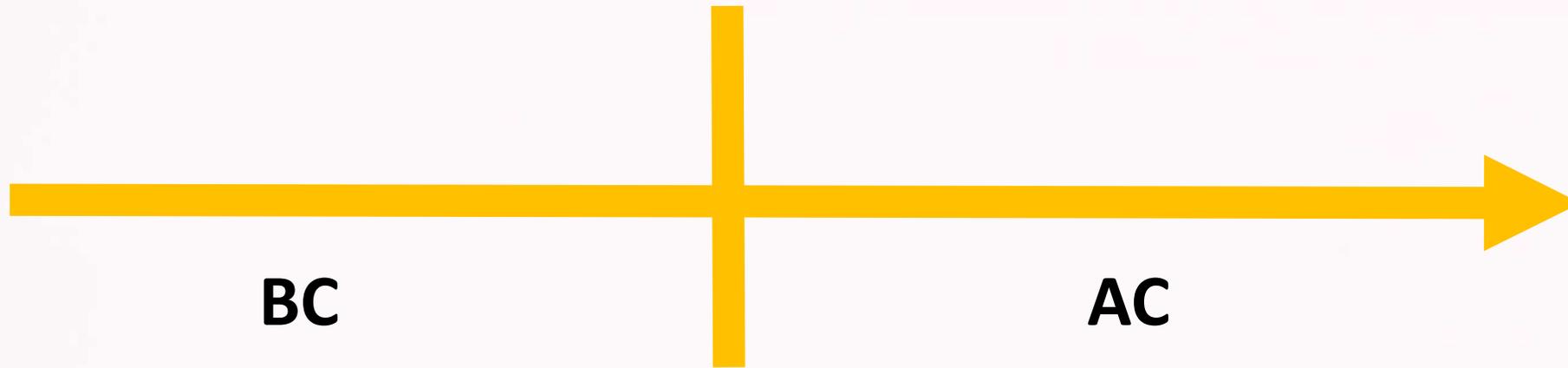
Free Indeed

- Jesus said, “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” John 8:36
- ἔλευθερώω eleutheroo
- Greek verb; to make free, deliver, set at liberty
- Spiritual freedom is found only in God’s Son

Timeline of Your Life

You have lived a past without Jesus.

Have you begun a new life with Jesus?



BC = Life Before Christ

AC = Life After Christ

How can we have Freedom Over the Past?

Phase 1

Acknowledge the Struggles of the Past

Phase 2

Receive the Promised Future in Jesus

Phase 1

Acknowledge the Struggles of the Past

- You made sinful choices
- Others made sinful choices
- You were outside the Body of Christ
- You had selfish priorities
- You did not submit to the Word of God
- You had not received new spiritual life

Phase 2

Receive the Promised Future in Jesus

- You are a new creation by faith in the Savior
- Live as a part of the Body of Messiah, the Church
- You are called to learn and grow spiritually
- You are here for a spiritual purpose
- You are called to serve others in Jesus' name
- You can have new, godly relationships
- You must prepare for spiritual warfare

What is Spiritual Freedom?

- Freedom is not defined by what is absent.
- Freedom is defined by Who is present.

Freedom is defined as the ability to respond fully to God out of who He created and redeemed you to be.

And the angel said to him [Peter], “Gird yourself and put on your sandals.” And he did so. And he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.” And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

Acts 12:8-9

***Are you ready to obey when God says “go”?**

When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. Acts 12:10



The concept of guardian or ministering angels is found in both Old Testament and New Testament.

- **“For He will give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.” Psalm 91:11**
- **Jesus said, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 18:10**
- **“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?” Hebrews 1:14**

When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod [Agrippa I] and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.” And when he realized this, he went to the house of **Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark [author of the Gospel of Mark], where many were gathered together and were praying. When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer. Acts 12:11-13**

Which Mary was this?

Mary of Jerusalem, whose home was used as a meeting place for Jesus' followers after His death. Many were praying there when Peter arrived after his escape from prison to leave a message for James and the brothers and sisters (Acts 12:11–17). That no husband is mentioned may mean that she is the widowed head of the household and so perhaps leader of one of the house-churches mentioned in Acts 2:46. Rhoda, the 'maid' or 'little girl' who went to the door (Acts 12:13), could be a slave member of the household, pointing to it as substantial. Mary's son John, also known as Mark, accompanied her nephew Barnabas (Colossians 4:10) and also Paul on some of their missionary travels (Acts 12:25; 13:5, 13; 15:37–39). – Harper's Bible Dictionary

Lots of Marys in the New Testament

- 1. Mary Magdalene, one of the women who ministered to Christ**
- 2. Mary, sister of Lazarus and Martha, who hosted Jesus at her home in Bethany**
- 3. Mary, wife of Cleopas, at the cross with Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Jesus. She was that “other Mary” who was present with Mary of Magdala at the burial; she was one who went early in the morning of the first day of the week to anoint the body.**
- 4. Mary, the mother of John Mark, was one of the earliest disciples. She was the sister of Barnabas. Her house in Jerusalem was the common meeting-place for the disciples.**
- 5. The betrothed and later wife of Joseph, the mother of Jesus**

When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate. They said to her, **"You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel." Acts 12:14-15**

- **They found it easier to believe that Peter had been executed and his ghost returned to earth than that their prayer for his release had been answered.**

Holman Concise Bible Commentary

- **God is real and He answers prayer. Many of us can grasp this concept intellectually, but when the evidence is knocking at the door we find it hard to believe.**

– Jewish New Testament Commentary

But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were **amazed. Acts 12:16**

God's ability to act is NOT dependent on the amount or size of our faith.

"I do believe; help my unbelief." Mark 9:24

But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them **how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, “Report these things to James [the half-brother of Jesus, not the apostle who had been killed] and the brethren.” Then he left and went to another place. Acts 12:17**

* James (Ya`akov) is called the brother of Yeshua in Matthew 13:55. Not a believer during the Messiah’s earthly ministry (John 7:3–8), he came to faith later, perhaps as a result of seeing Yeshua resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:7). He was among the 120 present in the “upstairs room” (Acts 1:14). He became leader of the Jewish followers of Jesus in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13, 21:18; Galatians 2:9, 12). He is the author of the New Testament book of James. Apparently Stephen had already turned over the leadership in Jerusalem to James and was himself establishing congregations elsewhere (Acts 8:14, 9:32–11:18; 1 Corinthians 1:12, 9:5).

Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter. When Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away to execution. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there.

Acts 12:18-19

***After an investigation of Peter's escape, Herod cross-examined the guards and ruthlessly ordered their executions. Herod no doubt justified such harshness by reasoning that guards whose prisoners escape are irresponsible and unreliable. Yet Herod lost 16 guards by his actions (see Acts 12:4). Herod then left Judea to stay for a while in Caesarea, the capital of the Roman province of Judea, from which Roman governors governed the nation. - Bible Knowledge Commentary**

Now he [Herod Agrippa I] was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon [independent city-states in modern Lebanon]; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country [they needed food]. On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel [shining silver robe], took his seat on the rostrum [βῆμα *bema*] and began delivering an address to them. The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died. Acts 12:20-23

But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark. Acts 12:24-25

“Look at how things have changed. The chapter opened with James dead, Peter in prison, and Herod in triumph. It closes with Herod dead, Peter freed, and the Word of God in triumph.” – Brian Bill



Do you need to be set free?

Do you need to be set free?

- **Justification makes us free from the guilt of sin, by which we were bound over to the judgment of God, and bound under amazing fears.**
- **Sanctification makes us free from the bondage of corruption, by which we were restrained from that service which is perfect freedom, and constrained to that which is perfect slavery.**

To Be Spiritually Free:

- **Start with belief in Messiah Jesus**
- **Recognize that your family history is not a guarantee of freedom; it may be a barrier to freedom**
- **Honestly assess the struggles of your past**
- **Understand that you can be enslaved and not know it**
- **Identify areas in which you are currently a slave (strongholds)**
- **Join the family of God through faith in His Son**
- **Pray fervently (earnestly) for God's guidance**

But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied. Acts 12:24

***Each of us faces our own prisons**

***We can be set free by the power of God**

***Be people of fervent prayer, for ourselves and others**

***Ask God to deliver us from our past**

***Ask God to guide our future**

***May God's word continue to grow and multiply here**



“if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” John 8:36