

Acts 12

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Review

- The word got back to Jerusalem about Peter's meeting with and baptizing God-fearers
- The circumcision party called Peter to task for his actions that they considered to be heretical
- Peter defends himself by reciting what happened and demonstrating that he was responding to the call of the Holy Spirit who manifested Himself to the God-fearers in the same way as the Jews who were at Pentecost
- Next we saw the expansion of the Church in Antioch via Greek speaking Christians from the Diaspora who began preaching the Gospel to the non-Jews in Antioch

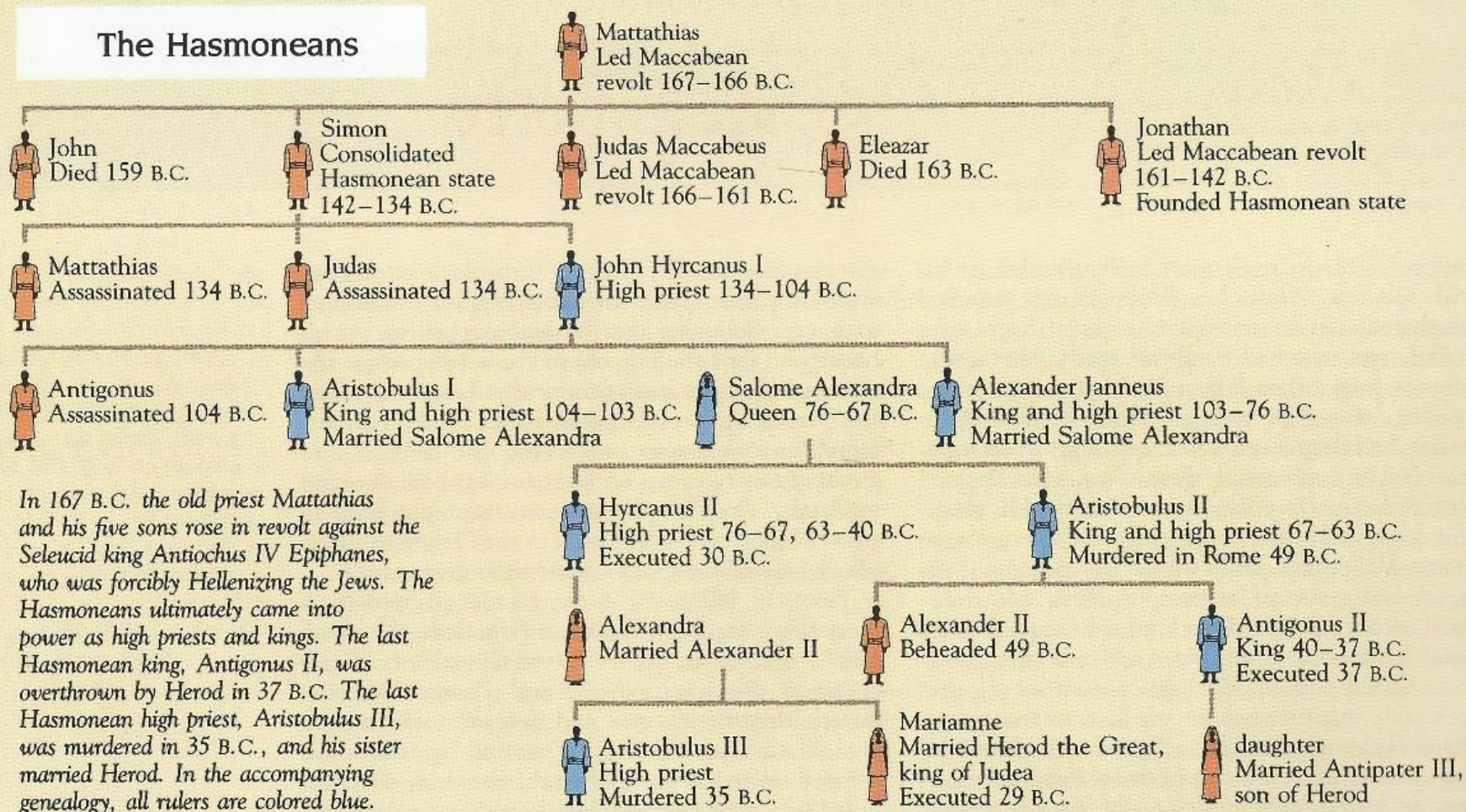
Review (Cont)

- Following this movement the Church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch to check on the situation
- Barnabas was happy with what he observed and went to Tarsus to bring Paul back with him to Antioch where they labored in that church for a year
- A prophet from Jerusalem came to Antioch and proclaimed that a severe famine was about to come to the entire region
- Barnabas and Saul took up a collection from the Church in Antioch and took it to Jerusalem to support the Christians living the communal life there

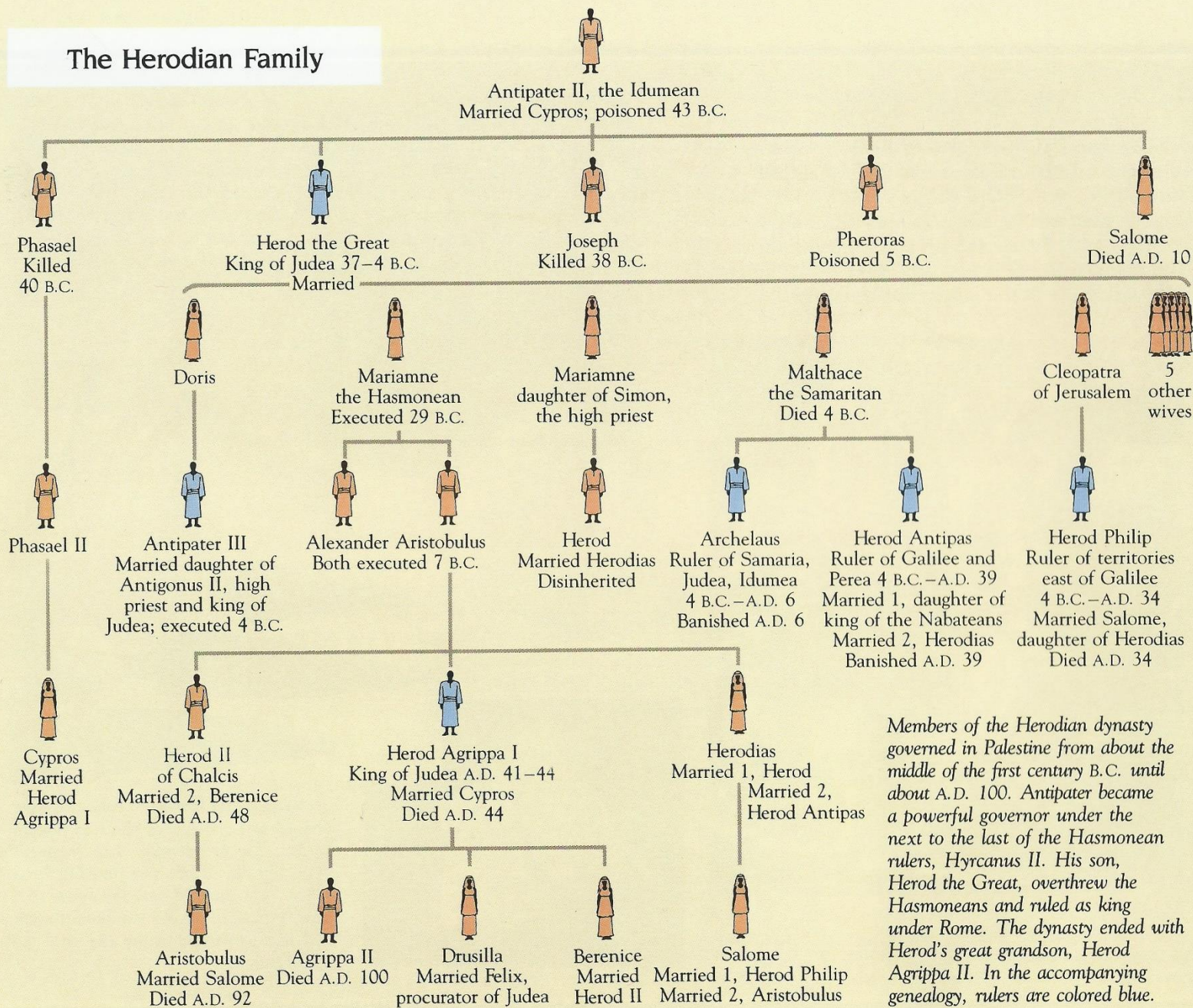
Acts 12

- **Acts 12:1** *“About that time **Herod** the king laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church.”*
 - This segment begins with a shift back to the **persecution of the Apostles** by **King Herod (Agrippa I)** in Jerusalem during the feast of Unleavened Bread
 - Following is a review of the Herods

The Hasmoneans



The Herodian Family



Acts 12 (Cont)

- **Acts 12:2-11** *“He killed **James** the brother of John with the sword; and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also....during the **days of Unleavened bread**... the Lord has sent an angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting”*
 - Luke is again demonstrating how the early Church and Peter followed in the footsteps of Jesus who was arrested and persecuted during the Passover by the Jews (**Sanhedrin**)

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

- The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a seven day feast (often confused with the Passover).
 - It begins on the 14th day of the 1st month (Nisan) and goes until the 21st day (**Ex 12:15-20**)
- The Passover is a 24 hour feast that begins after dusk on the 14th day of the month of Nisan and ends at dusk on the 15th day.
 - It commemorates the Passover of death of Israel just before they were released for the Exodus from Egypt.
 - It marks the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread

Acts 12 (Cont)

- Do not confuse this **James** who was executed with the James who later became the Bishop of Jerusalem
- This James is **not** the author of the “Epistle of James” who some believe to be “James the lesser,” and the first Bishop of Jerusalem
- This is the **James**, brother of John, the **sons of Zebedee** who is frequently referenced with Peter and John as they constituted the early leaders of the Apostles
- It is most fitting that the first Apostle to be martyred is **James**, the fisherman son of Zebedee

Acts 12 (Cont)

- Next, we see **Herod (Agrippa I)** after taking Peter captive, placing him in prison where he could bring him before the people after the Passover feast
 - Look at the extraordinary lengths that Herod (Agrippa I) took to secure Peter so he could bring him to trial after the Passover Feast
 - While he was in prison the Church in Jerusalem was praying for Peter who was in a seemingly hopeless situation
 - This set the stage for the miraculous events that began that night when an angel rescues and leads Peter out of the prison without incident

Acts 12 (Cont)

- Peter recognized that the Lord send the angel to rescue him from the hand of **Herod (Agrippa I)**
- Luke is establishing this scene with obvious references to both God's deliverance of his people from slavery in Egypt and Jesus' death and resurrection (Look at the timing of the Passover)
 - Peter, like Israel, is rescued from bondage at night
 - The community prayed fervently for Peter's release as Jesus prayed fervently in his agony in the garden

Acts 12 (Cont)

- **Acts 12:12** *“When he realized this, he went to the house of **Mary**, the mother of **John** whose other name was **Mark**, where many were gathered together and were praying.”*
 - Pay close attentions to these names
 - **Simon, John** and **Mary** were common Old Testament names that many first century parents gave to their children
 - This John is not John the Evangelist the son of Zebedee and brother of James

Acts 12 (Cont)

- This is **John Mark**:
 - He would be called John (Ioannes) among the Jews and Mark (Marcus) by his Gentile (Greek or Roman) associates
 - He had both names because if he told a Greek that his name was Ioannes that ending would sound feminine in Greek and thus be considered a girl's name
 - Often the people added an "s" to the end of their Jewish names to make them more masculine in Greek
 - *Isaiah* to *Isaias*, *Jeremiah* to *Jeremias*, *Kepha* to *kephas* and *Joshua* to *Jesus*
 - So this John takes the Latin name "Marcus" for use among the Gentiles

Acts 12 (Cont)

- Mary in this passage is not the mother of Jesus or Mary Magdalene
- She is another Mary who had named her son “John Mark” who many believe is “Mark the evangelist” the author of the Gospel of Mark

Acts 12 (Cont)

- **Acts 12:13-17** *“And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a maid named Rhoda came to answer.... but ran in and told that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, ‘you are mad.’ But she insisted that it was so. They said, it is his Angel! But Peter continued knocking... And he said, ‘Tell this to **James** and to the brethren....”*
 - Imagine poor Peter who just got out of prison standing at the gate asking to get in but *Rhoda*, the maid, runs off leaving him at the door
 - This is reminiscent of the disciples refusing to believe the women on Easter morning concerning the resurrection of Jesus,
 - Here these members of the early church refuse to believe the testimony of *Rhoda*

Acts 12 (Cont)

- This **James** is the James who **will become the first Bishop of Jerusalem**
- At this point he already has a very important role in the Jerusalem Church as we can see from what Peter says next (**Acts 12:17**)
- The soldiers of **Herod (Agrippa I)** are looking everywhere for Peter whom they understood had escaped but they had not seen the angel
 - Peter tells the disciples to tell James, and the rest of the Christian brothers, that he is leaving Jerusalem
 - Peter is on the run and he has placed James in charge of the Jerusalem community
- We will see just how important a role James has when we get to **Acts 15**

Acts 12 (Cont)

- **Acts 12:18-25** *“Now when the day came, there was no small stir among the soldiers....And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, bringing with them John whose other name was Mark.”*
 - **Herod (Agrippa I)** gets so angry at the loss of Peter that he has the guards executed
 - Then he goes **down** (up) to *Caesarea* his home base where he meets a delegation from *Tyre* and *Sidon* with whom Herod (Agrippa I) had also become very angry
 - Here the people appeal to Herod (Agrippa I) as if he was a “god” resulting in an angel of the Lord striking Herod dead
 - Thus Herod (Agrippa I), who executed one of the Apostles, dies death of the impious

Acts 12 (Cont)

- The passage ends with *Barnabas* and *Saul* leaving Jerusalem and returning to *Antioch*
 - Remember they had gone up to Jerusalem to bring funds to the Jerusalem church to help them live through the famine
 - Even though the famine was throughout the region those in the outlying churches were better off than those in the communion of Jerusalem and thus could send help
 - We saw *Barnabas* and *Saul* bringing these funds to Jerusalem at the end of **Acts 11**
- Next we see the expansion of the word of God which is one of the major themes of the Book of Acts

Transition

- Next we will look at Acts 13