



Riding God's Wave to Freedom!

Acts 12

Happy Advent Everyone!!!

Here is a note on not “keeping
Christ in Christmas)

<https://theologycurator.com/2-reasons-christmas/>

1. Jesus came humbly
2. It is for the Church How are we putting Christ in our lives, not gifts under our trees.

2 Reasons NOT to ‘Keep Christ in Christmas’

PANGEA

This Month we are Looking closely at ACTS 12

Our First Week we tried an escape room in
to think about Peter in a different way.

This Week we are looking at the Christmas
Story and History.



<https://forms.gle/7rhp2okU7MtzXPjh9> (The Escape Room)

Christmas in America- The Story

- One Reason we Celebrate Christmas like we do today is because of the Puritans. They didn't Celebrate it and that caused a vacuum that was filled by Victorian Values. Specifically, Queen Victoria's (1837) German Protestant Mother Kept the Traditions that filled that Void. Christmas Trees... became popular then, but the Church proper did not do much.
- Then (1843) Charles Dickens a Christmas Carol Came along. Understand Charles Dickens was a Rock star! He Created a Myth of Christmas which was focused on Giving, not the Gospel.
- In the US, in 1810 The saint Nicholas Day Dinner Featured illustration of St. Nicholas (the Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor) in bishop's robes. The illustrations had him being pulled by horses, and 1862 he morphed into a small elflike Creature who lived at the North Pole, as a toy maker, elves, receiving letters from kids.

More History

- In 1931, Coca-Cola they used his Dutch Name SinterKlass in order for people to encounter Santa (Drinking a Coke). The same man did the illustrations from 1931-1964- developing our current “Santa” that we have also exported.
- Understand that marketing and Consumerism is King. For ex. Diamond Wedding Rings are a modern invention (1930's) Christmas has become a Child centered, Gift Centered Holiday. That is not all bad... but it can distract from It's Origins.
- Don't Forget it is a made up “Christian” holiday...Based on the Pagan celebration of Winter Solstice Feasts that Predate Christianity. (This is one source of the Trees, Lights etc.) Many Secular Holidays were Christianized to turn pagan holidays into Christian ones. Easter/Resurrection Day is Christian but it too is connected to Pagan fertility Spring festivals- Rabbits and Eggs..

Christmas in The Bible

Source: [Why Putting Christ Back in Christmas Is Not Enough](#),
David Taylor Christianity Today

1. **It was A Fantastic Story**... With Real Angels, Magi, Dreams, a Child King, etc. Less like Pixar, more like Narnia.
2. **It was a story of hardship loss, and pain.** Child out of wedlock, Social Stigma of Joseph to marry Mary, Infertility with Zechariah and Elizabeth, A refugee family, and the Massacre of Children. “Christ birth is an encounter with joy and not happiness because joy, biblically considered , can account for suffering, while happiness cannot.
3. **It was a multigenerational, Multi-Cultural story.** (it was not just for kids and toys). Jesus had a teenaged Mother, Elizabeth, Anna the prophetess and Simeon (the God-Receiver) were all elderly. Mary and Joseph were from the lower Class, The Shepherds were from the outcast class, Zechariah from the Priestly Class, the magi were astrologers (Scientists of their day), and Herod was a king.
4. **It was full of Spontaneous Songs**... Speech wasn't sufficient to tell the story, songs were used. Mary has her Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) , Zechariah sings his way out of silence (Lk1:64), the angels chorus, and Simeon bursts into Verse Lk 2:33-35) at the sight of the Christ child.

So How should we Celebrate?

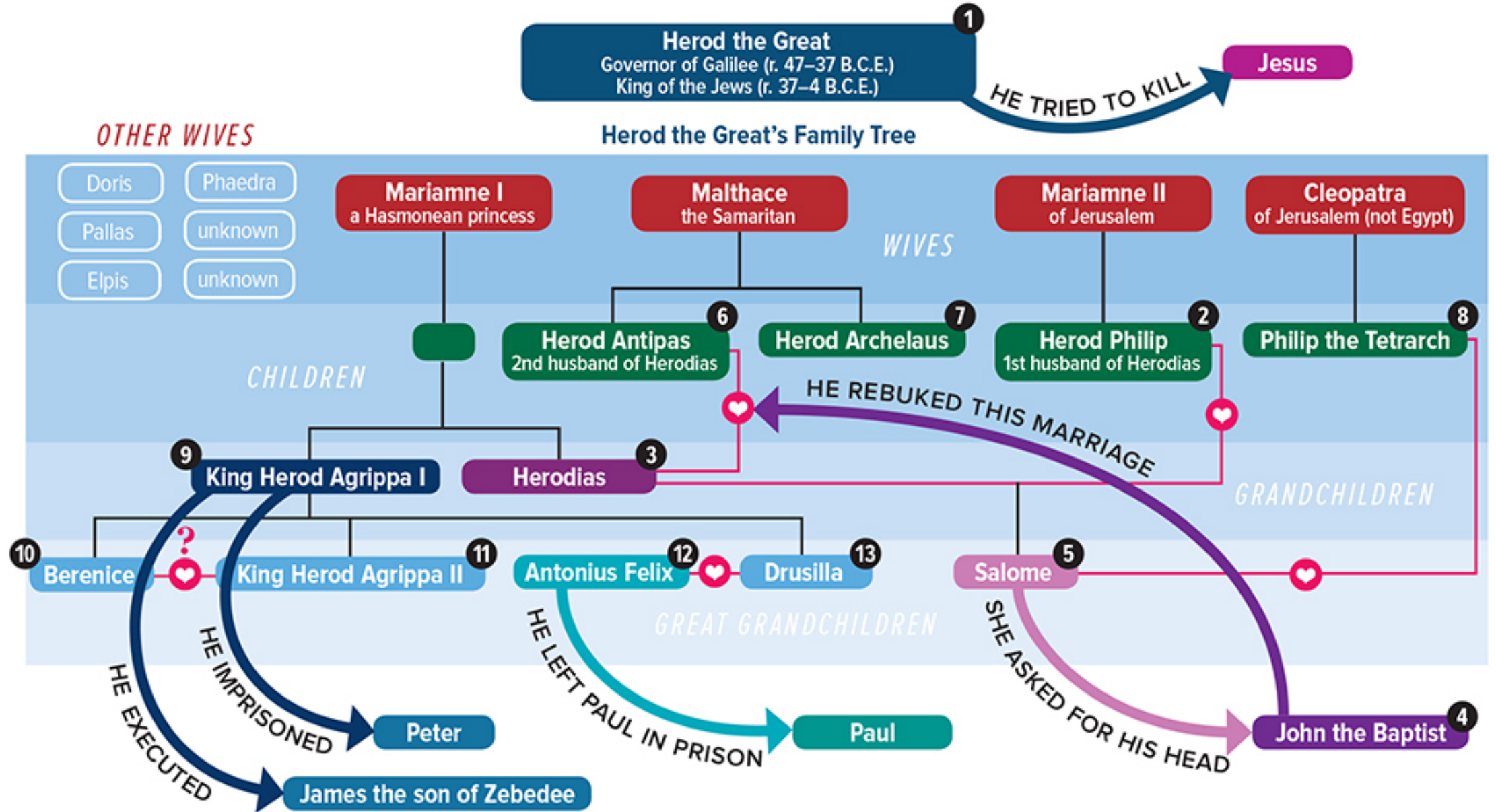
Source: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2018/december/putting-christ-back-in-christmas-not-enough-nativity-america.html>

- **First Without guilt or Shame-** Enjoy what is good about “Christmas in America” ... Enjoy It’s a Wonderful life, Charlie Brown, Wreaths, Trees, Mariah Carey songs (Even if you are singing background for her). God’s Grace and goodness are not absent from such things.
- Second- **Remember “Christmas in America should not be confused with the complex Gospel story** with both joy and sorrow, justice and mercy in a redemptive story of God and His Kingdom.
- **Let America have it’s Christmas story**, it is not worth the fight to try and change it. Treat it like any other aspect of our nations traditions, for better or worse.
- **Celebrate the Feast of the Nativity** and admire the beauty of the story of baby Jesus.
- **Let people see what they need in us.** That Christ is with us (Emmanuel) now right here in this time and place.

Acts 12 is Primarily 2 Stories

- Peter's Deliverance from Prison
 - Q. Why didn't God deliver James?
 - Q. Why did the Jews hope Peter would die?
 - Q. Why did they leave him hanging outside?
- Herod's Pride
 - Q. How was This Herod Related to the one that remade the Temple?
 - Q. How do you get to the King? Through someone he trusts- Blastus.
 - Q. Why did Tyre and Sidon, give into a prideful King?
 - Q. Why did God kill Herod? His father killed thousands of babies, and didn't die... He simply didn't give praise to God and dies...

The Tale of the Herods



What is man that thou art mindful of him?

- Sense our World (input)
- Think about what we sense and make choices (programming)
- Act on those Choices (output)
- What is A robot?... They are becoming more in our image...The definition is important because it helps us to know who we are, and how we are messed up.

We are not Robots, but they are made in our image, as we are made in God.

- Sin impacts and corrupts our senses and inputs. Be careful of echo chambers that are not Kingdom centered. Romans 1:18-21
- Sin impacts our thinking, it corrupts our code, our programming and our choices. We need to be debugged. Understand that the bad guy rarely thinks they are doing bad things! The Herods knew the Jewish laws and disregarded them... Mark 9:35 (Jesus came to reprogram us- Last shall be first))
- Sin impacts our outputs so we don't do the things we want to do (Romans 7:14-20ff)



What does it mean to be a Christian? To be a Disciple?

1. Sense God's Kingdom in Jesus
2. Make a Choice to be a part of it
3. Act on that Choice...

You are not even a Robot if you Can't Choose or act on the choices you have... As God's image bearers we are made to make those choices...

What is A Robot?

Are We programmed to be stubborn?

- <https://www.wired.com/video/watch/hardwired-so-what-is-a-robot-really>

Are we able to change based on what our Maker wants?



Peter is an imperfect image bearer who decided to Follow His master

Herod is an imperfect image bearer who decided to BE his own master

Who are we?

What things are our Inputs- How are those inputs impacting our thoughts? How are those thoughts impacting our actions? Who are we following?



Changing our Programming...

- What Can Get you to Change your programming?
- Little Johnny's mother had been noticing that his math grades had been steadily declining. She decided to have a chat with Johnny about his disinterest in math, being more responsible with his studies, and the importance of bringing his grade up.
- The next quarter ended- Johnny's report card came out, and his math grade was still low. So Johnny's mother decided to call his math teacher in an attempt to get to the root of the problem. Little Johnny's mother was hopeful that Johnny's math grade would finally improve. But to her dismay, his grade had still not improved on his next report card.
- In an act of desperation, little Johnny's mother decided to transfer him to the local Catholic school. Immediately, she noticed that when Johnny came home from school, he wouldn't say a word, but would go straight to the table and begin doing his math homework. Johnny's mother was very pleased with this sudden change; and over the course of the next few weeks, it seemed little Johnny's math issue had finally been resolved. Once again, Johnny's report card came; but this time he got an "A" in math.
- Johnny's mother was overjoyed- yet a little perplexed. She asked him, "What do they do so differently at the Catholic school that finally persuaded you to change your attitude and bring up your math grade?"
- Little Johnny replied, "On the first day of math class, when I looked up and saw that guy hanging from the giant plus sign above the chalkboard, I knew they weren't messing around."



Herod Agrippa's Ego Centric Programming Telling a Self Centered Story

Acts 12: ¹⁹ When Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. ²⁰ He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply.

²¹ On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. ²² They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." ²³ Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

- He was a slave to the "Nazi's" (Satan and his forces- The occupiers of God's World)
- The fruit of that slavery is sensing things on Satan's terms
- Being programmed to be prideful, self centered, not loving etc.
- Acting on that Selfishness brings a lack of focus on God's kingdom but our own..
- YOU make Disciples (good or bad)- Your children, Other nations, etc. Tyre Sidon...



Titus Kaphar's Freedom Programming Telling a Complex Story

Here is a Relevant artist who is very humble... but Relevant and shares his voice to serve others..

Not Gospel Centered but Story Centered... How do we Tell the Complex story that God is with us?

<https://artandtheology.org/tag/titus-kaphar/>



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmoWXI1uOA>
- He is free despite doing poorly in High school, He is free to fulfill a purpose his gifts and for Freeing others.
- The fruit of that Freedom is sensing things on God's kingdom terms
- Being programmed to be loving, Humble, Sacrificial, etc.
- Acting on that Selflessness brings a focus on God's kingdom not our own..
- YOU also Make Disciples... Nexthaven...

Question for Today in Groups if time or as homework


Thing to Ponder- People who are not Christians or Christ focused have

1. a different set of inputs, and
2. a different way of Thinking or looking at the World.
3. Act Accordingly.

Our Job is to allow Christ to set them free by giving them input of what God looks like...
Once they have that, we can encourage them to choose and act on God's Kingdom.

• Peter's Deliverance from Prison

- Q. Why didn't God deliver James?
- Q. Why did the Jews hope Peter would die?
- Q. Why did the saints leave him hanging outside?



Christmas as a Case Study of Robotics at Work...

Christmas, Weddings, and other crazy traditions we often forget where they come from.

Remember Junk in = Junk Out..

- Inputs- Gifts, Lights, Consumerism, love by gifts not sacrifice.
- Thoughts- It's the most wonderful time (or depressing time) of the year. Money fixes things. Traditions are healthy.
- Actions-Going into debt, giving lip service to Christ (cultural Christianity), Family Centered activities (not Christ centered), etc.