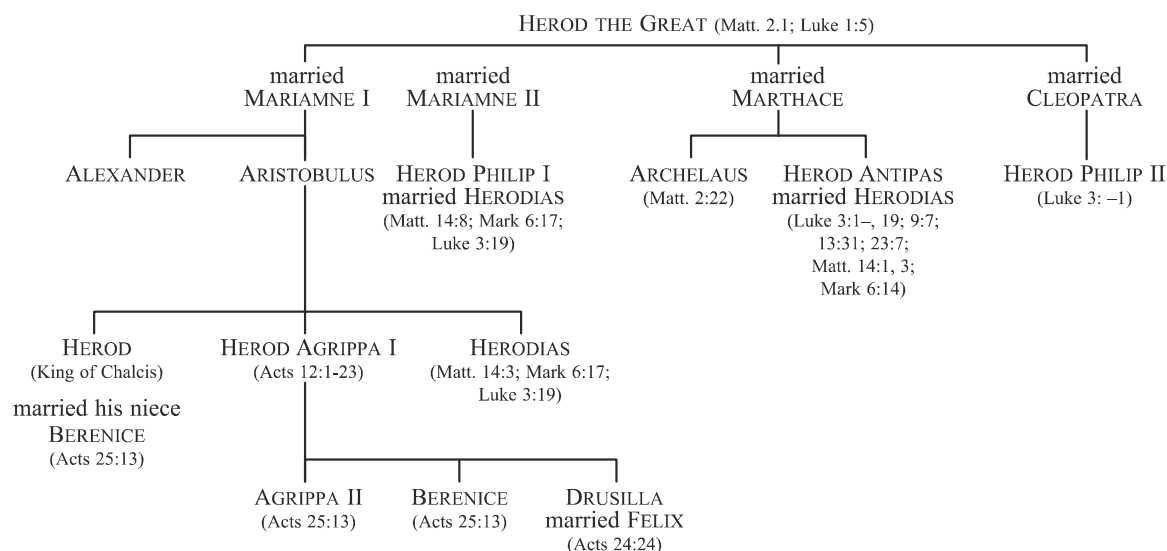


The Herods Of The New Testament



Herod The Great

Was born in 73BC, his father was Antipater, a Jew of Idumaeen descent,

Herod the Great is remembered as a builder of cities and the lavish rebuilder of the Temple in Jerusalem.

But Herod destroyed people, showing little greatness in his personal actions or his character, his suspicions and jealousy led to murder of several of his children and at least one wife.

Herod attained a position of great influence in Judaea after the Roman Conquest and was given the position of Procurator of Judaea by Julius Caesar in 47BC. **Herod showed his qualities as a ruler by the vigour with which he suppressed brigandage in the area.**

The Roman governor of Syria was so impressed by Herod's energy that he made him military prefect of Coele-Syria.

After the assassination of Julius Caesar and the subsequent civil war, Herod enjoyed the goodwill of Antony.

When the Parthians invaded Syria and Palestine and set Hasmonacan Antigonus on the throne of Judaea [40-37BC] the Roman senate, advised by Antony and Octavian, gave Herod the title '*King of the Jews.*'

It took Herod three years of fighting to make this title effective, but when he had done so he governed Judaea for thirty-three years as a loyal "friend and ally" of Rome.

Because Herod's title '*King of the Jews*' was not genuine, and not accepted by the Jewish people, because he was not part of the Davidic family, Herod was constantly worried about losing his position.

Herod's actions when hearing from the magi about their search for a new king are consistent with his character.

Although Judah benefited from Herod's lavish efforts to rebuild and repair the Temple in Jerusalem, he won little admiration because he also rebuilt various pagan temples.

Herod's costly attempt to gain the loyalty of the Jewish people failed because it was superficial, his only loyalty was to himself.

Until 31BC, despite Antony's goodwill, Herod's position was rendered precarious by the machinations of Cleopatra, who hoped to see Judaea and Coele-Syria reunited with the Ptolemaic Kingdom.

This peril was removed by the battle of Actium, after which Herod was confirmed in his kingdom by Octavian [Augustus], the new master of the Roman world.

Another source of anxiety for Herod was the Hasmonaean family, who resented being displaced on the throne by one whom they regarded as an upstart.

Although Herod married into this family by taking to wife Mariamne, granddaughter of the former high priest Hyrcanus, Herod's suspicions led him to get rid of the leading Hasmonaean survivors one by one, including eventually Mariamne herself [29BC].

Herod pacified the territories on his north-eastern frontier in the interests of Rome, and Augustus added them to his kingdom.

Herod furthered the emperor's cultural policy by lavish building projects, not only in his own realm but in foreign cities, for example Athens.

Herod in his own realm rebuilt Samaria and renamed it Sebaste after the emperor [Greek Sabastos is Augustus in Latin.]

Herod rebuilt Strato's Tower on the Mediterranean coast, equipped it with a splendid artificial harbour, and called it Caesarea, also in honour of the emperor.

Other settlements and strongholds were founded throughout the land by Herod.

In Jerusalem, Herod built a palace for himself on the western wall, having already rebuilt the Antonia fortress, named in honour of Antony, north-west of the Temple area.

The greatest of all Herod's rebuilding enterprises was the reconstruction of the Jerusalem Temple, begun in early 19BC.

Herod's wiping out of the Hasmonaean family was **not** forgiven but engendered domestic troubles. There was friction between his own female relatives and his wives, and between the children of his respective wives.

Herod's two sons by Mariamne, Alexander and Aristobulus, were brought up in Rome and were his designated heirs.

Their Hasmonaean descent [through their mother] made them acceptable to the Jewish people, but their privileged position stirred up envy of their half-brothers, especially Herod's eldest son, Antipater, who set out to poison his father's mind against them. Eventually, in 7BC, they were found guilty of plotting against their father and executed.

Antipater derived no advantage from their death, for three years later he also fell victim to Herod's suspicions, and was executed only a few days before Herod's death [4BC].

Herod has been remembered more for his murderous outbursts than for his administrative ability.

In his will Herod bequeathed his kingdom to three of his sons.

Judaea and Samaria to Archelaus, [**Matthew 2:22**].

Galilee and Peraea to Antipas.

The north-eastern territory to Philip, [**Luke 3:1**].

These requests were ratified by Augustus.

Lessons we can learn from Herod's life –

Great power brings neither peace nor security.

Suspicion and jealousy destroys any relationships and can lead to violent actions.

Superficial loyalty, that is loyalty that is self-centred, will never impress other people or the Creator God.

No-one can ever prevent the plans of the Creator God being carried out.

Archelaus [Herod the Ethnarch on his coins]

Archelaus reigned in Judaea from 4BC to AD6 but without the title of King of the Jews.

Archelaus was Herod the Great's elder son by his Samaritan wife Malthace, and has the worst reputation of all the sons of Herod the Great.

Archelaus offended Jewish religious susceptibilities by marrying Glaphyra the widow of his half-brother Alexander.

He continued his father's building policy, but his repressive rule became intolerable.

Archelaus, a violent man, began his reign by slaughtering 3,000 influential people.

A deputation of Judaeans and Samaritan aristocracy at last went to Rome to warn Augustus that, unless Archelaus was removed, there would be a full-scale revolt.

Archelaus was accordingly deposed and banished, and Judaea became a Roman province, administered by procurators appointed directly by the emperor.

Matthew 2:19-23 [New King James] *“Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, ‘Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead.’ Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, ‘He shall be called a Nazarene.’”*

Because Archelaus was ruling in Judaea, Joseph decided for safety sake to move into the region of Galilee which was ruled over by Antipas.

Herod the Tetrarch, who was named Antipas

Antipas was Herod the Great's younger son by Malthace and inherited the Galilean and Peraean portions of his father's kingdom.

Antipas is conspicuous chiefly in God's Word for his part in the imprisonment and execution of John the Baptist, [Mark 6:17-28] and for his brief encounter with Jesus Christ when Pilate sent him to Antipas for judgement, [Luke 23:7-12].

Antipas threatened to kill Jesus Christ at one time, [Luke 13:31-32].

Antipas was the ablest of Herod the Great's sons, and like his father was a great builder, the city of Tiberias on the Lake of Galilee was built by him [AD22] and named in honour of Emperor Tiberius.

He married the daughter of the Nabataean King Aretas IV but divorced her in order to marry Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Herod Philip.

John the Baptist incurred the wrath of Antipas for denouncing his second marriage as unlawful.

Josephus [Ant. 18:5,2] tells us that Antipas was afraid that John the Baptist's great public following might develop into a revolt.

King Aretas naturally resented the insult offered to his daughter by Antipas divorcing her, and seized the opportunity a few years later to wage war against Antipas [AD36]. The forces of Antipas were heavily defeated, and Josephus tells us that many Jews regarded the defeat as divine retribution for Antipas' killing of John the Baptist.

In AD39 Antipas was denounced by the Emperor Gaius by his nephew Agrippa as a plotter against Rome and Antipas was deposed from his tetrarchy and ended his life in exile.

Lessons from the life of Antipas –

A life motivated by ambition is usually characterised by self-destruction.

To miss or resist God's message, as Antipas did, is tragedy. How aware are you of God's attempts to enter into your life to offer salvation?

If we reject the messenger, [John the Baptist] it is easy to reject the One whose message the messenger is bringing [Jesus Christ the Messiah] as Antipas did.

Herod Agrippa I [Herod the King]

Agrippa was son of Aristobulus and grandson of Herod the Great. After his father's execution in 7BC he was brought up in Rome, in close association with the imperial family.

In AD23 Agrippa became so heavily involved in debt that he had to leave Rome. For a time he received shelter and maintenance at Tiberius from his uncle Antipas, thanks to his sister Herodias, whom Antipas had recently married.

But Agrippa quarrelled with Antipas and in AD36 returned to Rome.

At Rome he offended the Emperor Tiberius and was imprisoned, but on Tiberius' death the following year he was released by the new Emperor Gaius [Caligula], from whom he received the title of king, with territories north-east of Palestine as his kingdom.

On Antipas' banishment in AD39, Galilee and Peraea were added to Agrippa's kingdom.

When Claudius became emperor in AD41 he further augmented Agrippa's kingdom by giving him Judaea and Samaria, so that Agrippa ruled over a kingdom roughly equal to the extent of his grandfather, Herod the Great.

Agrippa courted the goodwill of his Jewish subjects, who looked on him as a descendent of the Hasmonaeans [through his grandmother Mariamne] and approved of him accordingly.

Agrippa's attack on the apostles [Acts 12:1] was perhaps more popular than it would have been previously, because of the apostles' fraternisation with Gentiles [Acts chapters 10 and 11], also his murder of the apostle James, [Acts 12:2].

Agrippa's sudden death at the age of fifty-four [AD44] is recorded by Luke, [Acts 12:20-23].

Like his grandfather, uncle, and after him, his son, Agrippa came close to the truth but missed acting on it.

The major reason for this is that he considered religion was only important as an aspect of politic, as so many leaders in society do in every generation.

Agrippa had no reverence and no qualms about taking praise that only God should be given, some religious leaders today by the titles they take on and the attitude they have towards their high position are following the example of Agrippa.

We personally can have the same attitude as Agrippa when we do **not** recognise that any accomplishments we have are a result of the gifts and abilities we have received from the Creator God.

Lessons we can learn from the life of Agrippa –

Those who set themselves against the Creator God are doomed to ultimate failure.

There is great danger in accepting praise that only the Creator God deserves.

Family traits can influence children towards great good or great evil.

Agrippa left one son, Agrippa, and two daughters, Berenice born AD28 and who is mentioned in **Acts 25:13** who became wife of her uncle, Herod Chalcis, a mistress to her brother Agrippa II and then mistress to the Emperor Vespasian's son Titus.

Drusilla [born AD38] became the third wife of the procurator Felix [**Acts 24:24**].

Herod Agrippa II

Son of Agrippa I, born in AD27 and considered too young to succeed to his father's kingdom.

Later he received the title of king from Emperor Claudius, with territories north and north-east of Palestine which were increased by Nero in AD56.

Agrippa changed the name of his capital from Caesarea Philippi to Neronias as a compliment to the latter emperor.

From AD48-AD66 he had the prerogative of appointing the Jewish high priests.

Agrippa did his best to prevent the outbreak of the Jewish war against Rome in AD66, when his effort failed he remained loyal to Rome and was rewarded with a further increase in his kingdom.

Agrippa is best known in the New Testament for his encounter with Paul [Acts 25:13-27; Acts 26:1-32] in which he charged Paul, in bantering vein, with trying to make him a Christian, [Acts 26:28].

Like great-grandfather, like grandfather, like father, like son, this tells the story of Herod Agrippa II, he inherited the efforts of generations of powerful men with flawed personalities.

Each followed his father in weaknesses, mistakes and missed opportunities.

Each generation had a confrontation with the Creator God, but each failed to realise the importance of the decision they made.

Herod Antipas actually met Jesus Christ personally during His trial, but failed to see Jesus Christ for Who He was.

Agrippa II heard the gospel message personally from Paul, but considered the message to be mildly entertaining.

Like so many people before and since, Agrippa II stopped within hearing distance of the Kingdom of God, hearing the message but deciding it was not worth responding to it personally.

The problem is **not** that the message is not convincing or that they feel they do not need to know the Creator God personally, it is that they choose not to respond.

What has been your response to the gospel message?

Has it turned your life around and given you hope of eternal life?

Perhaps it has just been entertainment to you, and you approach your contact with other Christians as a religious social club with people who are pleasant to be around.

It may seem a price too great to pay to give the Creator God control of your life.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

Yet when we consider what God has done through Jesus Christ for us, this is the only way we should respond to show our gratitude.

What will really be the greatest price to pay will be to end up eternally cut off from the Creator God and the world tomorrow He is planning for all who love Him and trust Him, a world that will go on for eternity, in peace and great joy.

What can we learn from the Herod dynasty? –

Families pass on both positive and negative influences to children.

There is no guarantee of multiple opportunities to respond to God’s message.

We need to learn from others’ mistakes, not follow them by making the same mistakes.

Suspicion and jealousy destroys relationships and can lead to violence.

A life motivated by ambition is usually a pathway to self-destruction.

Superficial loyalty that is self-centred will never impress other human beings or the Creator God.

No-one can ever prevent the plans of the Creator God from coming to fruition.