

#24 King Herod | August 5, 2018

Know King Herod to Know the Times of Jesus

- With only a few verses in the Bible about Herod the Great, one might wonder why he is included in this list. However, to know Herod the Great is to know the times of Jesus. Herod is only mentioned in Matthew 2:1-22, Luke 1:5, and a historical reference in Acts 23:25.
- A little background:
 - In 63 BC, the Roman general Pompey captured the city of Jerusalem. Although he allowed the city and the surrounding areas to remain independent, he required them to pay tribute to Rome. This was devastating to the Hashmonean dynasty (the "Maccabees") which held rule since approx.. 167 BC.
 - Rome quickly reduced the size of the kingdom, creating "the Decapolis" as well as other previously non-existent governmental regions.
- About 70 years before the birth of Christ, Herod was born, son of Antiper, a loyal official to Hyrcanus, the next to the last of the Maccabean kings.
 - At about 25 years of age, Herod was appointed by Rome as Governor of Galilee. His older brother was appointed Governor of Jerusalem.
 - When the rule of Hyrcanus was overtaken by his nephew, Antigonus, Herod made a trip to Rome to plea on Hyrcanus' behalf. Strangely and suddenly the Roman Senate declared Herod the King of Judea (approx. 40BC), thus beginning the Herodian Dynasty and ending the Hashmonean (Maccabean) Dynasty.
 - Herod battled Antigonus for three years, finally capturing him and sending him to Mark Anthony for execution. Antigonus was the last of the Maccabean kings.

The Good, the Bad, the Ugly

- The overall opinion of Herod is mixed. He was despotic, a megalomaniac, and often cruel. He was also a great builder, provided a great economy, did not use slave labor, and made sure his people were safe and well-fed.
- Herod's greatness is in his architectural and building achievements, some of which remains to this day, including the Temple mount, Masada, Herodian, the port at Caesarea, the burial tomb of Joseph, and much more.
- Herod was unquestionably loyal to Rome, and displayed that loyalty often.

Did Herod really kill the baby boys under two years of age?

- Matthew 2 is an account that is often criticized by liberals as untrue, yet the events align perfectly with known history.
- In vv. 1-4, Herod **was troubled**, which caused **all of Jerusalem with him** to be troubled.
- Herod had previously set up a gate to the Temple, and on that gate was a golden Eagle. This *graven image* was against Jewish Law, and infuriated the Jewish faithful.
- Just prior to the birth of Jesus, a group of respected older priests had gathered a group of about 40 young men to tear down the gate as soon as they were given the "go forward" command, which would come upon Herod's impending death. However, word came prematurely that Herod was dead, and the 40 young men were captured and taken before Herod. The respected older priests, Judas and Matthias, confessed to the "crime."
- Soon after Herod, "commanded that all the principal men of the entire Jewish nation wheresoever they lived, should be called to him" (Antiquities, 17:16:174) (compare to Matt. 2:4). Death was the punishment for not arriving. Could this meeting have taken place because the Magi did not arrive?
- Was Herod of the mental state that he would kill any who threatened him (including baby boys from Bethlehem?)
 - He killed his own son, Antiper, five days before his death.
 - He gathered every leading man of the nation to Jericho and gave command that they all be killed upon his own death, just so that the nation would mourn his death.
- After Herod's death, his son Archelaus reigned in Jerusalem, but his reign was so despotic that the Romans soon removed him Jerusalem was under direct Roman control. (See Matt. 2:22).
- Another of Herod's sons, Antipas was made *tetrarch* of Galilee rather than King. He beheaded John the Baptist. A grandson of Herod, Agrippa, reunited the Kingdom and was given the title King by Emperor Claudius. King Agrippa sentenced James to death and ruled over the trial of Paul.

Things You May Not Know

- Herod was an *Idumean*, that is, and Edomite, descendant of Esau.
- The Idumeans has been forced to convert to Judaism when conquered by the Hashmonean's in about 140BC. Herod was of the Jewish faith by this heritage, but not by his loyalty to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- A common chronology of Herod's life has him dying at about 4-6BC. This chronology doesn't fit what we now know, and he more likely died in the first quarter of 1BC.