

Herod the Great

(Scripture Here)

Introduction:

1. Herod the Great is a name that lives in infamy.
2. Herod is a complex figure and somewhat contradictory.
 1. On one hand, he is a tyrant king; on the other, he is deeply insecure, seeking the approval of his people.
 2. He is a man who executes his wives and children, but his actions torment him, and he loved his wives and children.
 3. He flipped allegiance when the political winds blew, but he brought about great stability.
 4. He was not a Jew, yet he renovated the temple.
3. This week we will delve into the life of Herod the “Great.”

I. Julius Caesar’s Death – 44 BC

- A. Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC by a conspiracy of Roman Senators after becoming “dictator forever.”
- B. Upon Caesar’s death, his will is read aloud.
 1. Mark Antony was one of Caesar’s best and most competent allies, expected to be named Caesar’s heir.
 2. However, Caesar named his nephew Octavius, as his heir.
- C. Civil War breaks out in Rome.
 1. Brutus and Cassius flee to the East and attempt to form their own government.
 2. Together Mark Antony, and Octavian defeat and kill Brutus and Cassius.
- D. In 41 BC, Quints Labienus convinces Parthia to invade East Asia,

II. Herod’s Beginning

A. Herod’s Youth (73-44 BC)

1. Herod was born in 73 BC during the rule of Alexandra Salome.
2. At 15 years old, Herod was appointed as “Strategos” of Galilee in 47 BC, along with his brother Phasael in Jerusalem.
 - a) Herod was loved by the Romans for his good rule but hated by the Jewish Sanhedrin for his barbarity.
 - b) At one point, Herod nearly received the death penalty by the Sanhedrin but received a pardon from his father, Antipater.
 - c) Herod’s Rule would allow him to fall into Mark Antony’s good graces.
3. Herod’s Wife Doris
 - a) The two had a son, Antipater II, whom Herod loved very much.
 - b) Herod would eventually banish his wife and son and become engaged to Mariamne, the granddaughter of Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II.

B. Antipater, Herod and the Parthians (44-41 BC)

1. After the death of Julius Caesar, Antipater was forced to contribute on behalf of the side of Cassius, one of the conspirators.
 - a) Antipater was poisoned to death in 43 BC.
2. In 41 BC, Parthia invades East Asia, including Judea.
 - a) The Parthians depose Hyrcanus II, and institute Antigonus II as king, and Hyrcanus II is mutilated, forcing him to abdicate the High Priesthood.
 - b) Herod's Brother, Phasael, would commit suicide rather than allow the Parthians to kill him.

C. Herod Flees to Rome (41-40 BC)

1. Seeing the Parthian's conquest of Judea, Herod and Mariamne flee to Cleopatra's Egypt and set sail across the Mediterranean Sea in winter to Rome.
2. While In Rome, the 14-year-old Mariamne goes before the senate and prepares to be made queen of Judea.
3. However, due to Herod's friendship with Mark Antony, the Roman senate surprisingly declares Herod King of Judea in 40 BC.

D. Herod's Return (37 BC)

1. Herod returns with Roman forces to Galilee and quickly retakes Galilee, Samaria, and liberates his family that was taking refuge in the fortress of Masada.
2. Herod marries Mariamne, giving him legitimacy.
3. Herod arrives at Jerusalem and defeats the Parthians, who had taken up with Antigonus II.
4. After the conquest, the Romans loot the city. Herod is displeased and has Mark Antony reprimand the Romans, and Antionus II executed.

III. Herod's Rule (37-4 BC)

A. Herod Rebuilds Jerusalem

1. Herod replaces the old Greek Acra with a much more powerful "Antonia Fortress."
2. He constructs a huge royal palace.
3. He expanded the city wall allowing for an increased population in Jerusalem.

B. Herod's Paranoia

1. Herod is afraid of the people.
 - a) He was already disliked for his cruelty in Galilee. Now he is concerned that he will be viewed as a usurper to the throne.
2. Herod expands in increases the fortifications of Masada. An insurance policy against his own people.

C. Aristobulus III

1. Herod seeking to appease the people, installs his brother-in-law, the 17-year-old Aristobulus III, as High Priest.
2. Aristobulus III was loved by the people and celebrated as he performed his priestly duties. Herod, who was near the outside of the temple, grew jealous and afraid of Aristobulus III's celebrity.
3. Aristobulus III mysteriously drowned in a pool a year later.

D. Herod and Mariamne

1. Mariamne's mother suspected Herod of killing her son and appealed to Cleopatra.
2. Fearing Marianne's disloyalty, Herod sent her to live with his uncle, Joseph.
3. He ordered Joseph to murder Mariamne if she was disloyal. Joseph refused and was killed.

E. Political Realignment

1. Mark Antony and Octavius
 - a) Mark Antony and Octavius engage in a civil war to inherit the power of Caesar.
 - b) Antony joins Cleopatra in Egypt, and the two have an affair.
 - c) Antony gives portions of Judea to Cleopatra, causing Herod.
 - d) Octavius eventually defeats Antony and Cleopatra in the Battle of Actium in 31 BC
2. Herod and Octavius
 - a) After Actium, Herod was in a precarious situation, having been a long-time ally of Mark Antony.
 - b) Herod met Octavius in Rhodes with 70 talents of silver, convincing Octavius of his loyalty.

F. Herod the Great Builder

1. The Temple
 - a) He dramatically increases the size of the temple mount.
 - b) He expands and beautifies the temple.
 - c) "He who has not seen Herod's Temple has not seen beauty."
2. Caesarea Maritima
 - a) He established the city, named after Augustus (Octavian) Caesar.
 - b) He created a much-needed port for ships.
3. Herodium
 - a) A man-made mountain fortress. Ultimately Herod's tomb.

G. Herod's Paranoia Increases

1. Herod Kills Mariamne - 29 BC
2. Herod Kills his children

- a) Herod kills the children of Mariamne, Alexander and Arisobulus IV — arrogant children raised in Rome. Their Hasmonean Blood made them especially dangerous.
 - (1) Hillel and Shimmai were certainly conspiring. They declared Jewish descent matrilineal.
 - b) Herod kills his firstborn son, Antipater II.
 - c) «κρείσσον Ἡρώδου ὕα εἶναι, ἢ υἱά» = “It is better to be Herod’s Pig than his son.”
3. Herod commits the massacre of innocents
- a) (Matthew 2:16)
- H. Herod’s Death ~4 BC
- 1. Herod dies from kidney failure and genital gangrene.
 - 2. Upon his death, he ordered that several members of the Sanhedrin be killed so that there would be mourning upon his death.
 - 3. The kingdom would be divided into a “tetrarchy” among Herod’s sons.

Conclusion:

- 1. Herod is an interesting ruler. Despite his despotism, he did a lot of good for the Jewish people.
- 2. His rule is generally considered to be very good. The Herodian sect (Matt 22, Mark 3), longed for the stability and relative independence that Herod brought.
- 3. With the rule of Herod, the stage is now set for the Messiah to come into the world. The fullness of time has been accomplished.