

"Herodian Dynasty"

(Acts 12:1-25)

(The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

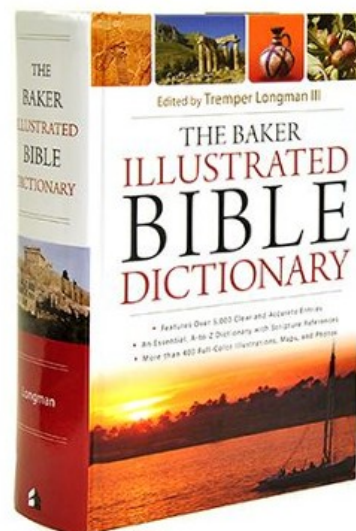
Several kings of the Jews, related by birth, had the name "Herod." The Herods formed a royal dynasty that flourished during the time of Christ and the early church. The founder of the dynasty was Antipater, who was appointed by Caesar in 47 BC as procurator of Judea. The Herods, being partly Edomite (descended from Esau) as well as loyal servants of Rome, were never fully accepted by their Jewish subjects. The family history was characterized by lust, intrigue, and bloodshed. They opposed the Christian faith, sometimes violently, being responsible for the attempted murder of Jesus (Matt. 2:16), the beheading of John the Baptist (Matt. 14:1-12), and the execution of the apostle James (Acts 12:2).

(1) **Herod I** (Herod the Great), son of Antipater, known as King Herod (Matt. 2:1; Luke 1:5). He ruled Palestine in the years 37-4 BC with Roman consent. A skillful politician, he managed to retain the favor of Rome by deftly switching allegiances when necessary. A capable ruler in some respects, he engaged in extensive building works. His finest project was the beautification of the temple, which he hoped would win Jewish favor. The rabbis would later say, "Whoever has not seen Herod's building has not seen anything beautiful."

His rule, however, was marred by paranoia, suspicion, and cruel jealousy. He had some of his wives and sons killed for suspected plotting. In Matthew's Gospel he is visited by wise men looking for "one who has been born king of the Jews." Subsequently, he massacred the male infants of Bethlehem, trying to rid himself of this new, royal challenger (Matt. 2:1-11). Upon his death, his kingdom was divided among three of his sons, Herod Antipas, Herod Archelaus, and Herod Phillip.

(2) **Herod Antipas**, son of Herod the Great, also known simply as Herod or as Herod the tetrarch (Matt. 14:1; Luke 3:19). He was given jurisdiction over Galilee and Perea, which he ruled from 4 BC to AD 39 (Luke 3:1). For this reason, when Pilate heard that Jesus came from Galilee, he sent him to Antipas for questioning (Luke 23:6-12).

He is infamous for his role in the death of John the Baptist, which later haunted him (Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29). Jesus referred to him as "that fox," alluding to his predatory destructiveness for having killed John the Baptist, who criticized him for taking his half brother's wife, Herodias, in marriage. He also sought to kill Jesus (Luke 13:31-32). Jesus warned the disciples of the yeast of Herod (Mark 8:15). Yeast was a metaphor sometimes used to describe how evil spreads and corrupts the whole person, perhaps a reference to Herod's lust for Herodias and his murderous opposition to God's Word and Son.



(3) **Herod Archelaus**, ethnarch of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea (4 BC-AD 6) and son of Herod the Great (Matt. 2:22). (See also Archelaus.)

(4) **Herod Philip**, son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra of Jerusalem; he was tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis in the years 4 BC-AD 34 (Luke 3:1). He rebuilt Paneas and named it "Caesarea Philippi" after the emperor and himself (Matt. 16:13; Mark 8:27). Apparently, he married his niece Salome III, the daughter of Herodias and his half brother Herod son of Mariamne II.

(5) **Herod (Philip)**, son of Herod the Great and Mariamne II, he was married to Herodias, who left him for his half brother Antipas (Matt. 14:3; Mark 6:17; Luke 3:19). Though sharing a common name, this is a different son of Herod the Great than the Herod Philip of Luke 3:1.

(6) **Herod Agrippa I**, grandson of Herod the Great, also called "King Herod" in Scripture (Acts 12:1). At the height of his power (r. AD 37-44), he ruled an area coextensive with that of his grandfather. He persecuted the early church, killing James the brother of John. Encouraged by the Jews, he imprisoned Peter, intending to put him on trial, until an angel of God miraculously intervened to free him. He died prematurely in Caesarea when struck down for not giving glory to God (Acts 12:20-25).

(7) **Herod Agrippa II** (reigned in Chalcis AD 48-52, in Iturea AD 52-c. 93), the son of Herod Agrippa I. Prompted by the governor Festus, he gave audience to the apostle Paul to make his defense. He rejected Paul's attempt to persuade him of the truth of the Christian faith (Acts 25:13-27; 26).

