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## The King of Christmas and Herod



**Part 17** (041205AM)

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I am amazed every time I walk over the old ground of the Word—there are fresh new truths. This week as I poured over the story of Christmas, that was the result.

The Christmas Story comes to us from the God of Heaven. He wrote it down in the Scriptures through His Apostles. Only God captured this event and transmits it to us flawlessly—so we get exactly what He wants us to know.

Have you noticed what is first in God's story of Christmas? If you look closely, the Christmas Story we all love begins each time it was written in God's Word—with the same seven words. Have you pondered them?

Open with me to Luke 1.5 and follow along.

**Luke 1:5** *There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.*

Now turn to Matthew 2.1. Notice the same words each time:

**Matthew 2:1** *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,*

It is interesting that God's Word describes the life of one of the greatest thinkers, builders, and rulers of all time, Herod, as "in the days...." What a sobering perspective. All of our earthly existence can be reduced to "days". We spring up, flourish, flower, wither, and are gone in a matter of days—from God's perspective! Christmas is a time for us to soberly reassess our lives, to refocus our hearts, and to remember just what life is all about.

This Christmas season we are going to examine Christ's coming from the perspective of Him as KING. This morning we will look at the life of Herod and contrast his life to Christ's. The Bible presents us with two kings. One acted like a king, looked like a king, lived like a king, and died like a king. The other did not. The other King was by all appearances poor, weak, fragile, powerless, unknown, and insignificant. Few ever realized that He was a King.

### The Two Kings

Christ's birth was the day in history when the two most absolutely opposite kings confronted one another for the first time. One was the ultimate earthly king. He sat that day at the pinnacle of power. His name was Herod the Great, descendent of Esau or (as the New Testament had it) an Idumean. Herod lived for Herod. He would soon slaughter the babies of Bethlehem in his desire to exterminate Christ. The theme of his life was: "What will it profit me?"

The other king was baby Jesus. He was the King of Kings, Creator of the Universe. He was the natural heir to David's throne. He was the supreme King over all the kings of this earth. But He did not look like a king, wrapped in humble clothing. He would live to be rejected.

At the height of His ministry He would die a criminal's death. Had he wanted to, Jesus could have called forth legions of angels who would have vindicated His cause instantly and have swept the usurper Herod from the throne. But Jesus did not want the throne in that way. He did not want the throne until you and I could share it with Him. To make that possible He died.

- Christmas-- Immanuel: God with Us
- Part: 29 Joseph & Mary: The King's servants
- Part: 28 Lessons from the Wise Men Giving our Worship to Jesus
- Part: 27 Simeon & Anna-- Single Hearted Devotion
- Part: 26 The Humble Shepherds
- Part: 25 Priests-- Indifferent People
- Part: 25 The Characters of Christmas
- Part: 24 Christmas Traditions: Their origins and meanings
- Part: 24 Ordinary People: Zechariah & Elisabeth
- Part: 23 The King's Glory
- Part: 22 Joseph & Mary-- Does God have all of YOU?
- Part: 21 So close and yet so far Zacharias, Elisabeth, Chief Priests and Scribes
- Part: 20 The King's Seekers the Shepherds
- Part: 19 The King's Seekers Magi and Shepherds
- Part: 18 The Wonder of Christ's Love
- Part: 17 The King of Christmas and Herod
- Part: 16 What is Christmas
- Part: 15 Simeon & Anna Finishing Fruitfully
- Part: 14 The Shepherds
- Part: 13 The Magi
- Part: 12 Joseph & Mary Walking with the Lord
- Part: 11 Zacharias and Elisabeth -- The 1st Spirit Filled Family
- Part: 9 The Priests & Scribes: So close and yet so far
- Part: 8 The Two Kings: Herod and Jesus
- Part: 7 Joseph and the Magi
- Part: 6 The Origin of Christmas Traditions
- Part: 5 Are you looking for Christ this Christmas?
- Part: 4 The Fourth Glory of Christmas: His Name
- Part: 3 God With Us
- Part: 3 Lessons in Worshiping Christ
- Part: 2 Anna: Living a Life of Praise
- Part: 2 God In A Manger
- Part: 1 The Fullness of Time: The Day Jesus Was Born

That dramatic moment in history is found in Matthew 2. Of all those chapters in God's Word there are four that detail the Birth of Jesus. They are Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2. From these chapters comes the intriguing and very powerful message of Christmas. Let pause and read the story again Matthew 2.1-23 and meet the King of Christmas—and Herod.

**Matthew 2: 1-23** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea **in the days of Herod the king**, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is He who has been born **King of the Jews**? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." 3 When **Herod the king** heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 6 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you **shall come a Ruler** Who will shepherd My people Israel.'" 7 Then **Herod**, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also." 9 When they heard **the king**, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. 11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to **Herod**, they departed for their own country another way. 13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." 14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until **the death of Herod**, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." 16 Then **Herod**, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more." 19 Now **when Herod was dead**, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 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." 21 Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 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. 23 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."

#### Prayer

By bringing Jesus and King Herod together at the same time in history, God reveals that He uses what seems to be unimportant to accomplish His eternal purposes. He uses those who appear to be weak to triumph over those who appear to be strong. Although Herod's power seemed overwhelming and undefeatable, God's power was greatest. Only what is done for God will last; only His kingdom is eternal; life lived for self always perishes. Enduring legacy comes only by self-sacrifice and servanthood, not through self-seeking. That simple lesson Herod never learned!

**1 Corinthians 1:26-27** For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and **God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;**

**2 Corinthians 12:9a** And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, **for My strength is made perfect in weakness."**

Now listen as I lay side by side the weak and the strong. Jesus King of Glory contrasted to Herod King of Self.

#### PROFILES IN CONTRAST:

Jesus (4BC – 28 AD)	Herod the Great (73BC – 4 BC)
<b>Jesus</b> slept in a manger where farm animals fed. He laid there seemingly weak and powerless and with no earthly status. In reality He had it all. Jesus possessed eternal power, receives eternal glory, and holds unending authority.	<b>Herod</b> constructed magnificent palaces, he appeared to have great strength, he wielded what seemed to be absolute power, and by every earthly measure had great status. All he lacked was what would outlive his brief life. He completely lacked any eternal status.
<b>Jesus</b> was born in Bethlehem as the Promised One, the Messiah from the royal line of David, and the rightful King because of the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but He was never accepted as the King of the Jews.	<b>Herod</b> was a usurper to David's throne, born not in Israel but in Edom, not an Israelite but an Edomite, not an heir to the throne but one whose reign violated God's rules ( <b>Deuteronomy 17: 15</b> )—yet he was accepted by the Jews as their king!
<b>Jesus</b> lived to honor God, serve others, and to fulfill His Father's Will.	<b>Herod</b> lived for Herod, he measured life by his own measure, he sought to satisfy himself and to fulfill his own purposes in life.
<b>Jesus</b> the Son of God was perfect in sinlessness, kind in His service.	<b>Herod</b> , the king of the Jews, was a wicked in his lifestyle and a cruel tyrant of a ruler.
<b>Jesus</b> never sought the power the world could give, but His power as God's Son is beyond comprehension.	<b>Herod</b> sought and found awesome earthly power, but he never sought nor found the power of God to heal his sin sick soul.
<b>Jesus</b> gave His life and ministry as a sacrifice on behalf of other people;	<b>Herod's</b> life revolved around sacrificing others in order to bring glory and honor to himself.
<b>Jesus</b> used the living stones of	<b>Herod</b> tried to defy nature as he built glorious

redeemed people to build His Kingdom buildings of marble and massive stone blocks (Mt. 16:18; 1 Pet 2:4-8). He lived for to honor himself and promote his standing God's Glory, and to seek and save the with Rome.

lost.  
**Jesus** died on a cross in the agony of **Herod** died in the agony of a dissipated body, His Love, surrounded by sorrowing and hated by his family, and with the blood of loving disciples. He chose to hang many family members upon his hands that he there to take away the sin of the had murdered. All that Herod had he lost. world. Everything Christ had He keeps forever.

Who are you like this morning—Herod or Christ? Which way is your life headed this morning? Are you going Herod's way or Christ's way? Jesus and Herod opposites morally, culturally, spiritually, and certainly in terms of their worldly status.

King Herod the Great ruled Israel from 37 B.C. until his death in 4 B.C. He was king at the time Jesus was born. Here is a summary of Herod's failed life.

1. **Herod Was One of the World's Greatest Builders.** Though in ruins, his buildings are still among the greatest.
  - The Temple Mount in Jerusalem is an engineering marvel to this day. Masada still evokes wonder. The ruins of Caesarea inspire images of magnificence and awe. The Herodion, the first fortress-palace along Herod's escape route was built 30 years before Christ's birth. This spectacular complex, just over three miles southeast of Bethlehem, is typical of the great building projects for which Herod is known. Built upon a high hill, the walls of the upper palace stood about ninety feet tall, and steep earthen ramparts built against the lower half of the structure gave it the shape of a volcanic cone.
  - The upper palace dominated the landscape for miles around and even could be seen from Jerusalem nearly ten miles to the north. As the sun rose and set, the Herodion literally cast its shadow across the surrounding towns. The Herodion clearly symbolized Herod's visionary genius, power, and splendor. As the third largest palace in the ancient world, its buildings covered about forty-five acres surrounded by about two hundred acres of palace grounds. It included elaborate halls and guest rooms, a terrace more than one thousand feet long, and a huge swimming pool (140 by 200 feet) surrounded by colonnades and a beautiful garden full of exotic plants.
1. **Herod Was One of the World's Insecurest People.** Though Herod controlled more territory than almost any king of the Jews who had ruled before him, yet he saw threats in every corner and cruelly suppressed all resistance real or imagined.
  - He especially feared Cleopatra of Egypt, so he built a series of fortress-palaces along an escape route between his palace in Jerusalem and his home country of Edom. From Jerusalem he could travel fewer than ten miles south to the safety of the Herodion, then about thirty miles to the cliff fortress of Masada, across the Dead Sea ten miles to Machaerus, and finally the thirty plus more miles to his homeland of Edom.
1. **Herod Was One of the World's Greatest Failures.** Though he intended to rival the greatest exploits recorded in Biblical history he only managed to become one of the greatest failures of all. Herod and his family got as close to Jesus as anyone could and yet they dies lost, hopeless, and still bearing their own sin.
1. **Herod's Life Was One Of The World's Greatest Lessons.** Just as the Herod's building projects towered over the landscape of biblical history, Herod cast his shadow across the history and people of Israel. Although Jesus and Herod were vastly different, God clearly engineered history to bring them together in fulfillment of His purposes.
  - Today, the awesome projects that King Herod built lie in ruins, and most people remember him only as the king who had innocent babies killed in an attempt to kill the baby Jesus, the promised Messiah. Herod made his mark in the world and then was gone.
  - In contrast, Jesus didn't leave a single building as a legacy. No one is exactly sure of the locations where He was born or died. Yet His passing changed the world forever. And today He lives! His kingdom has no end, we Christians are His temples, and the eternal truths He revealed remain true today. No matter how strong and glorious Herod appeared to be, the baby in Bethlehem's manger was stronger. Jesus the Messiah, the Lord of heaven and earth, triumphed over all evil even death! He will return to conquer all earthly powers.

So we need to learn and heed the powerful lessons from the first words of the story of Christmas—the colossal failure of Herod's life. The lesson of the tragic life of Herod shows that Herod gained the whole world but lost his own soul.

**Matthew 16:26** For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

- **HEROD HAD IT ALL IN THIS LIFE. You can have it all in this life and fail in the next.** As a General he was nearly undefeated. As a Diplomat he was unstoppable. As a Builder he was unparalleled. As a Businessman he was unimaginably wealthy. It took great faith for the Jewish people to believe that Jesus, who began His life on earth as a baby in Bethlehem, was truly the Lord of heaven and earth. The contrasts between Jesus and Herod could not have been greater. Herod had all the power, wealth, strength, and glory that his position in the world could offer; yet Jesus, the King of the universe, had nothing of that sort to demonstrate His position. So to believe in Jesus as the Messiah was to believe that regardless of outward appearances, Jesus, the baby in the manger, was indeed Lord of heaven and earth. So beware, HEROD HAD IT ALL IN THIS LIFE. **You can have it all in this life and fail in the next.**

One of the treasures that I have from the Holy Land is this rock. I found it washed up on the sand after a big storm along the coast of Israel. The archaeologist who was leading me around Herod's city called Caesarea looked it over and told me that I had an actual piece of imported marble that Herod purchased and used to build his greatest palace of all. The Romans destroyed that palace and smashed every part of it into millions of tiny fragments. This is one of them. A reminder that all we have in

this life is fragile and temporary unless it is connected to Christ!

- **HEROD LIVED FOR THE EARTH, NOT HEAVEN. *If you live for the earth and not heaven you will lose everything.*** Herod was too earthly minded to notice the significance of this event.

**John 3:19-21** This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." (NIV).

King Herod, who personified evil, no doubt seemed to have all the power and control. He ruled with an iron hand, seeking out and destroying every possible enemy even killing innocent babies. Yet Jesus, the humble King of all creation, was truly in control. He had the power to overcome every evil including that of Herod.

Although it is easier and safer to avoid evil than to confront it, the crucial question that all Christians must answer for themselves is: "Will I dare to live as if God is greater than any evil I face in my life and my culture, as if the power within me is greater than every power of evil that I will encounter?" So beware of being like Herod. **HEROD LIVED FOR THE EARTH, NOT HEAVEN. *If you live for the earth and not heaven you will lose everything.***

- **HEROD HAD DEMON FAITH.** *You can tremble before God and still be damned.* Demon faith means God scares you but you never change. King Herod believed the Scriptures! Herod believed God's Word enough in that crowded court to dispatch a corps of butchers to Bethlehem to slaughter innocent children, in hopes of destroying this rival to his throne. But he was too late. The magi had come and gone and Jesus was by now safe in Egypt. All Herod's exposed to God's Word many trembled none changed!

**James 2:19** You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

So beware of being like Herod. **HEROD HAD DEMON FAITH.** *You can tremble before God and still be damned.*

- **HEROD PUT HIS FAITH IN HIMSELF, HIS POWER, HIS RICHES, HIS WEALTH, AND HIS PLEASURE.** *You can gain the whole world and lose your own soul.* King Herod - more concerned about his crown than his soul.

**Matthew 16:26** For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

**John 3:19** And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

**John 3:36** He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

So beware of being like Herod. **HEROD PUT HIS FAITH IN HIMSELF, HIS POWER, HIS RICHES, HIS WEALTH, AND HIS PLEASURE.** *You can gain the whole world and lose your own soul.*

- **HEROD MISSED HIS CHANCE.** *You can get as close as Herod and still miss heaven.*

Few people were as close to salvation as the Herod family was. Few had so many opportunities to meet the Messiah and to hear His teaching. As you read the New Testament you immediately begin to notice how many encounters the eight named members of the Herod family had--with Jesus and His message. The Legacy of Herod the Great is--**that few families in history have come as close to Jesus' message as the Herod's.** Many members of this ruling family knew of Jesus and His followers. Yet, one after the other, they killed or tried to kill anyone connected to Him.

Ruler	Notable Deeds	Last Days
• <b>Herod the Great</b> (37 BC to 4 BC): ruled the Land when Christ's Birth took place. <b>Matthew 2:1-8, 13-18</b>	<b><i>He heard the Magi and Religious leaders announce Christ's Birth!</i></b> He knew and believed the Scriptures. He only wanted to get rid of Jesus, not bow before Him.	He died a horrible, painful, sickening death in terror. He was killed by the dual onslaught of gangrene and venereal diseases.
• <b>Antipas</b> (son of Herod the Great) ruled 4BC to AD39: ruled Galilee and Perea 40+ years. <b>Mark 6:14-29 Luke 23:8-12</b>	<b><i>He beheaded John the Baptist!</i></b> Brought peace and prosperity: sensitive to Jewish religion yet married brother Philip's wife. Built Sepphoris and Tiberias. Had John the Baptist beheaded, met Jesus and plotted His death (Jesus opposed him) Agrippa accused him of a plot	New emperor exiled him and claimed his property
• <b>Archelaus</b> (son of Herod the Great) ruled 4BC to AD 6 over Judea, Samaria, and Idumaea for 10 years. <b>Matthew 2:22</b>	<b><i>He was alive while Joseph, Mary, Simeon, Anna, Zacharias, and Elisabeth all lived and worshipped in his capitol city—Jerusalem!</i></b> Yet he ruthlessly killed the families of Jewish delegations who had gone to Rome to accuse him. He will always be known for his bloodthirstiness and evil qualities	Exiled to Gaul, then disappeared from history
• <b>Philip</b> (4 BC to AD 34):	<b><i>He ruled over the town of Peter,</i></b>	Died of natural

ruled area north and east of the Sea of Galilee **Andrew, James, and John as they** causes at end of his reign  
 37 years. [Matthew 14:3](#); **He *fish*ed his Sea of Galilee, and we**  
[Mark 8:27](#) **called by Jesus on his seashore!**

- A just ruler who mainly governed Gentiles, peace-loving

**Agrippa 1** (grandson of Herod the Great) ruled AD 36-44: ruled area north and east of Sea of Galilee, Judea 8 years. [Acts 12:1-5](#), 18-24

**He knew the Apostles, killing some and imprisoning others!** Ruled a large area, sought to stop Jesus' followers, killed James and imprisoned Peter and other disciples

An angel of God stuck him down, eaten up by worms and died
- Drusilla** (wife of the governor Felix and daughter of **Agrippa I**). [Acts 24:24-26](#)

**She sat and watched the greatest evangelist of all time—Paul, preaching about righteousness and judgment to come.** As far as we know she was unmoved like her great-grandfather Herod the Great!

Fades from history after Acts 25 presumably lost forever.
- Agrippa II** (great-grandson of Herod the Great) ruled AD 50-70: ruled small portion of his father's region, had limited rule in Jerusalem. [Acts 25:13,23,26:1-29](#)

**He actually sat through one of Paul's greatest messages!** Advanced Hellenistic culture, wounded during Jewish Revolt supporting Rome, heard Paul's stirring presentation of the gospel in Caesarea, but was not persuaded.

Was wounded fighting for Rome against the Zealots at Gamla, but the specifics of his death are not known.
- Bernice** (great-granddaughter of Herod the Great). [Acts 25:13,23,26:1-29](#)

**She also sat through one of Paul's greatest messages!** Sitting by her brother, she heard Paul's stirring presentation of the gospel in Caesarea, but was not persuaded.

Fades from history after Acts 25-26 presumably lost forever.

Few people were as close to salvation as the Herod family was. Few had so many opportunities to meet the Messiah and to hear His teaching. Look up the following verses, and notice the encounters the Herod family had with Jesus and His message. The Legacy of Herod the Great is that few families in history have come as close to Jesus' message as the Herod's. Many members of this ruling family knew of Jesus and His followers. Yet, one after the other, they killed or tried to kill anyone connected to Him. So beware of being like Herod.

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Herod the Great [Matthew 2:1-8](#), 13-18

[Matthew 2:1-8](#) Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem heard of him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 6 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.' " 7 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

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16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more."

Antipas (son of Herod the Great) [Mark 6:14-29](#) [Luke 23:8-12](#)

[Mark 6:14-29](#) Now King Herod heard of Him, for His name had become well known. And he said, "John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him." 15 Others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets." 16 But when Herod heard, he said, "This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!" 17 For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. 18 Because John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. 21 Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee. 22 And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you." 23 He also swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom." 24 So she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist!" 25

Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her. 27 Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, 28 brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard of it, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb.

**Luke 23:8-12** Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. 9 Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. 10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. 11 Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. 12 That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

Agrippa I (grandson of Herod the Great) **Acts 12:1-5**, 18-24

**Acts 12:1-5** Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. 2 Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. 4 So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover. 5 Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.

**Acts 12:18-24** Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. 19 But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death.

And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there. 20 Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country. 21 So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. 22 And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" 23 Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. 24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

Drusilla (wife of the governor Felix and daughter of Agrippa I) **Acts 24:24-26**

**Acts 24:24-26** And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." 26 Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.

Agrippa II (great-grandson of Herod the Great) **Acts 25:13,23,26:1-29**

Bernice (great-granddaughter of Herod the Great) **Acts 25:13,23,26:1-29**

**Acts 25:13-23** And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus. 14 When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, 15 about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him. 22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him." 23 So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.

**Acts 26:1-29** Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: 2 "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, 3 especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently. 4 "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. 5 They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. 7 To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. 8 Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead? 9 "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11 And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities. 12 "While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13 at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. 14 And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15 So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 16 But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 17 I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' 19 "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. 21 For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. 22 Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come— 23 that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles." 24 Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you

mad!"

25 But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. 26 For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

29 And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."

I am indebted for this comparison to a small tract written years ago by Joseph Hoffnran Cohn for the American Board of Missions to the Jews, entitled "The Man from Petra," No. 65 in the series "What Every Christian Should Know About the Jews" (revised 1961, no original date of publication).

The details on Herod are quoted and paraphrased from Ray Vander Laan, *Faith Lessons On The Life & Ministry Of The Messiah. Leader's Guide*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999, p. 22ff.

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Generations earlier, Isaac, Abraham's son, had prayed on behalf of his barren wife, Rebecca. The Lord answered his prayer, and she conceived twins. Esau, the older son, founded the nation of Edom. Jacob, the younger son, founded the nation of Israel. Listen to what the Lord said would happen, which is mirrored by the lives of Jacob and Esau's descendents. "Two nations are in your womb," the Lord said to her, "and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger" ([Genesis 25:23](#)). King Herod (who was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau) seemed to possess all the power, magnificence, and glory. He certainly appeared to rule over a newborn baby in Bethlehem names Jesus. But years earlier, Balaam had prophesied, "A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel... Edom will be conquered; ... but Israel will grow strong" ([Numbers 24:17-18](#)). And the prophet Malachi spoke the word of the Lord: "...I have loved Jacob ...but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals..." ([Malachi 1:2-3](#)). So, the Jews knew that someday the line of Jacob would assume power. These prophecies have certainly come true.

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