

June, 2004

# Pause Ponder Profit

## The Herod Family

by James A. Brown

The Herod family was the ruling dynasty (67 B.C. — 100 A.D.) in Jewish Palestine during Roman domination. Several from this dynasty are mentioned in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as in the Book of Acts. But sometimes when they are mentioned, there is no clear indication of who from the Herodian dynasty is under consideration. Because of this, I want to offer you a brief description of the ruling Herods mentioned in the New Testament. And also provide you with a chart of The Herodian Family I took from Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia Of The Bible.

**1. Herod the Great** — He was not a Jew but was from the country of Idumea. At the young age of twenty-five, he was appointed governor over Galilee and then later became king over Judea. He was a very sinful man. He had ten wives. His first wife was Doris by whom he had one son, Antipater. He repudiated Doris and Antipater when he married his second wife, Mariamne I. Later in life he took them back. But later on he had his son Antipater executed. He killed many of his own family because he was afraid they would

become king. On one occasion he had his two sons (Alexander and Aristobulus) by his second wife executed by strangling. Shortly before Herod's death the Magi had come to Judea to worship the newborn king of the Jews. Herod summoned the wise men, asking them to report to him the location of the Christ child when they found him in Bethlehem. Being warned in a dream, the Magi did not return to Herod but departed to the East by another route. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to flee to Egypt because of Herod's intention to kill Jesus. They fled to Egypt and Herod killed all male children of Bethlehem who were two years and under (Lk. 1:5; Matt. 2:1-18). They stayed in Egypt until they were told by an angel of the Lord that it was safe to return to the land of Israel (Matt. 2:19-21). When Herod the Great died three of his sons — Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip II each ruled over a part of the country.

**2. Herod Archelaus** — A son of Herod the Great by his fourth wife, Malthace, a Samaritan. Archelaus became ruler over Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. When Joseph obeyed the angel of the Lord and came back from Egypt he was afraid to live in Judea because he heard Archelaus was king there. God told Joseph to go to the country of Galilee. That is why they went to Nazareth (Matt. 2: 19-23; Lk. 2:39). Archelaus was as ruthless as his father. He treated both the Jews and the Samaritans with great brutality. On one occasion, he sent out an army in order to prevent an uprising of a mob at Passover and killed 3000 people. His methods of suppression of unrest were oppressive, to say the least. Because of his harsh and unjust rule, and a scheme within the Herod family to bring about his downfall, he was soon banished by Rome to Vienna in Gaul.



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*(Continued from page 1)*

**3. Herod Antipas** — Another son of Herod the Great by his fourth wife, Malthace. Of all the Herodians, Herod Antipas figures most prominently in the New Testament, for he was the tetrarch over Galilee and Perea, the two areas in which John the Baptist and Christ had most of their ministry (Lk. 3:1). Around A.D. 29 Antipas made a journey to Rome. On his way he paid a visit to his half Herod (Philip) who apparently lived in one of the coastal cities of Palestine. This Philip was the son of Herod the Great by his third wife, Mariamne II. It was this Philip with which Antipas schemed to help bring about the downfall of their brother Archelaus. While Antipas visited with Philip, he plotted to take his host's wife Herodias who was also his own niece. When Antipas and Herodias were married John the Baptist spoke out boldly against the unlawful union. Consequently, Antipas incarcerated him and later had him beheaded (Matt. 14:3-12; Mk. 6:17-29; Lk. 3:19-20).

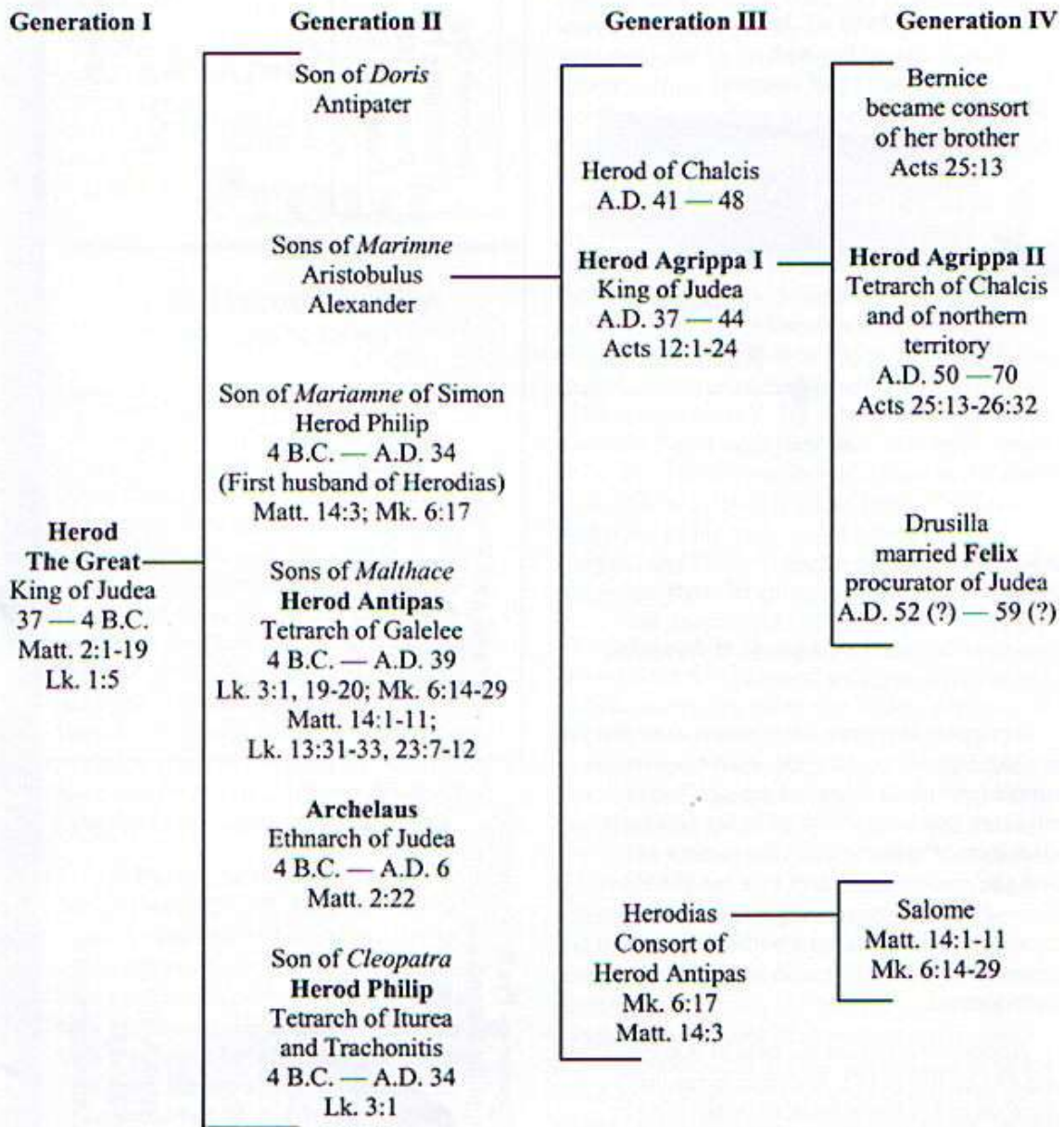
Antipas' relationship to Jesus is seen in three episodes. The first event is upon Antipas' hearing of Jesus ministry and concluding, with a note of irony, that this one is John the Baptist resurrected (Matt. 14:1-2; Mk. 6:14-16; Lk. 9:7-9). The second episode to be noted is when Jesus was on his final journey to Jerusalem. Some of the Pharisees came to Jesus and stated that He had better remove Himself from Antipas' territories because he wanted to kill Jesus (Lk. 13:31-33). Jesus replied by saying, "Go tell that fox" that He would continue His ministry of casting out demons and curing diseases for a short time at least, but only after He had finished would He go to Jerusalem to perish. By referring to Antipas as a "fox" (the animal which is weak and uses cunning deceit to achieve its aims), Jesus speaks of him as a crafty coward. The final encounter was when Jesus was tried by Antipas in A. D. 30 (Lk. 23:6-12).

**4. Herod Philip II** — He was the son of Herod the Great by his fifth wife Cleopatra of Jerusalem. He was ruler over countries northeast of the Lake of Galilee, Gaulanitis, Auranitis, Batanea, Trachonitis, Paneas, and Iturea (Lk. 3:1). Philip II was not as ambitious and scheming as his brothers. He ruled his domain with moderation and tranquility. He was well liked by his subjects. He married Herodias' daughter Salome whose dances led to the execution of John the Baptist. They had no children.

**5. Herod Agrippa I** — He was a grandson of Herod the Great. He was the son of Aristobulus (son of Herod the Great and Mariamne his second wife) and Bernice (daughter of Herod's sister Salome and Costobarus). This Herod was also the brother of Herodias. Agrippa I is known in the New Testament for his persecution of the church in order to get in good with the Jews (Acts 12:1-19). He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword and imprisoned Peter who was released by an angel. Agrippa had the guards put to death. Agrippa died around A.D. 44 in Caesarea. Luke states that he was in Caesarea sitting on the judgment seat dressed in royal robes addressing ambassadors from Tyre and Sidon with whom he was displeased. While speaking the people called out stating that it was the voice of a god and not man. Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory; and he was eaten by worms, and died. His survivors were three daughters, Bernice, (Acts 25:13) Mariamne, and Drusilla, (Acts 24:24) and a son also named Agrippa who was seventeen years of age.

**6. Herod Agrippa II** — He was the son of Agrippa I and Cypros, daughter of Phasaël (Herod the Great's brother's son) and Salampsio (Herod the Great's daughter). More simply, he was the son of Agrippa I and the great-grandson of Herod the Great. Around A.D. 59, Paul was taken before

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*Names of New Testament are in bold face. Names and relatives by marriage are in italics.*

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*(Continued from page 2)*

this Herod and found not guilty of anything wrong (Acts 25:13– 26:32). All through the Roman and Jewish wars Agrippa II was never reluctant to side with the Romans.

Agrippa's II private life was not exemplary. His sister Bernice was a widow after her second husband (and uncle Herod), king of Chalcis, died. From that time she lived in her brother's house. In an attempt to quiet the rumors of incest she resolved to marry Polemo of Cilicia. But she did not continue long with him and returned to her old relations with Agrippa. But during the Roman and Jewish wars she was also Titus' mistress.

Historians differ on the date of Agrippa II's death (93 or 100 A.D.). Josephus gives no indication of his being married or having any children. His death marked the end of the Herodian dynasty.

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