

Herod the Man: Herod the Builder

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### Introduction – Background

The family Herod ruled over Palestine for the Romans for approx. 100 years.

Family was Idumean by birth.

Idumea was an area south of Bethlehem and Jerusalem populated by Edomites. The Maccabean John Hyrcanus I conquered Idumea around 130 BC and compelled them to accept orthodox Judaism.

Usually forced conversions don't go well. The Edomites were Arabs who, while forced to be Jewish, had very little allegiance to Judaism. The Maccabeans had led the Jews in a heroic struggle to free themselves from foreign rule in 167 BC. The Syrian ruler Antiochus IV became interested in Egyptian conquest. He was met at the border of Egypt by a Roman official who said, "No, go back to Syria".

When Antiochus had trouble making up his mind, the official drew a circle in the sand around him and said, "You have two choices. Accept the Roman rule and go home or step outside that circle and be at war with Rome".

It wasn't a very pretty choice, and Antiochus reluctantly started back to Syria. He had to pass through Palestine, and his anger boiled over on the Jews.

He forbade circumcision, the observing of the Sabbath and Jewish dietary laws.

That was bad enough, but he also went into the Temple and sacrificed a pig on the altar and placed an image of Zeus in the Temple.

A fortress, Akra, was erected in Jerusalem in order to solidify Seleucid rule.

The Jews were not happy.

Many refused the new worship and either were killed or fled into the hills.

Those who remained were subjected to bloody persecution.

When an agent of Antiochus arrived at the village of Modein approx. 20 miles NW of Jerusalem to enforce the new religion, an aged priest named Mattathias ran him through with a sword.

Mattathias' last name was Hasmonaeas, which is where the Hasmonean name comes from. Back to Mattathias: He killed the royal official along with a Jew who was attempting to offer a pagan sacrifice at the altar.

Mattathias and his five sons fled into the hills, and the Maccabean revolt was born. Jews throughout the land rallied to the Maccabean cause.

Simon and Judas, Mattathias' sons, were appointed to lead the rebellion.

Simon (wise in counsel) led the rebellion.

Judas was appointed military commander. Mattathias died in 166. By the time of his death most of Palestine was held by the rebels.

Judas prepared for guerilla warfare.

His forces knew the land and drew their support from the local populace.

By day they blended in with the locals.

By night they struck at pro-Syrian settlements and ambushed enemy patrols. The pro-Syrian faction appealed to the governor of Samaria, who marshaled an army and advanced on Jerusalem.

Judas' forces ambushed and defeated the Samaritan force.

Judas took the governor's sword and used it for the rest of his life.

The guerillas gained many weapons and were greatly strengthened by the Samaritan losses. Over the next several years Antiochus sent at least four armies, which were never quite strong enough to defeat Judas' forces.

The Maccabees defeated every Syrian force sent against them.

Finally a general, Lysias, assembled a massive force—100,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry, 32 war elephants.

They defeated the Jews, but then Lysias received word that there was rebellion in Syria. He proposed a compromise.

He would grant the Jews religious freedom if they would abandon their strongholds on the Temple mount.

Judas, now at the lowest point in his rebellion, determined to achieve nothing less than political independence for Judea.

In the meantime there was a series of campaigns and battles in Syria which distracted the Syrians and allowed the Maccabees to build their political and military strength.

In 142 BC Judea became politically independent. In 65 BC the Roman general Pompey the Great ended the Hasmonean reign.

And Rome became the superpower in Judea. There followed approx. 25 years of turmoil. Contending factions struggled for legitimacy and especially for Roman military backing. The process was complicated by Rome's internal political turmoil.

Herod's father tried to gain the support of Mark Antony.

He was appointed governor of Palestine. He then appointed Herod governor of Galilee and his brother Phasael ruler of Jerusalem. The Jews hated him for his cooperation with the Romans, and he was poisoned.

Herod, with Roman help, executed his father's killer.

He was opposed by a fellow named Antiochus who captured Jerusalem.

Herod fled to Masada and then to Egypt and then to Rome.

He made the sea voyage to Rome in the winter when it was too dangerous to travel by sea. The Roman senate appointed him "King of the Jews".

He returned to Judea and with Roman help took Jerusalem and executed Antiochus and had to fight for 3 years, but eventually he overcame all his opponents and was "King of the Jews" in fact as well as in name.

He was not liked very much by the Jews. They feared and hated him. He kept the lid on by a ruthless campaign against any real or suspected enemies and a large spy network across the land.

### Some facts about Herod the Great

#### Some terms defined

Born 73 or 74 BC; died 4BC in Jericho.

An Edomite.

Reigned approx. 33 years, usually given as 37 BC - 4 BC.

Client king of Roman provinces of Judea, Galilee and Samaria.

Very complex man.

Great administrator; possessed great political skills.

Massive building programs both in and outside the Holy Land.

Father - Antipater, an Idumaean – high-ranking official under Hyrcanus II (ethnarch – Hasmoneon)

Mother – Cypros, a Nabatean.

Herod was appointed governor of Galilee at age 25.

Glossary –

Levant – Lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

Idumaea – At the time of Herod, country directly south of Judea (Edom) west of Nabatea.

Nabataen Kingdom – In Herod's time, Arab lands south, east and west of Judea and the Dead Sea. (Parts of it lay south of Idumaea). Some was in NW Arabia and trans-Jordan.

Petra – Capitol of Edom and later Nabataea. Famous as the Red-Rose City (for the red stone).

Fosse – moat/ditch.

Political parties/groups in Herod's world –

1. Sadducees
2. Pharisees
3. Zealots
4. Essenes
5. Herodians

1. Sadducees

Formed during the Maccabean period / Ended in AD 70 with Temple destruction.

Name means "righteous ones":

Made up of the aristocracy, rich descendents of the high priestly line (Not all priests were Sadducees).

Beliefs:

Accepted only Torah (Gen.-Deut.) the written law as authoritative.

Rigid/literal conservative interpretation of Torah.

Observed past beliefs and traditions.

Opposed oral law as binding.

Believed people could do as they wished without God's attention.

Denied divine providence.

Denied life after death/resurrection.

Denied reward/punishment after death.

Denied angels/demons.

Very materialistic.

Very political.

In charge of Temple and its services.

Many were members of Sanhedrin, which exercised great political control.

Supported ruling power/status quo.

Hellenistic (Greek influence) despised by Jews.

Opposed both Pharisees and Jesus.

Both groups considered more than Torah as authoritative.

Opposed Jesus for fear their wealth/position/power was threatened if they supported Him.

Claimed descent from Zadok, high priest at time of Solomon.

## 2. Pharisees

The most important group. Opposed Jesus in the gospels. Most numerous (about 6,000).

Paul was a Pharisee:

Controlled the synagogues and exerted great influence over the people.

Means "the separated ones".

Separated from the masses or

Separated to study and interpretation of the law.

Very legalistic. Developed the oral tradition.

600+ rules to obey the Law. (613)?

Progressive, willing to adopt new ideas.

Strongly monotheistic (one God).

Accepted all the OT as authoritative.

Affirmed the reality of:

Life after death.

Resurrection of the body.

Missionary – sought to convert Gentiles.

Little interest in politics.

Opposed Jesus because He refused to accept the teachings of the oral law.

Pharisees developed oral law.

### 3. Zealots

Simon, one of the disciples, is called a zealot.

The extreme wing of the Pharisees.

Believed only God had right to rule over Jews.

Willing to fight and die for that belief.

Patriotism/religion were inseparable.

Not nonresistant; given to political assassination and anarchy.

Carried weapons/slipped beside Roman or enemy in a crowd; Kill him and flee.

Name refers to their religious zeal.

Believed total obedience (supported by drastic physical measures) must be apparent before God would bring in the Messianic age.

Opposed Roman rule over Palestine.

Opposed to peace with Rome.

Refused to pay taxes.

Opposed to Greek influence/language in Palestine.

Engaged in terrorism against Rome and others with whom they disagreed politically.

*Sicari* (or assassins) were an extremist zealot group who carried out acts of terrorism against Rome.

### 4. Essenes

Very strict sect.

Ascetics. (self-denying / austere / self-discipline and abstinence)

Monastic: Many took vow of celibacy.

Some did marry to procreate.

Adhered rigidly to Law (including a strict rendering of the ethical teachings).

Had other authoritative literature (in addition to Scripture).

Pacifists.

Believed Temple worship and offerings had been corrupted. (did not worship at Temple)

Believed in immortality of soul with no bodily resurrection.

Oriented to endtime beliefs.

Devoted to copying and studying of the manuscripts of the Law. (Dead Sea Scrolls?)

Lived in community with communal property.

Converts required to submit to ritual baptism and long probationary period.

Righteous and virtuous/self-disciplined.

Very diligent/manual laborers. (self-sufficient like Ephrata Cloister)

Upheld rigid Sabbath laws and daily worship.

Maintained a non-Levitical priesthood. (others corrupted)

Rejected pleasure as evil.

Many believe the Dead Sea Scrolls people were Essenes (Qumran).

Famous for hospitality.

Took care of sick/elderly/Interest in medicine.

## 5. Herodians

Name from their support of Herodian rulers (Herod the Great or his dynasty).

Consisted of wealthy, politically-influential Jews who supported the Herod family while Rome ruled Palestine.

Not a religious, but a political group.

Members would have been comprised of representatives of varied theological perspectives.

Accepted Hellenization and foreign rule.

Something more than a political party.

Something less than a religious sect.

## The Herods in the NT

Herod – not a personal name, but the family or surname.

All the descendants of Herod the Great down to the fourth generation, who are identified with the government of Palestine and who are mentioned in the NT, are known in history by the surname Herod.

Herod Archelaus

Herod Antipas

Herod Philip II

Herod Agrippa I

Herod Agrippa II

## I. Herod the Great

Born 73/74 BC, died 4 BC.

Ruled 37 BC to 4 BC.

Father, Antipater / Idumaeen / Edomite / Descendants of Esau / Lived south and west of Judea.

Jews distrusted/disliked Herod's family... Called them half-Jews. The Idumaeans were not endeared by this. They were wild, wandering Arabs not used to being ruled.

Herod appointed procurator of Galilee when he was about 25.

His champions were Mark Antony and Augustus. The Romans needed someone to rule and subjugate their eastern flank. Herod was their man.

## II. Herod Archelaus

The oldest of three sons of Herod the Great who ruled after Herod's death.

He was ethnarc, which is something less than king. Herod the Great willed him to be king, but Augustus split kingdom three ways with the promise that if Archelaus did well he would be given the whole kingdom.

He did not do well – As a ruler he usurped kingly prerogatives without Augustus' permission, in fact against his directives.

Archelaus was very heavy-handed, killing 3,000 Jews in the Temple courts at Passover.

He lasted 10 years, then was banished to Gaul (France) where he died.

His territory was taken over by a Roman procurator.

One Scripture ref., Matt. 2:22...

Joseph and Mary returning from Egypt were afraid when they heard Archelaus was reigning.

## III. Herod Antipas

Younger brother of Archelaus.

Regarded as sly, ambitious, luxurious, but not as able as Herod his father.

Jesus said of him in Luke 13:32, **Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils<sup>1</sup>.**

Married Herodias, wife of his half-brother Philip I, while they were both married.

Killed John the Baptist.

Involved in treason against the emperor and was banished to Gaul (France) where he died.

This is the Herod that Jesus was sent to by Pilate.

#### IV. Herod Philip II

Son of Herod.

Married his niece Herodias, who left him to marry his half-brother Antipas.

Philip II married Salome, the daughter of Herodias and Philip I.

Had a long rule distinguished for its moderation and equity.

Died AD 34.

He built Caesarea Philippi, where Peter made his great confession, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

#### V. Herod Agrippa I

Grandson of Herod the Great.

He was the child of two first cousins and was himself married to another cousin, the daughter of his aunt who was married to an uncle!

This is the man in Acts 12 who was eaten of worms and died because he did not give God glory.

Quite a family!

This is the man who beheaded James and imprisoned Peter.

Was king of all Palestine.

#### VI. Herod Agrippa II

Son of Agrippa I.

17 years old when his father died.

Emperor considered giving him the kingdom, but decided instead to give him only about a

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<sup>1</sup>The Holy Bible : King James Version. 1995 (Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version.) (Lk 13:32). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

third.

At 23 he was given authority over part of the kingdom, including Jerusalem, with authority to manage the Temple treasury and remove the high priest.

He was never popular with his subjects.

After the Roman capture of Jerusalem in 70 AD he retired to Rome where he died.

Herod the Great

Name signifies "heroic".

Some say Herod was not really a Jew. Arab from Idumaea. We saw before that the Idumaeans had been forced to convert to Judasim by John Hyrcanus in 125 BC.

Forced to be circumcised, but old loyalties and antagonisms remained.

Herod's grandfather Antipater (died 78 BC) was the founder of the family. So Herod was the third generation of Jews.

Antipater was appointed governor of Idumaea.

His son Antipater, Herod's father, succeeded Antipater as governor.

He and Herod were cunning, resourceful, ambitious and possessed great political skill. Cleverly picked the right side in the sectarian/religious conflicts – Was appointed procurator of Judea by Rome.

Antipater was poisoned by an assassin in 47 BC, leaving 4 sons and a daughter:

Phasael

Herod the Great

Joseph

Pheroras

Salome, the daughter

Pheroras and Salome caused Herod endless trouble as they fomented intrigue and family brawls throughout his long rule.

Herod was born in the reign of Queen Alexandra.

She was pious and capable; she had survived two husbands, and at age 64 was the first Jewish queen mother.

Her brief rule of 9 years was a time of peace for the Judean people.

Alexandra was the last of the Hasmoneans or Maccabeans (the last to rule as a monarch).  
 When Alexander the Great died in 323 BC his empire was split.  
 After 40 years of jealousy and strife his family had ceased to exist.

The former empire was reduced to three kingdoms:

Macedonia

Syria

Egypt

All were Greek with Greek rulers.

Antiochus IV by 168 BC had managed to goad the Jews into revolt.

The Maccabeans revolted, and Hyrcanus conquered Idumaea and forced it to accept Judaism. This made it possible for Herod the Edomite to become king of the Jews. He was a third-generation Jew, but not a very strict one. Apparently very sensitive to the whims/wishes of his subjects, but not so Jewish when outside Palestine.

The Nabataens or Edomites lived south and east of Judea. Their territory lay on rich trade routes which ran from south Arabia to Alexandria, Egypt.

When Hyrcanus conquered the Nabataens he picked Herod's grandfather Antipater as governor (Herod's father and grandfather were both named Antipater).

We know next to nothing about both these men.

Josephus tells us that Antipater, Sr. was appointed governor of Idumaea, and that he made friends with the Arabs and the people of Gaza and Ascalon and won them over with large gifts.

Josephus says Herod's father was in the front rank of his nation. He says, "He had a large fortune, and was by nature a man of action and a great party man".

We see here the characteristics of Antipater and his son Herod: the wealth, the knowledge of how to use it and the flair for politics which in Herod would amount to genius. Both men were gifted with enormous energy and ambition which drove them to excel.

Herod's grandfather became a Jew by religion, but he was an Arab by race. He would use his Jewish religion to get what he could, but he remained an Arab.

When his son, Herod's father, looked for a bride it was to the Arabs that they looked. Since the family was rich and powerful, the match was concluded with one of the leading families of Petra. Her name was Kufra in Arabic. In Greek it was Cypros. It was a noble

name for a noble woman. She and the younger Antipater had 5 children—four sons, Phasaël, Herod, Joseph and Pheroras and one daughter Salome.

Her great-niece Salome would make that name notorious when she asked for the head of John the Baptist. All the children were given Jewish names except Herod, which is Greek. It was a prophetic choice, for of all the children, Herod was to be the least Judaic and the most Greek (Hellenist).

So Herod's father was Antipater; his mother was Cypros. He was born in 73 BC.

The Roman historian Tacitus, writing about the situation at Herod's birth, says,

The Macedonian power had fallen into impotence, that of the Parthians was still immature, and the Romans were far away. So the Jews of their own accord inflicted kings on themselves. Expelled by the fickle mob, these princes regained power by force of arms, and proceeded to the banishment of freeborn men, the destruction of cities, the assassination of brothers, wives and parents, and the rest of the usual crimes of tyrants; while they exploited the dignity of the priesthood to buttress their political power, and so fostered the national fanaticism.

"End of quotation"

There was a power vacuum in Palestine. The queen mother Alexandra was frail. She was unaware that within 10 years all would change.

Hellenism, the pagan way of life and conduct, would be predominant within the country, and a pagan Gentile would go unrebuked into the very Holy of Holies itself.

There were two reasons for this:

First – Jewish nationalism, which had started by uniting the Jewish people, ended by dividing it, hopelessly and irreparably.

Second – By the time Queen Alexandra died and Herod was a boy of eight, the Romans were no longer far away; they were in Jerusalem.

Alexandra had been advised to make peace with the Pharisees, but the rift was too deep.

Her husband Alexander Jannaeus called himself king and high priest. He was a hard-

drinking brute. In 95 BC he had been pelted with citrons (a big lemon-like fruit). He replied with a massacre.

The people called for his death and asked outside troops for help. Alexander defeated the troops sent against him and crucified 800 of his countrymen. Then he murdered their wives and children while they looked on from the crosses. Nice people! Nice times!

There were two main political groups in Judea in Herod's youth:

The nationalists and the Hellenizers.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees, while no friends of each other, were both nationalists. Both were for Palestinian autonomy and for keeping Rome and Hellenism out.

The Hellenizers bade their time and waited as Rome drew ever closer.

For some time Rome's policy for its eastern frontier was hesitant and spotty.

After Antiochus IV had his adventure in Egypt and was chased home by Rome, there were several more changes in rule. The Roman fleet operated against pirates in the Aegean, and Roman merchants were active in Syria and even in Palestine, but Roman land forces were far away.

The time was ripe for Rome to enter the Levant.

Queen Alexandra's two sons Aristobulus and Hyrcanus now fielded armies. Hyrcanus was defeated, and Antipater had to decide who to back. He didn't like Aristobulus very much and so retired to Idumaea and waited.

He began to ingratiate himself with Aristobulus' enemies and with the Nabataean king.

There was a protracted civil war, and finally the Roman Pompey entered the fray. He defeated Aristobulus; Hyrcanus was rewarded by being appointed high priest and president.

Antipater's man had won.

Young Herod (10 years old) had been sent with his mother to her country.

Here he was exposed to wealthy Arabs, merchants of all races and learned the ways and some of the language of the Greek, Persians, Indians, Africans and Romans. This training would serve him well later in his illustrious life.

Control of Palestine seesawed back and forth during this time. Rome was involved in civil strife among its leaders. The Hasmoneans were still a force to be reckoned with.

Mark Antony came on the scene, and 16-year-old Herod and Antony became fast friends.

After many years of fighting and backing the right man, Antipater was appointed procurator of Judea by Caesar.

He was a Roman citizen, exempt from taxes, procurator of Judea. He had worked long and patiently. Hyrcanus was senile, and when Antipater suggested appointing his eldest son

Phasael prefect of Jerusalem and his second son Herod governor of Galilee, Hyrcanus agreed heartily.

Herod was 26. Well equipped to lead. Tall and handsome, with great political charm.

He was athletic, a fine horseman, an excellent wrestler and a first-class shot.

We have no coins or statues of his likeness, because that would have outraged the Jews. There were statues outside of Judea, but none have survived.

Stewart Perowne in his book about Herod the Great has this to say about the young Herod:

Both his parents were of Arab stock. That he had dark hair we know. It is not hard, therefore, to imagine him as he was, with the fine features of the Arab, the golden complexion, the thin, sensitive lips, the delicately-moulded nose, the small, crisp ears, the large, liquid, oval eye, shaded by fernlike lashes, beneath sable eye-brows. From his father he inherited the flair for politics, the quickness of perception, the instinctive knowledge of other men's minds and motives. He lacked Antipater's calm, almost northern temperament. Instead he had the sanguine, impetuous character of his mother. At times, it was to enable him to surmount awful crises and perils, at others to reduce him to a condition of nervous excitement not far removed from madness.

Sanguine – cheerful; confident; optimistic; hopeful

As he grew up he spent more and more time with his father learning valuable lessons from watching him deal with various people groups.

At the very onset of his career he was given the opportunity to prove himself.

A certain Ezekias was terrorizing the countryside between Palestine and Syria. Herod rounded him up and killed him and many of his gang.

This made him very popular with the Syrians.

Herod's enemies complained to the Sanhedrin, which summoned Herod to trial. Herod appeared with a bodyguard to protect him and a letter from the Syrian governor telling the Sanhedrin to acquit him.

Herod was advised to flee, which he did. He received the governorship of part of Syria and Samaria after giving the governor a handsome gift.

Herod now knew he could not trust the Jews. He must be very careful to back the winner

in the next Roman civil war which was about to begin.

There was in Hyrcanus' court a rascal named Malichus who hated Antipater. Hyrcanus, thinking it would be good to counter the growing power/influence of the Herods patronized Malichus.

The Romans had assessed Palestine 700 talents of taxes. Herod quickly collected his share.

Malichus tried to resist, and Cassius, the new Roman Caesar, wanted to execute him. Antipater paid his share and pled for his life.

You would think Malichus would be grateful, but he saw Antipater as weak and conspired against him.

Antipater Herod and brother Phasaël raised an army to fight Malichus, who said it was just a misunderstanding.

Again Malichus was in danger of being executed when Antipater and his sons intervened for him. These guys would ruthlessly eliminate any rival. Here was a traitor who was allowed to live.

Maybe he was a relative of Cypros, Herod's mother. We don't know.

In the summer of 43 BC Malichus arranged for Hyrcanus' butler to poison Antipater.

Apparently Malichus thought Herod would blame Hyrcanus and Herod and Hyrcanus would be enemies and Malichus would gain.

Unfortunately for Malichus, Herod figured it out, and with Rome's blessing executed Malichus.

Herod now sought to consolidate his political base by marriage.

He already had Doris, who was a commoner, with one son. His religion did not restrict him to one wife.

Mariamme was a beautiful woman in her own right, but more important, she was a Hasmonean. Herod hoped by marrying her that he would be considered part of the old royal family. Unfortunately for Herod the business of Mariamme was only to bring him grief.

In October, 42 BC Antony came to Asia as the Roman power. Two groups from Judea met him. Herod and Phasaël brought a very nice present.

A group of Jews came to denounce Herod. Antony would not listen to them.

Antony asked Hyrcanus who was better suited to rule. He answered, "Herod and his party".

Antony appointed Herod and Phasaël tetrarchs. Many of the Jews who opposed Herod were killed.

Hyrcanus still remained ethnarch, "ruler of the nation", and high priest. He was a

figurehead.

The new tetrarchs were to exercise military and financial authority, and they had practically unrestricted access to Rome.

Meanwhile Antony was off frolicking with Cleopatra. The Parthians made their move.

They got as far as Jerusalem where Herod and Phasael held the Temple area. Antigonus tried to trick Herod, Phasael and Hyrcanus into meeting him, but Herod refused to go and warned the others not to. They went and were imprisoned. Phasael committed suicide and Hyrcanus had his ears cut (or bitten) off, thus disqualifying him from being high priest.

One dark night Herod slipped out of the city, taking his family with him. There were about 9,000 in the party. One of the overloaded wagons overturned, badly injuring Herod's mother. He thought she had died and was on the point of killing himself when she recovered.

Next morning the Parthians and Jews pursued them. He turned and defeated them. It was here, at the place of his victory, that Herod built Herodeum, the great desert fortress/palace, whose ruins still stand today.

He placed his family in Masada. Herod tried to get help from the King of Nabataea, but it was not forthcoming.

Herod was alone, his only friends far away in Rome. Herod decided to go there.

Here was a discredited Arab, evicted by the Parthians, harassed by the Jews and spurned by his own. Could he get help from Rome? He was sure he could.

Herod set off for Egypt. There Cleopatra worked her charms on him, but he was too wily for her. She never forgave him. Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. Even though it was winter and dangerous to travel on the Mediterranean. The voyage was disastrous. They almost wrecked.

He presented his case to Antony, who supported him. The Roman senate confirmed his as "King of the Jews".

Herod had conquered Rome: He still had to conquer Jerusalem.

Herod landed in Palestine with an army. He first attacked the Galilee brigands. They retreated to what they felt were unscaleable caves in the sheer cliffs north of the Sea of Galilee. They went up with ladders, pulled the ladders up after them, and felt they were safe.

Herod had cages constructed and left them down with ropes. The soldiers in them pulled or smoked them out, defeating them. Herod continued to fight, and after a five-month siege conquered Jerusalem.

Antigonus, the last of the Hasmoneans, was beheaded.

It was the summer of 37 BC. Herod was 36 years old. He was nearly bankrupt. He was hated by most of his subjects. He had caused destruction in Jerusalem the 4<sup>th</sup> time in less than 25 years. The Jews hated him for it. But he was king of Judea, and Mariamme was his wife.

Herod had spurned Cleopatra's advances, and she determined to get even with him.

She was married to Antony (after having been Caesar's mistress).

Now she tried to get Antony to give Herod's kingdom to her. She worked on him, but he refused to hurt his old friend. As a compromise he gave her some of the coast on the west, the exclusive right to mine the bitumen of the Dead Sea and Jericho.

Jericho had dates and balsam.

The date groves were very valuable, and the ancients counted 49 different varieties. There were two balsam groves—one appo. 20 acres, the other somewhat smaller.

Herod was eventually able to rent the Jericho groves, but it was galling to him to have to pay for them. Herod now decided to take his revenge on the Sanhedrin. They had tried to condemn him to death; now it was their turn.

Herod condemned and executed 45 members. That left 26 survivors who could do nothing against the 45 new members Herod appointed.

Herod also had a frustration in the matter of the high priest. Herod could never be high priest. Not by wealth or power could he win the right to enter the Holy of Holies. In fact, Herod could not enter the Temple courts—only the court of the Gentiles. Some think this accounts for the royal stoa, a magnificent edifice on the southern expanse of the Temple.

This frustration that he could not be high priest was aggravated by another woman, Mariamme.

His marriage to her was a huge political mistake. He could have dealt with the Hasmoneans much more effectively if they weren't installed in his household.

It was a mistake to have married Mariamme. It was an even greater mistake that he fell in love with her.

She did not return the passion, but it was used by her and her mother Alexandra to vex Herod.

Mariamme and Alexandra pled with Herod to install Mariamme's brother in the office of high priest.

Alexandra wrote to Cleopatra, who put pressure on Antony to force Herod to do what they wanted. Antony refused to intervene. But he did ask Herod to send the 16-year-old

Aristobulus to him. Herod finally yielded and appointed Aristobulus high priest.

He was watched along with his mother, who made plans with Cleopatra to escape from Herod in a coffin.

Herod learned of the plot and caught them in the act, humiliating them.

He pretended to forgive them, but he determined that Aristobulus must go.

During the Feast of Tabernacles as Aristobulus moved through the Temple courts in his rich, glittery robes, the crowd went mad with enthusiasm.

Herod made up his mind.

After the feast the court went down to Jericho. There is still a swimming pool at Herod's palace site.

In the heat of the day Herod showed great affection to Aristobulus. He talked him into taking a swim. While swimming he accidentally drowned when Herod's servants held his head under water too long.

The funeral was magnificent. Herod was loud in his lamentations.

No one was deceived.

Alexandra wrote again to Cleopatra, who gave Antony no peace till he had summoned Herod to explain what had happened.

Herod was exonerated by Antony and returned white as snow.

During his absence he had given his sister's husband Joseph instructions that if he did not return, Joseph was to kill Mariamme because he loved her so much that he could not think of her being loved by another. Joseph let it slip to Mariamme, who was furious and taunted Herod when he returned.

Herod was convinced that Joseph and Mariamme had been lovers.

He executed Joseph without trial.

And had Alexandra kept under strict guard.

Stewart Perowne in *The Life and Times of Herod the Great* says,

Thus did Herod take the first steps on the fatal path of family discord and bloodshed. It is almost unbelievable that so shrewd a man could have been so worked upon by women of the stamp of Alexandra and Salome, that he could have been overcome by such jealousy as made him distrust Mariamme and murder Joseph. It is hard, sometimes, for a spectator to credit the reaction of Shakespeare's Othello to Iago's poison; yet Herod, as the story is told in the

minutely detailed pages of Josephus, acted on far flimsier grounds. There is no reason to believe that Shakespeare had ever read Josephus: "he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards and found her there"; but his analysis of jealousy and the madness it induces is psychologically vouched for by the history of Herod.

Cleopatra now determined to be rid of Antony. She sent her agents to tell him she had died, thinking he would no longer wish to live. Antony took the bait and tried unsuccessfully to kill himself.

Octavian was now in charge, and Herod skillfully switched sides and supported Octavian. He argued that he had supported Antony and now would support Octavian. Octavian determined to go down to Egypt to defeat Cleopatra and conquer Egypt. Herod rode with Octavian. He provided abundant supplies of fresh water and food for the party. First came word of Antony's death; then Cleopatra attempted to seduce Octavian, but when he resisted she killed herself. The properties Cleopatra had taken from Herod were restored; his kingdom was enlarged.

Herod also received Cleopatra's personal bodyguard of 400 Galatians.

He received her children's tutor who began to educate the king. He became one of the most trusted advisors to the king.

The royal women began to fight again—Alexandra and Mariamme in one camp, Cypros and Salome in the other.

The only thing they agreed on was that Doris, Herod's first wife was utterly common. Mariamme's hatred of Herod was as deep as his love for her. She refused to share his bed. She indicated displeasure at Herod's success and told him she wished he had failed. Josephus says, "She treated her husband imperiously enough because she saw he was so fond of her as to be enslaved by her. She acted like she did not know her life was in his hands."

This went on for a year. Herod the doting husband and Mariamme the hating wife. Herod, in love as he was, bore with her, greeted her insults with a smile and would hear no ill of her. Herod's sister Salome realized that the only way to get Mariamme in trouble was to get Herod to suspect her chastity.

She had Herod's cupbearer tell him that Mariamme had asked him to poison the king. Herod became convinced that Mariamme and his friend Sohaemus had been lovers. There was no evidence to support the charge, but Sohaemus was executed without trial. Mariamme was subjected to a fake trial. It was obvious to everyone that the death penalty was the only

acceptable sentence. When it was felt that Herod would commute her sentence to imprisonment, Salome argued strenuously that as long as Mariamme lived Herod's life would be in danger. Herod allowed himself to be persuaded and pronounced the death sentence.

As Mariamme was led to her death her mother abused her (trying to improve her own position). She tore her hair and accuse her of being an evil woman.

Mariamme looked at her mother in disdain. Unmoved, with her beauty undimmed, she walked calmly on to her death.

Salome's victory nearly killed her brother. He abandoned himself to grief. He staggered about from room to room of the palace crying out for Mariamme, he sent his servants to summon her, as though she were still alive. He tried to find forgetfulness in society, in feasting and entertainments. But Mariamme was always present to him, "for his love to her was not of a calm nature, nor such as we usually meet with among husbands". Then plague broke out in Jerusalem, and carried off a number of citizens, including some of Herod's closest friends. He was more dejected than ever. He went on long hunting expeditions, making his headquarters in the town of Samaria, where he and Mariamme had been married. But the memories of his happiness only aggravated his distemper. He became much worse, both in mind and body. He was suffering from terrible pains in his neck and his mental affliction gave him the aspect of a madman. He refused to be ruled by his physicians, particularly as regards diet. They gave him up. Let him eat what he liked, they said, he could not last long.

Alexandra, on hearing the news of Herod's impending death, again plotted against him. He found out and issued the order for her execution.

Slowly Herod recovered. He was 44; he had another 26 years to live. He never completely recovered. He became moody, suspicious and liable to sudden fits of vindictive passion. Perhaps the strangest part of the whole account is Herod's attitude toward his sister. Apparently he never figured out that she had sent Mariamme to her death unjustly. She had never been unfaithful to Herod.

Salome was almost as vile as Alexandra. When she tired of her 2<sup>nd</sup> husband she unjustly accused him and his friends of treason against Herod. They were rounded up and executed

and Salome had her divorce.

Nice people!

### The Client King

Rome ruled the known world. The Roman system of government grew out of twin necessities. First was the need for security.

Second was the need for money.

The further her armies were from Rome, the more expensive it was to maintain them. So the conquered nations were asked to pay tribute.

The client kings were responsible for keeping the peace and for collecting taxes for Rome. Egypt and Syria were the two most important Roman provinces. Vast wealth flowed to Rome from these two areas.

Sitting right between them was Palestine. Trade moved in two ways—sea and land. Lucrative land routes ran through Palestine from Syria to Egypt.

There was also the eastern frontier. Only in the east had the Roman legions been defeated. The warlike Parthians had to be reckoned with.

Client kings could do all this.

Rome ruled through them. Their position was very precarious. Rome could remove them for any reason.

Rome could replace a client king, appointing another in his place.

They could also simply abandon the client king's position and set up a Roman governor in his place.

Perowne writes:

A client king therefore held his kingdom merely on a "grace and favour" tenure. He could be dethroned at will. He could not bequeath his kingdom, except by Rome's permission, and then only to an heir approved by Rome. Frequently it happened that Rome, having used a king for a time, took over the kingdom and turned it into a province. That had happened in North Africa, it had happened in Asia, and it would happen again. Nor might a client king strike his own silver coins, only copper ones. The silver coinage was imperial. He must, too, be ready at all times to furnish contingents of troops

for distant wars. The king, nevertheless, was supreme within his frontiers. He had full legislative, judicial, fiscal and administrative authority. He was entitled to the diadem, the sceptre, the crown and the purple. He enjoyed two important privileges: he and his kingdom were exempt from the tribute, and from the garrisoning of Roman troops on his people and at their expense.

Within such cramping limits, with such slender prerogatives and prospects, it was not to be expected that many a king could achieve eminence. They were not meant to. But, as Buchan admits, Herod had that touch of genius which makes a man incalculable. He was determined to shine in the world, and shine he did.

### The Jews

The nation Herod ruled was peopled by appo. 3½ million people, of which 3 million were Jews. About the same number of Jews lived outside the Holy Land.

The Jews were people of village and field. Fishing, farming and grape cultivation dominated. Corn (meaning small grains, not our corn), wine and olive, fruits, flocks and herds were the wealth of the land.

In matters of religion there was great variety, but the Jews were especially pesky. They had the audacity to claim that religion was about a single God. In fact, it was blasphemy to worship any other God. They claimed that their God was the only God that was, and that all others simply did not exist.

The vast Temple was the center of their religious experience. From all over the world gold flowed into Jerusalem. Every Jew paid an annual ½ shekel Temple tax. It was transported in cash. All of this had political ramifications. The Jews had lots of strange laws making them hard to govern.

Herod had to please the Romans and please the Jews.

He was very savvy, with an acute political sense which served him well, but it was a massive job to keep both happy.

If he made the Jews unhappy they could complain to Caesar. If Rome was offended it could mean Herod's ouster.

Stewart Perowne comments about the Temple taxes:

But the money might also be applied to more secular uses, such as fortifications, repair of walls and water conduits and other urban needs. Even so, a large surplus accumulated. Crassus had coveted the Temple riches, and a century later, even after Herod's lavish expenditure, Tacitus could speak of the "incalculable wealth of the Temple". Most of it came from abroad, where many rich Jews would contribute far more than the minimum half-shekel. To the ruler of Judaea, therefore, it was of the first importance that this revenue should reach Jerusalem uninterrupted and unmolested.

Such were the two Jewries which existed in Herod's day: the predominantly agricultural community of Palestine, and the widespread, complex Dispersion, the two bound together by their Faith, and by devotion to its centre, the Temple in Jerusalem.

Herod was king of Judaea, but with his usual flair, he realized that to succeed in that role, he must play a leading part in the affairs of the Dispersion as well; and, incompatible as that might seem with his status of client king, he would show he possessed the genius to do it.

### Some Problems

Herod wasn't liked too much because of his loose practice of the Jewish religion. His pursuit of Greek ways was resented by some and downright despised by others.

Herod had constructed three buildings to host "the Actian Games" in 27 BC.

A hippodrome

A theatre

An amphitheater

The hippodrome was built in Jerusalem. It was used for chariot races. Most Jews were ok with chariot racing. It was a dangerous sport. Chariots were drawn by 2-4 or 6 horses. The course was a narrow U-shape with a very tight turn between the two legs. It was ok to upset rivals by squeezing them either into the middle wall or off the track. The axles got so hot that grooms stood at the turning point ready to throw water on them as they thundered by.

The musical performances often contained offensive items to the Jews—So Herod built

the theatre right outside the city wall.

The amphitheater was the most offensive of all. Animals like lions would fight with each other or with condemned criminals.

Wrestling matches were conducted in the nude. The walls were richly decorated with warlike trophies which caused trouble.

The Jews protested against the trophies, which they said were graven images.

Herod asked them to meet with him in the amphitheater, where he had the trophies taken apart bit by bit till only the bare poles were left.

Were wooden poles graven images, he asked.

The assembly dissolved in laughter, which only increased the anger of the objectors.

10 of them formed a plot to assassinate Herod when he entered the amphitheater.

Herod was warned and returned to his palace. They were rounded up and executed.

The man who had warned Herod was killed by the crowd.

Herod had some women tortured till they disclosed the ringleaders. They with their families were executed. No more plots.

"Very nice people"

In 25 BC there was an incredible drought which Herod handled decisively.

Herod was out of money. He had already begun his building program, and because of the drought the people could not pay taxes.

He stripped the gold and silver from his palace and melted it and his plate and sent it to Egypt to buy grain. He set up feeding stations throughout the land. People could get grain or if they could not grind and bake bread he gave them baked bread to eat. He distributed 150,000 bushels in Syria and 1,200,000 bushels to his own people.

Herod had immense wealth. He had just launched his building program.

His court was known far and wide for its splendor.

Palm and balsam groves of Jericho were very lucrative.

He managed Augustus' copper mines for which he received ½ the income.

There was also the rich Arabian trade route. Herod was terrified when he learned that Augustus was planning to invade Arabia and take its treasures for himself. By a combination of luck and circumstances Herod pulled triumph from disaster.

One of the king's advisors (a Nabataean) was no friend of Herod or Rome.

He managed to misguide and ill advise the Roman force till after a year and a half they returned completely unsuccessful.

Herod sent a small token force to appear as if he was helping Rome, but actually did not cooperate with them at all.

Once again Herod had snatched success out of danger.

### Herod's Building Program

Herod the Great was one of the most passionate builders of antiquity. It is by his buildings that yet survive that he is most remembered today.

His constructions fall into four rough categories or zones:

1. Jerusalem
2. The Temple, his greatest work
3. The rest of his kingdom
4. Areas outside of his kingdom

The work went on for 20 years, beginning as soon as he was established as king in 37 BC. The most productive period was the 10 years between his 46<sup>th</sup> and 56<sup>th</sup> year (27 to 17 BC).

Obviously the Temple was not completed till many years after his death. We know from history and from the gospel of John that at that time the Temple had been 46 years in building. It was only completed a few years before its destruction by Titus in 70 AD.

Herod first built the Antonia fortress. Then a new royal palace. It had 3 defensive towers, many large rooms (some large enough to sleep 100 guests), rich marble, costly wide beams, paintings and sculptures were only a few of the amenities.

Across from the palace Herod constructed a magnificent royal mausoleum.

A magnificent winter palace was rebuilt and constructed at Jericho.

Jericho also had an amphitheater and a hippodrome.

Herod rebuilt or constructed a series of 10 palace-fortresses around the perimeter of his kingdom.

These were lavish, with 5 characteristics in common:

1. They are all on the tops of hills or mountains.
2. Whenever possible the stone building on the summit is protected with a smooth glacis so steep that it is hardly possible to walk on it.
3. There are cisterns lined with hydraulic cement to store rain water.
4. Often there is an aqueduct to bring additional water.
5. The actual mountain is severed from the outside by an artificial moat.

These 10 fortresses were connected by a system of mirror signaling devices. 4 of them could signal Jerusalem. If fortresses were not visible to each other, relay signal stations were used to keep them in the communication loop.

The Temple was perhaps Herod's greatest work. He enlarged the Temple courts to a size of 35 acres. Its dimensions were 1,053 feet on the north, 927 feet on the south, 1,554 feet on the east and 1,608 feet on the west.

Huge arches and underground vaults carried the platform out over the valley. 10,000 masons were employed. A thousands carts were used to bring stone from the quarries. To insure that no profane hands touched it, Herod trained 1,000 priests as stonecutters, carpenters and decorators.

The northern surface was expanded back over 100 yards by digging away the rock.

The southern end was built up with great retaining walls.

The corner of the wall called the pinnacle of the Temple stood 450' above the Kidron Valley.

Josephus says it was so high that it was not possible to see from the top to the bottom—most feel he was nearsighted.

All around the Temple court were continuous porticos.

Gleaming white pillars (double rows) stood appo. 30' high and supporting a roof.

The south portico was Herod's masterpiece, called the royal portico or stoa. It had three aisles appo. 105 feet wide with 162 massive columns surmounted by Corinthian capitals. Sir Charles Wilson, writing in the 1860s, said, "It is almost impossible to realize the effect which would be produced by a building longer and higher than York Cathedral, standing on a solid mass of masonry almost equal in height to the tallest of our church spires; and to this we must add the dazzling whiteness of stone fresh from the mason's hands".

The Temple complex stood by itself behind a 4½' wall beyond which no Gentile could go. Jewish women could enter the Court of the Women. Jewish men could go to the great altar.

Priests could enter the Holy Place, and only the high priest, only on the Day of Atonement, and only with the blood of an animal, could enter into the Holy of Holies.

The Temple was the capstone of Herod's building.

Josephus says, "He who has not seen the Temple has not seen a beautiful building".

Throughout the rest of his kingdom Herod built fortresses, palaces, gymnasiums, theaters, amphitheatres, cities, a seaport, colonnaded roads, temples and many other buildings.

Herod did extensive building in Samaria. He built a brand new city on the site of Strato's tower, naming it Caesarea after Caesar.

Herod had his engineers construct a huge new harbor which was magnificent. Breakwaters were constructed of huge stone and concrete blocks in 120' of water. Herod's engineers, using a special volcanic sand from Italy, developed concrete which cured underwater. The concrete was poured into huge forms which were then sunk into position.

Streets were laid out in checkerboard fashion. A series of 100 vaulted warehouses on the southern quay serviced the ships. A theater seated 4,000. There was also a large amphitheater and a hippodrome. A temple to Caesar held a huge statue of the emperor.

Water was brought on an approx. 10 mile aqueduct. Under street sewers were flushed by the sea. It took 12 years to build, and after the great Temple was Herod's most magnificent work.

I was aware that Herod built extensively inside his kingdom. I was amazed to learn that he also built extensively outside his kingdom. He built 18 buildings in Jerusalem.

27 outside of Jerusalem, but inside his kingdom.

10 in Phoenicia and Syria.

15 in Asia Minor and Greece.

All over the Holy Land today one can see the remains of Herod's building programs. We will look at some specific buildings if we have time.

There seems to have been three reasons for Herod's building:

1. In his kingdom he could not do anything that would redound to his personal glory. No image or statue of him was permitted. In Greek cities this prohibition did not apply.
2. His loyalty to his friends.
3. His desire to support those Jews of the dispersion who were located outside the Holy

Land.

### Heyday

The years 23 to 13 BC, Herod's 6<sup>th</sup> decade, have been described as the best years of his life.

The Hasmonean and Roman wars were behind him. People who had left were returning. The population was increasing.

New colonies were planted. Imitating the Romans, he gave land to retiring veterans of his armies.

Samaria received 6,000 retired mercenaries. Herod's building program provided plenty of employment.

Herod's relationship with the Roman government, particularly with the governors of Syria and Egypt, fostered trade which brought in large revenues.

Herod made a trip to Rome appo. 18 BC. He was received with great fanfare by Augustus, who allowed him to bring back his two sons Alexander and Aristobulus. They had been educated in Rome.

Herod was good friends with Agrippa, who was Augustus' son-in-law and heir. They traveled together. Agrippa toured Herod's kingdom.

Herod's citizens asked Agrippa to address wrongs they were suffering, which he did.

### Last Years

Herod's family and reputation would have been well-served if he would have died at 60 rather than 70.

The years from 14 BC to 4 BC were filled with failure, disease and crime.

A despot is the most lonely of men. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. Herod had no defense, no friend to counsel him, no peers to restrain or warn him.

Josephus makes much of the last 10 years. He casts them in a very bad light.

He was writing for Rome and had no incentive to cast Herod in a good light. He was also descended from the Hasmoneans. Herod had killed many Hasmoneans, so since he could not speak badly about Herod's Roman dealings, he took the opportunity to make his private life as bad as possible.

Herod had not been accepted by his Arab neighbors. They were jealous of him. They resented his power over them. He had beaten them in battle and taken territory from them.

There was an incident with an Arab ruler named Syllaeus which caused Herod much grief. Syllaeus came to Jerusalem in the year 20 to negotiate a loan which his Arab king needed. While there he became infatuated with Herod's sister Salome. She was in her 40s and had been twice widowed.

The king was told, and as he watched them he saw it was true. When Syllaeus asked Herod for permission to marry Salome, Herod decided for political reasons that it would be a bad match.

He artfully said that he would agree if Syllaeus became a Jew and was circumcised. Syllaeus brusquely replied that he would be stoned by his people if he did this. He returned to Petra rebuffed and revengeful.

8 years later while Herod was in Rome the Arabs decided to revolt. They spread the word that Herod was dead and took to robbery and harassment of Herod's people.

Herod's generals soon defeated them, but 40 escaped to Syllaeus' territory where they were received with open arms.

When Herod returned he led the army against the Arabs. Syllaeus disregarded Herod and the Roman governor who told him to repay the loan.

He went to Rome where he lied to Caesar that Herod had killed 2,500 Arabs and had insulted the king.

Caesar, without investigating, sent Herod a nasty note and told him that whereas he had been his friend he was now his servant. Herod was out of favor for some time till Caesar found out Syllaeus had lied. He made him pay back the loan and then beheaded him. Herod was now back in good graces with Caesar, but at home it went from bad to worse.

Herod had 10 wives. By 8 of the wives he had 15 children. One died in Rome. 8 were too young to take part in the political scene at court.

The children who caused the trouble were Antipater, his firstborn by Doris, and the 4 surviving children of Mariamme I, Alexander and Aristobulus and two girls, Salampsio and Cypros.

Antipater was the oldest son, but his mother was a nobody. He and his mother had been banished from the court in 37 BC. Mariamme's boys on the other hand were born when Herod was a king to a mother with royal blood. They had been brought up in Rome where

they were friends of Caesar.

This alone was enough to create friction between the half brothers.

Herod had dynastic ambitions, and he felt that it was Mariamme's sons on which he planned to found a royal line (Remember that as a client king his successors needed to have Rome's approval).

The plot thickened when Alexander and Artistobulus married.

Alexander did good. He married the daughter of the king of Cappadocia. This was a good match for all concerned including the Romans.

The younger Aristobulus didn't do as well. He married one of Herod's sister Salome's daughters. Herod had already married one of her daughters, but they had no children.

What an intrigue! Herod married a niece. Aristobulus married a cousin. Salome was now Aristobulus' mother-in-law!

She was determined to have her share of the royal line. She had caused the death of the boy's mother and now was determined to ruin them both. What a mess!

The royal family was divided into two factions—Salome, Doris and Antipater against the children of Mariamme.

Salome had a powerful ally in Herod's only remaining brother Pheroras. In spite of all Herod had done for him he was jealous of him. He had been accused of plotting against Herod while Mariamme still lived. To his jealousy he added resentment. His first wife was sister-in-law to Herod. When she died Pheroras was betrothed to Mariamme's eldest daughter, Salampsio, but had thrown her over for a servant girl.

Later Herod took him to task for his discourtesy. It was agreed that Pheroras would divorce his wife and marry Mariamme's younger daughter Cypros. He agreed to do it in one month, but found he could not leave the woman he loved no matter her unroyal blood. He continued to live with her.

This led to a breach between the brothers and enlisted Pheroras' wife among Herod's most active enemies.

The young sons of Mariamme could hardly be expected to overlook the fact that their father had murdered their mother. They talked too much and too freely.

Salome played on Herod's worst passion, his suspicion.

She insinuated that he was in great danger and that his sons were plotting his death.

Herod, thinking he could make the boys see reason, recalled Antipater so they would see that they weren't the only heirs and abandon their hostility toward him.

It turned out much different. The boys felt they had one more grievance. Antipater,

making up for his 23 years of banishment, undertook with all the vigor of his low and malicious nature the welcome task of ruining his hated half brothers.

Herod married Antipater to a Hasmonean princess and also took back his mother Doris. Antipater was publicly proclaimed Herod's heir.

Herod became convinced that his sons Alexander and Aristobulus were plotting against him. He took the matter to Caesar where Alexander defended himself and his brother. He soon had the whole court in tears. Caesar told him that while they were not to blame for treason against Herod, they had not showed respect to him.

Herod embraced them and a reconciliation was effected. Caesar authorized Herod to nominate an heir for the kingdom or to divide it up as he liked.

Things went from bad to worse with the various royals intriguing and plotting against each other. Herod had three handsome eunuchs. Alexander by bribing them seduced them. Herod had them tortured, and they sang against Alexander.

The palace dissolved into a delirium of espionage, blackmail and torture. Trusted friends who had served Herod faithfully for many years were dismissed, because they had been tutors and intimates to his sons.

Under torture one of the victims fingered Alexander. He supposedly had boasted that he was planning to kill his father and make it look like a hunting accident.

Herod ordered Alexander's arrest. He determined to turn the tables on his accusers. He wrote a 4-book confession admitting his guilt but implicating many others in the court. He accused Salome of forcing him to have sexual relations with her.

Herod's father-in-law Archelaus hurried down from Cappadocia. He realized Herod was insane and accused Alexander. He said he was surprised that Herod hadn't already killed him. In this way he forced Herod to defend Alexander.

Reconciliation was effected, and everyone was happy.

This lasted two years. Then a Spartan wormed his way into the court. He spread a false tale about another plot to stage a hunting accident in which Herod was to be killed.

Aristobulus tried to blackmail his mother-in-law Salome. She whined to Herod, who believed her and took her side. He ordered the two brothers Aristobulus and Alexander to be arrested. They were confined in separate prisons. Emissaries were sent off to Rome to lay charge against the boys before Caesar.

Caesar did not wish to establish a precedent of becoming arbiter of the domestic troubles of his client kings. He had quite enough troubles of his own. He was probably getting tired of dealing with Herod's domestic troubles. He had told Herod that he would not deprive

him of parental authority so long as he lived.

He told Herod to handle the matter himself. He did ask that the trial be in Beirut, not Jerusalem. The two boys were not invited.

Herod's speech was rambling and violent, showing his unstable mental condition.

There was no doubt what verdict would be acceptable, and even though several of the judges disagreed with the death penalty, it was passed and the boys were condemned to die.

The company began the return to Caesarea. Herod had not made up his mind. Many hoped he would be lenient and commute the sentence. The whole kingdom was in suspense. Everyone was afraid to speak to Herod about it.

At Caesarea the silence was broken by an old soldier named Tero. He spoke up for Alexander and Aristobulus and against Antipater. At this point the royal barber told the king that Tero had often asked him to slit the king's throat as he shaved him.

Tero and 300 army officers were stoned to death.

Alexander and Aristobulus were taken to Sebaste in Samaria where they were strangled.

Their bodies were sent back to Alexandria and buried with their ancestors in the family tomb.

They had been imprudent, ungracious and ungrateful, but they had not plotted their father's death. It was once again Salome who caused their downfall. It was around her that the envy, hatred, malice and uncharitableness of the court collected and revolved.

One of Herod's better character traits was that he took great pains to see to the care and education of the children of the people he executed. Antipater was now at the height of his power. He was sharing the throne with his father. It was evident that the king could not live much longer, but Antipater became more and more impatient. He complained to his mother that he was already gray-haired and might die before his father. He was hated by the whole nation. They were aware how he had deceived his father and sent his half brothers to their deaths. He arranged a trip to Rome, because he felt Judea was getting too hot for him.

There were several other plots and intrigues which convinced Herod of the need to deal with Antipater before he died.

He contacted him and asked him to come home. Antipater had grave doubts, but decided to return. When he reached Caesarea dark looks and curses were all he encountered. He could not turn back and decided to brazen it out by going to Jerusalem. Herod was cool to him, accusing him of trying to kill him. A trial was arranged. Antipater was convicted and imprisoned. He languished there as Herod slowly died.

It was now autumn of the year 5 BC. Herod's illness was gaining on him rapidly.

It was clear that he could not live much longer, but Herod could not die in peace. He would need to deal with a political crisis provoked by the Pharisees. They refused to take an oath of loyalty to Caesar and Herod. As the king's death drew nearer they persuaded a band of youths to go into the temple and tear down the offending golden eagle with axes. 40 were arrested. The dying king insisted on hearing the case himself. He could not stand, but was carried on a litter. The ringleaders were to be burned alive, and the rest were to be executed by axe or bowstring.

Perowne writes that Herod,

...in the awful physical and mental decay into which he had fallen, and in this atmosphere of fervid Messianism, should have ordered the massacre of the Innocents of Bethlehem is wholly in keeping with all we know of him. Bethlehem was but a few miles distant from his palace-fortress of Herodium: there least of all could any subversive cell be tolerated. Such an act was by no means unheard of. In pagan antiquity, the life of a new-born child was at the mercy of its father or of the state. As Abel points out, a few months before the birth of Augustus, a prodigy having presaged the birth of a king for the Roman people, the affrighted Senate decreed that none of the children born that year were to be brought up. Later on Nero, fearing the consequences of the appearance of a comet, ordered the execution of leading aristocrats of Rome. Their children were driven from the city and died from hunger or poison.

End of quotation

Herod was now in the last throes of his disease. He was dropsical (having dropsy, fluid retention), gangrenous and racked with burning pains. He could hardly breathe. He was taken to the Dead Sea area to hot springs. They did him no good, nor did the bath of hot oil his physicians lowered him into (The oil almost killed him. His eyes turned back in his head, and it looked like he had died). When he reached his palace he asked for an apple and a knife to peel it. He immediately tried to kill himself. He was prevented by his cousin. There was a great tumult which echoed throughout the palace.

Antipater heard the noise in the prison, and thinking the king was dead, asked the jailer to

release him so he could assume the throne. The jailer went and told the king, who although he was at death's door, raised himself on his elbow and ordered his guards to kill Antipater at once. When he heard of Antipater's death Augustus made his celebrated remark that he would rather be Herod's pig than his son. Herod died 5 days later, having made his 4<sup>th</sup> and final will.

He was 70 years old, having reigned 37 years since being confirmed by the Romans.

Herod had ordered a large group of leading Jews to be imprisoned and killed when he died. He knew the nation would not mourn his death, and by having these men killed he hoped to ensure genuine mourning at his passing. Fortunately the orders were countermanded before they were carried out.

Perowne recounts the funeral procession:

On the morrow, the funeral convoy left Jericho. All the regalia had been brought out. The body lay on a golden bier, encrusted with gems, beneath a long purple pall. The dead king wore his diadem, and a gold crown above it. His sceptre was in his right hand. Immediately next to the bier were his sons and all his family. Then came the army, in the following order; The Royal Guard, the Thracian Regiment, the German Regiment, the Galatian Regiment, Regiments of the Line, all in full battle order. The army was followed by 500 of Herod's servants, carrying spices. Up the steep road they climbed, the road that runs beneath Cypros, on the south side of the Wadi Qilt, the traditional Valley of the Shadow of Death. Soon, the glittering procession turned aside from the grim cleft of the valley, and moved south across the barren tors and downs of the Wilderness of Judaea. At last they came in sight of the Herodium, the round castle on the hill, standing where the desert meets the sown. They passed through the gardens that Herod had planted, by the pavilions he had built. Up the marble stairway they went, and into the strong, cold keep at the top. There, they laid Herod in the tomb he had chosen for himself, the strange, sad king, solitary for ever in death, as he had been lonely and alien in life, "for there, by his own command he was to be buried; and thus did Herod end his life".

End of quotation

Josephus describes the funeral procession this way:

Archelaus omitted nothing of magnificence...but brought out all the royal ornaments to augment the pomp of the deceased. There was a bier all of gold, embroidered with precious stones, and a purple bed of various contexture, with the dead body upon it, covered with purple; and a diadem was put upon his head, and a crown of gold above it, and a sceptre in his right hand; and near to the bier were Herod's sons, and a multitude of his kindred; next to which came his guards, and the regiment of Thracians, the Germans also and Gauls, all accoutred as if they were going to war; but the rest of the army went...armed, and following their captains and officers in a regular manner; after whom five hundred of his domestic servants and freed-men followed, with sweet spices in their hands: and the body was carried...to Herodium, where he had given order to be buried.

We will close out our study of Herod by looking at his final illness and the possible causes of his death.

### Herod's Horrid Death

Physicians have long debated what caused King Herod's death. But there is no disagreement that his death was a horrid one. Many would say it was well-deserved.

The Jewish historian Josephus has left a detailed account of his death. It was based on the firsthand account of Nicolaus of Damascus, who was Herod's daily companion and thus an eyewitness to the king's condition.

Nicolaus was also in direct contact with the court physicians who treated Herod.

Herod became seriously ill when he was about 70 years old in 4 BC. He moved to his palace in Jericho. His final illness lasted only a few months.

His illness began with a vague condition causing uncontrolled anger. Josephus stresses Herod's cruelty in his last days.

Part of the illness was a terrible desire to scratch, for it was impossible not to seek relief. This could have been scabies, which are tiny mites, all but invisible to the eye.

Once these mites take up residence, they burrow into the skin. Eggs are deposited beneath the skin, and upon hatching the young mites seek a new location. All this tunneling causes discomfort, and a persistent itching begins. In addition, the body usually develops an allergic reaction to the presence of the mites. The original itching is intensified by the body's chemical responses. Scratching usually catches tiny mites under fingernails and transports them to new sites. Continued scratching may also cause a secondary bacterial infection in already irritated sites. Mites prefer thin, loose skin and thus tend to concentrate in the genital area, between fingers, or on ankles or elbows.

This was only the beginning. Josephus says:

There was also an ulceration of the intestines with particularly terrible pains in the colon, and a transparent swelling of fluid around the feet. And similarly there was a malignancy in the abdominal area, as well as a putrefaction in the private member which was creating worms. His breathing had a high pitch [literally "upright tension"], and it was extremely loathsome because of the disagreeable exhalation and the frequency of gasping [literally "density of asthma"]. He also had spasms in every limb that took on unendurable force.

At this point his physicians decided to move him to the hot springs beyond the Jordan River. They did not help, so they decided to bathe him in warm oil. This almost killed him. On his return he was seized with a melancholy which made him enraged at everyone. As his pains increased he refused to take any food.

This is when he asked for the apple and knife and tried to kill himself. By this time he was no longer able to stand. 5 days later he died. Before Herod died he had trouble breathing if he was not upright. His breath was short and rapid. Near the end he developed a convulsive cough.

Someone has written about Herod:

Herod's addiction to pleasure was manifest in the quality and size of his harem. With 10 beautiful wives and numerous concubines and boy lovers, his

dynasty flourished; we know of 15 children, 20 grandchildren, 13 great grandchildren and, 8 great great grandchildren and two great great great grandchildren.

In light of this sexual activity, it is possible that Herod's illness was syphilis or a sexually-transmitted disease.

Josephus lists 16 symptoms which troubled Herod:

- Muscular weakness
- Mild fever
- Intolerable itch
- Strong pains in the colon from ulceration of the entrails
- Transparent swellings around the feet as in dropsy
- Malignancy in the abdominal area
- Putrefaction of the private member, creating worms
- High-pitched breathing
- Disagreeable breath
- Dyspnea or frequent gasping
- Spasms in all limbs of unendurable force
- Fainting and turning eyes up as though dead when immersed in warm oil.
- Melancholy and enragement
- Inability to take food due to overpowering pains
- Sustained convulsive cough
- Attempted suicide

Possible modern diagnosis:

- Poisoning
- Cardio-renal failure
- Liver cirrhosis
- Sexually-transmitted disease
- Diabetes mellitus
- Cancer of the pancreas
- Amoebic dysentery

Physician Walter Y. Loebel draws these conclusions from Herod's symptoms:

Dr. Loebel finds four of Herod's symptoms particularly diagnostic. The intolerable itch can be attributed, he says, to kidney failure, which causes waste chemicals to accumulate in the blood. This would have been the end-stage of a number of processes, including "diminished oxygen to the kidneys due to arteriosclerosis [hardening of the arteries]."

Dr. Loebel interprets the transparent swelling around Herod's feet as edema, a build-up of fluids that often occurs in older people, especially in their ankles and legs. Bedridden people can also get it in their lower back and genitalia, he says. The commonest causes are "heart failure, renal [kidney] failure and dilution of the blood in anemia." Another type of edema—pulmonary edema, or edema of the lungs—may have contributed to his demise.

The related putrefaction in Herod's private member, Dr. Loebel sees as "myiasis." He explains that "the moist skin with edema and the hot climate would have attracted flies who laid eggs, developing larvae looking like worms—[like] maggots used by fishermen!"

Dr. Loebel regards Herod's inability to breathe unless in an upright position (*orthopnoia*) as "the most reliable part of the description." As used in clinical medicine, "orthopnea is a typical sign in heart failure, renal failure or anemia."

His conclusion is that, most likely, "Herod died of age-related failure of his heart and kidneys with terminal edema of the lungs."

So in great pain the great man died, unloved by his subjects and unmourned by them.

1. Some things are worth fighting / for.

Maccabees / Jews against Antiochus IV

2. Money can't buy love / loyalty. (Mariamme 1)

3. One woman is great / 2 women really rile the stew / 10 women—Ock!

4. Herod used his God-given gifts to his advantage. What would it have been like if he used them for God?

(God expects us to use His gifts and talents in His service and for Him).

5. Herod played God—life and death—ordered executions—run people's lives / arranged marriages.

(How important it is for us to allow God to be God—Let Him work out his will in ours and other's lives.

6. Jealousy and hatred are hard, bitter masters.

7. Herod was paranoid and destructive—Are we?

8. Save your own skin no matter what.

- Herod over and over switched sides.
- Salome – hateful, lying, misrepresenting.
- Alexandra – reviled Mariamme / pulled her hair.

9. Herod was king at the whim of Caesar.

We are children of the king as long as we serve Him, stay with Him. He will not betray us, leave us.

10. Herod built for Herod.

All over Palestine lie the ruins of Herod's greatness.

11. Wealth, power could not prevent illness.

(We are all in God's hands)

12. Herod died—Power, wealth could not keep him alive—"It is appointed unto man once to die".

None of us knows the hour of our dying. Need to be ready to go.

13. God is sovereign in affairs of men and nations. God is sovereign in our lives.

## Caesarea on the Sea

Probably the second-most-ambitious building project. (The first was the Temple complex in Jerusalem) 12 years in building, Caesarea was for all practical purposes a brand new city from the ground up. There was a small town (Straton's Tower) at the site, but Herod's architects and engineers started over in constructing Caesarea.

Herod named it for Augustus Caesar. The latest Roman building methods were used. Many new and innovative features were part of the new city of Caesarea.

In AD 6 Herod Archelaus (Herod's son) was removed by the Romans, and a procurator was installed. Caesarea became the official Roman governor's residence.

The streets were laid out in a checkerboard pattern. At least the north/south main street was paved with limestone blocks. There were probably about 4 north/south streets and as many as 12 east/west ones.

An underground sewer system was constantly flushed by the action of the sea. This was unique for a Mediterranean city.

There was a theater with semi-circular stone seats which probably held 4,000 spectators. There was an amphitheater which measured approx. 290 by 190 feet, which is slightly bigger than the Coliseum at Rome.

A theater is a semicircular building with a stage and dressing rooms across the front.

An amphitheater was a completely round structure with circular seats around the playing field. The amphitheater lent itself to gladiator-type sports or games where action happened on the playing field and the spectators sat around the field.

The theater was more suitable for plays and theatrical productions where the players and actors had a stage, curtains, props, etc.

In the theater excavators found a block with the name of Pontius Pilate inscribed on it. This is evidence for Pilate from outside the Bible. (The stone was originally set up elsewhere and was used in one of the many refurbishing projects to the theater)

Herod's dream included a large seaport on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. A look at the map will show the almost complete lack of natural harbors on the coast of Palestine.

Herod's engineers, using a special volcanic sand from Italy and special hydraulic cement which hardened under water, constructed large breakwaters in water as deep as 120 feet! Huge forms were constructed of wood, floated into position, then sunk and filled with concrete. The southern breakwater curved around to meet the northern breakwater. They were several hundred feet wide and provided protection for the approx. 40-acre harbor they

enclosed.

Entrance to the harbor was to the northwest, which protected from the prevailing southeasterly winds. The breakwaters were topped with paving stones, and large statues of various kinds stood on pedestals.

A lighthouse approx. 250 feet tall stood at the entrance of the harbor. A massive pile of cut stones appears to mark the site today. Along the south and eastern part of the harbor approx. 100 vaulted warehouses served the shipping merchants and sailors.

A huge temple to Augustus contained a much larger than life-sized statue of the emperor.

White limestone was used extensively to face buildings and in other construction. Today these limestone fragments wash up on the beach.

There were colonnaded paved streets and covered merchants' stalls where merchants plied their trade.

To the east there was a hippodrome where racing events were held. Chariot racing with two, four or six horses was popular and dangerous. The track was laid out with two parallel races with a turn at the end. Getting around the tight turns was very difficult and dangerous. Rows of stadium-type seats lined the tracks.

On an outcropping of rock south of the city Herod constructed a magnificent palace. It boasted an Olympic-sized freshwater swimming pool which jutted out into the saltwater of the Mediterranean.

The palace was a two-story building surrounded on 3 sides by the sea. There were two wings of 2-story rooms on the north and south sides of the building.

Niches in the wall held statues. Frescoes and tile floors provided magnificent decoration.

There was a columned dining room at the west and the pool was surrounded by columns and was open to the sky.

It may be interesting to examine Josephus' detailed description of Herod's building activity at Caesarea:

His notice was attracted by a town on the coast, *formerly called Strato's Tower*, (though then dilapidated), *which was very well suited to be the site of the city, he set about making a magnificent plan and put up buildings all over the city, not of ordinary material but of white stone.* He also adorned it with the most magnificent palaces, displaying here, as nowhere else, the innate

grandeur of his character, *with civic halls and—what was greatest of all and required the most labour—with a well protected harbour, of the size of Piraeus, with landing-places and secondary anchorages inside.*

*But what was especially notable about this construction was that he got no material suitable for so great a work from the place itself but completed it with materials brought from outside at great expense. Now this city is located in Phoenicia, on the sea-route to Egypt, between Joppa and Dora. These are small towns on the seashore and are poor harbours because the south-west wind beats on them and always dredges up sand from the sea upon the shore, and thus does not permit a smooth landing; instead, it is usually necessary for merchants to ride unsteadily at anchor in the open when menaced by the south-west wind; for even a moderate breeze from this quarter dashes the waves to such a height against the cliffs, that their reflux spreads a wild commotion far out the sea. To remedy this inconvenient feature of the land Herod laid out a circular harbour enclosing enough space for large fleets to lie at anchor near shore, and (along this line) he sank enormous rocks to a depth of twenty fathoms. Most of these rocks were fifty feet in length, and no less than eighteen (ten) in breadth, and nine in height, some of them being larger, some smaller than that. Upon the submarine foundation thus laid he constructed above the surface a mole two hundred feet broad. Half of it (a hundred feet) was opposed to the surge of the waves and held off the flood of waters breaking there from all sides, and was therefore called a breakwater, while the remainder supported a stone wall encircling the harbour. The wall was divided at intervals by towers, of which the loftiest and most magnificent, a very handsome thing, is called Drusus (Drusion), taking its name from Drusus, the stepson of Caesar, who died young. Into the wall had been built a series of vaulted recesses (inlets) as shelters for sailors, while the whole circular terrace fronting these channels served as a broad promenade for disembarking passengers, a very pleasant place to walk around for those who wished to do so. The entrance or mouth of the harbour was made to face north, because in these latitudes the north wind is the most favourable of all (and always brings the clearest weather). At the harbour-mouth stood colossal statues, three on either side, resting on columns; the columns on the left of the vessels entering port were supported by a massive tower resting upon piled*

stones as a broad firm base to withstand pressure (from the water), those on the right by two upright *great stone blocks* clamped together, whose height exceeded that of the tower on the opposite side.

*In a circle round the harbour there was a continuous line of dwellings constructed of the most polished stone, and upon it converged the streets of the town, laid at equal distances apart. In their midst, on an eminence (a mound) facing the harbour-mouth, stood Caesar's temple, remarkable for its beauty and grand proportions, visible a great way off to those sailing into the harbour; it contained a colossal statue of the emperor, not inferior to the Olympian Zeus, which served for its model, and another of Rome, rivaling that of Hera at Argos.*

The city Herod dedicated to the province, the harbour [Sebastos] to navigators in these waters, to Caesar the glory of this new foundation, to which he accordingly gave the name of Caesarea, *most beautiful both in material and in construction. But below the city the underground passages and sewers cost no less effort than the structures built above them. Of these some led at equal distances from one another to the harbour and the sea, while one diagonal passage connected all of them, so that the rainwater and the refuse of the inhabitants were easily carried off together. And whenever the sea was driven in from offshore, it would flow through the whole city and flush it from below.*

*Herod also built a theatre of stone in the city and on the south side of the harbour, further back, an amphitheatre large enough to hold a great crowd of people and conveniently situated for a view of the sea.* The rest of the buildings—amphitheatre, theater, public places—were constructed in a style worthy of the name which the city bore.

Now the city was completed in the space of twelve years, for the king did not slacken in the undertaking and he had sufficient means for the expenses. The entire work of construction was finished in the tenth year, the stated period having been prolonged to the twenty-eighth year, which fell in the hundred and ninety-second Olympiad. And so there was to begin a very great festival of dedication and most lavish arrangements. For he announced a contest in music and athletic exercises, and had prepared a great number of gladiators and wild beasts and also horse races and the very lavish shows that

are to be seen in Rome and in various other places, offering prizes of the highest value; at these games not the victors only, but also those who obtained second and third places, participated in the royal bounty. He further instituted quinquennial games, likewise named after Caesar, and inaugurated them himself, in the hundred and ninety-second Olympiad... And Caesar, adding luster to his love of glory, from his own revenues sent all the equipment needed for such games.

The city was enclosed by a wall over a mile in length.

Water was brought to the city by a series of aqueducts and tunnels approx. 8 miles long. There has been extensive archaeological excavations done both on land and under the sea in the harbor, but much remains unexplored.

Truly this was a magnificent undertaking by King Herod, architect of the Holy Land.

## Masada (mountain fortress)

Masada is a boat or diamond-shaped, rocky outcropping at the eastern edge of the Judean desert close to the Dead Sea.

Its top is approx. 1,900 feet N to S and 650 feet from east to west, approx. 23 acres in size and with varying topography. Its sheer walls rise approx. 1,300 feet above the desert.

First fortified by a Hasmonean ruler, Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BC).

It is approached by two paths. A winding path which switch backs up the steep cliff. Easily defended, the Snake Path is on the east side and takes about 45 minutes for a person in good shape to ascend the mountain.

Josephus says about the Snake Path,

It is called the Snake Path because it is so narrow and it twists and turns so violently. Often as it creeps along the precipice, it goes around a corner and disappears entirely. Then it turns back on itself; and then it somehow manages to edge forward again, a little bit at a time. Climbing it is horribly dangerous, for a single false step can lead to instant death in the chasm below.

End of quotation

The west side has a path which is less steep and dangerous.

Herod kept his family at Masada during the years of struggle for power in Judea. After he established his rule in Judea, Herod began a widespread building program. The fortresses were to defend against internal and external threats to his rule. Cleopatra was a threat. You never knew when the Jews would revolt.

Herod completely (except for the northern palace) surrounded the top with a double casement wall. The walls were 18' high and the walls contained 27/37 ? towers. The space between the walls (approx. 14 feet) was covered with a roof, and there were rooms between the walls. These walls, and the space between them, would be important for soldiers defending the mountain. They could live in the rooms and use the protection of the roof to move about the walls and reappear at a different location. During the period of the zealot occupation of Masada, many of the Jewish families lived in the rooms between the walls.

The top of the mountain was accessed by 4 gates in the wall. They were guarded by

defensive towers.

Numerous large cisterns were cut into the top of the mountain and into its face. The cisterns held millions of gallons of water, and in this land where it only rains appo. twice a year, were filled by mountain wadis which were fed into the cisterns on aqueducts and channels cut into the rock.

There were numerous palaces, storerooms and garrisons. There was a large swimming pool and part of the surface was cultivated to provide food.

On the west by the wall was a large palace and adjoining buildings, probably designed to be used by Herod's entourage.

The most spectacular feature of Herod's buildings is a series of three hanging palaces on the north face of the rock. The upper palace, which was probably built by Alexander and rebuilt by Herod, consists of nine rooms and a semicircular terrace.

65 feet below this a second circular building stands. 45 feet below this on the lowest level Herod's engineers erected a peristyle (a row of columns supporting a roof) building with lavish appointments. The three levels were connected by stairways cut into the rock to hide them from view. The buildings were lavishly appointed with frescoes, mosaics, columns, capitals and statuary. The northern and the hanging palaces are assumed to be the royal living quarters. It was altogether a place of sumptuous luxury.

100 years after Herod's occupation of the rock, Jewish zealots occupied it and used it to harass the Romans. They found many weapons which Herod had stockpiled there. They took them to Jerusalem to be used against the Romans.

Food, dates, figs, honey, nuts and oil which had been there for 100 years were still edible and were used by them. It's another story for another time, but 2 years after the destruction of the Temple, the mighty 10<sup>th</sup> Legion lay siege to the fortress. Eight Roman camps were built around the base of the rock. A two-mile circumvallation wall was erected around the entire mountain to prevent any Jewish escapes. A massive siege ramp was built by Roman and Jewish slave laborers. After a siege of 7 months by the most powerful army on earth, the Romans broke through. That night, rather than surrender, 960 Jewish zealots committed suicide rather than become prisoners of the Romans.

#### The water systems

In the desert the greatest necessity and luxury is water. It rarely rains. When it does it pours. The ravines or wadis fill with torrents of water.

There were two wadis on the high ground north and south of Masada. Herod's engineers devised dams across these wadis. When the torrents of water poured through these wadis into the dams, the water was transported to cisterns on Masada via aqueducts. The cisterns filled one by one, the top one overflowing to the next one and so on till all were filled. Water was transported to the top by pack animals and slaves. The cisterns were enormous. It is estimated that they held 40,000 cubic meters of water—enough water to allow Herod and his lords and ladies to bathe, drink, swim and revel in a tropical paradise in the midst of a scorching desert. Along with a quarry on the north side, the cisterns were a source of stone for the buildings and walls which were atop Masada.

The palaces were richly decorated with wall paintings, frescoes, mosaics and floral motifs. Rich imported woods, particularly cedar from Lebanon, were used in the buildings. Columns were decorated with elaborate capitals and the extensive use of statues enriched the living areas.

There were at least three bathhouses and several swimming pools. There may have been as many as 7 *mikias* or ritual baths used by the Jews for ceremonial cleansing. Some of these may be post-Herodian in construction.

There were many buildings on Masada, the most spectacular being the hanging palace at the north. This consisted of three buildings which hung on the north surface of the cliff.

There were at least 10 buildings in total. A large western palace stood at the entrance of the west path. Huge administrative and storage buildings were on the north side. The casement walls surrounding Masada contained approx. 110 rooms and 27/37 ? towers.

The casement wall was 4,250 feet long, approx. 18 feet high, approx. 14 feet between walls. Built of hard dolomite stone which was quarried on Masada. Approx. 110 rooms inside the walls. 27 towers (Josephus says 37) ranging in length from 18' to 115' long.

### Building phases at Masada

Netzer believes the building at Masada was in three phases.

1. 4 palatial mansions at the center of the mountain.

- a. The core of the western palace
  - b. Building #11
  - c. Building #12
  - d. Building #13
- } the "small" palaces
2. Building #7 – probably used for administrative and storage purposes: built at the north.
  3. Building #9 to the south of no. 7 – residential building, maybe an army barracks.
  4. Several water cisterns
  5. Large swimming pool at the south end
  6. Small bathhouse

The second building phase:

1. The northern palace
2. An adjacent large bathhouse
3. A complex of storerooms for food and arms
4. A grand scale water system on the northwestern slope
5. Additions to the western palace
6. Digging of the groups of cisterns:

12 cisterns holding approx. 40,000 cubic meters, 80 meters below surface and 120 meters below the surface serviced by an aqueduct, part of which lies buried beneath the Roman siege ramp.

The third building phase:

1. The casement wall
2. Extensions of storeroom complex (including building 8)
3. Additions to western palace

Note: A word about the western palace:

It had four blocks of rooms; royal apartments, workshops, storerooms and an administrative section identified as the throne room because of four rectangular holes cut into the floor.

It seems that the northern palace was the main and ceremonial palace. Herod, his family and high-ranking guests were probably received here on its three extraordinary terraces.

Second in importance was likely the core of the western palace... probably used by the king and his close relatives.

The small palaces would have provided accommodations for members of the royal family and close friends.

There is disagreement among scholars as to the function of Masada in Herod's scheme of things.

Did it serve simply as a place of refuge, or did it have geopolitical significance as a point of contact with the Nabatean kingdom? (Herod's relations with the Nabateans were very complex)

The historical sources are not very precise as to how often Herod and family visited or how long they stayed.

These visits could have been for:

1. Vacations
2. To take advantage of the climate
3. Enjoyment of the exceptional landscape
4. Political fence-building and entertainment of his neighbors.

All of these are possible, but we don't have any sure historical records as to which or how many of them were true.

How did Herod finance his incredible building program?

- \* Huge wealth, partly inherited, partly taken from Hasmonaeans. Most of their estates and fertile lands passed into Herod's hands.

Jericho's royal estate had rich balsam bushes and date palm groves. Given to Cleopatra and leased back by Herod (great source of cash!)

- \* Herod encouraged and fostered trade.

The port at Caesarea brought enormous wealth in taxes, duties and freight to Herod. Caravan routes carried rich spices, expensive cloth and goods.

- \* Taxes, tariffs, duties and bribes were a rich source of income.

Some specific duties:

1. Customs duties – up to one quarter the value of the goods.
2. Personal and census tax (census every few years)
3. Land tax
4. Taxes on buildings
5. Sales and purchase taxes
6. Wreath tax... a compulsory gift tax often levied in the form of a gold or silver wreath, probably dedicated to the king on the occasion of special events.
7. Road and port tolls and charges
8. Special taxes – on commodities like salt

So we see that Herod had and controlled vast sources of wealth which he could use to finance his far-flung building programs.

Some of the reasons suggested for Herod's building programs are:

1. Gratitude and honor

Herod was ever the politician, currying favor by naming projects for powerful influential friends and persons he wished to influence.

He also used naming projects to reward persons who had honored or helped him.

## 2. Self-preservation

The fortresses protected from internal and external foes and provided a place of refuge for the royal person and his family in case of need.

## 3. Personal comfort

Herod loved creature comforts. He hated cold. He loved fine things. His lavish palaces and fortresses provided a stunning retreat from the crush of life.

Examples would be Masada, Jericho, Caesarea and Herodium, among others.

## 4. Piety

Many of his projects were religious in nature (The huge Temple complex was designed, among other things, to curry favor with the Jews). Tombs and memorials honored his family.

## 5. Economic expansion

New cities, trade facilities, military settlements all were "public works" and as such boosted the economy and put people to work.

## 6. Culture

Herod integrated many Roman techniques and features into his building projects. He was interested in advancing Roman and Hellenistic culture.

## 7. Support of imperial Rome

Hippodromes, theaters, the seaport at Caesarea and Sebast all honored and supported Rome.

## Herodium

One of two fortress palaces built by Herod the Great as memorials to himself. (named after him)

Josephus lists one on the eastern border on the Idumean frontier. The exact site is not known. Some think it is a mistake.

The other is 7½ miles south of Jerusalem, approx. 3 miles southeast of Bethlehem, 24 miles SW of Jericho. It was built around 23 BC. It was built on a mountain which was artificially heightened. Herod's engineers sliced off the top of a mountain, built a 7-story palace and then brought ground from a nearby hill to mound up around the bottom 2 stories, leaving 5 stories above the surface.

The fortress/palace was constructed by erecting two concentric circular stone walls.

The outer wall was approx. 200 feet in diameter. The inner wall was approx. 12 feet from the outer one.

There were 4 towers at the cardinal points of the compass (N S E W). The north, south and west towers were semicircular and did not rise much above the fortress walls. They contained apartments and rooms for living and storage. The rooms extended all the way down. There were 4 rooms on each floor. The eastern tower had a solid stone base and a top which rose approx. 75 feet above the wall. Royal rooms in this tower allowed superb views and the taking of the breezes. The roof probably served as a watch and signaling post.

The top soared above the desert approx. 2,460 feet. When it was constructed it was the largest palace/fortress in the Roman world. Inside the mountain Herod built a magnificent 7-story palace/fortress/living quarters.

Access from the valley 180 feet below was provided by a steep marble stairway approx. 500 feet long. It started at the valley floor as an exposed stairway, and partway up it was covered in a tunnel. This stairway provided the only access to the palace and was easily defended making for a very secure palace.

Inside the cylindrical palace Herod built a rectangular outdoor garden courtyard.

It was surrounded by columns and contained niches for statues.

The western half of the cylinder was a triclinium or dining hall 45 feet by 30 feet.

There was a full Roman bath built adjacent to the living quarters. The bath had hot, cold and warm rooms heated with underfloor fires and flues.

The impressive stone cupola of the warm room still stands.

Four large underground cisterns were built to store water. They were located on the

northeast side of the mountain.

A cistern was also associated with the solid base of the eastern tower.

Water was carried approx. 4 miles by aqueducts. It was distributed by slaves in such a way that this desert fortress was a lush tropical paradise.

Herod was attracted to the site because of an event which took place there in 40 BC. He and his entourage had secretly fled from the Hasmonaeon ruler in Jerusalem. They were pursued, and at a site close to Herodium Herod defeated the Hasmonaeans. His mother was thrown from her carriage before the battle and run over. Herod, in despair, thinking she was dead, attempted suicide. These three events, the flight, the accident and the battle evidently gave rise to his deep personal attachment to the site which would later bear his name.

It seems that from an early date Herod entertained the notion of being buried at Herodium. But what was the use of having a tomb at a remote, out-of-the-way spot? So in typical Herodian fashion, Herod had his engineers, architects and masons constructs a large, luxurious palace/fortress at the site.

It may be interesting to look at Josephus' description of Herodium at this point.

But while he thus perpetuated the memory of his family and his friends, he did not neglect to leave memorials of himself. *When the wedding ceremonies were concluded, Herod constructed another fortress in the region where he had defeated the Jews after his expulsion from the realm, when Antigonus was in power, and called it after himself. This fortress, which is some sixty stades distant from Jerusalem, is naturally strong and very suitable for such a structure, for reasonably near by is a hill, raised to a (greater) height by the hand of man and rounded off in the shape of a breast.*

The crest he crowned with a ring of round towers, *at intervals*, the enclosure was filled with gorgeous palaces, the magnificent appearance of which was not confined to the interior of the apartments, but outer walls, battlements, and roofs, all had wealth lavished upon them in profusion. *It has a steep ascent formed of two hundred steps of hewn stone, of the purest white marble; the mound though entirely artificial, being of a considerable height.*

Around the base (of the hill) he erected other palaces for the accommodation of his furniture and his friends. *There are pleasure grounds*

*built in such a way as to be worth seeing, among other things because of the way in which water, which is lacking in this place, is brought in from distance and at great expense. The surrounding plain was built up as a city second to none, with the hill serving as an acropolis for the other dwellings; this stronghold resembled a town, in its restricted area a simple palace.*

The upper and lower Herodium sprawled over an area of approx. 45 acres. Upper Herodium (the palace/tomb) and lower Herodium were planned with architectural symmetry. The elements all align to straight and/or diagonal lines.

There are several units to lower Herodium. Directly below the palace, at the foot of the mountain, was the "large palace".

Approx. 400 feet long and approx. 170 feet wide, it was a huge building. Some of the barrel-vaulted cellars and basement halls have survived. It stood at a higher elevation than the other structures at the base of the mountain. It apparently served as the main palace wing of greater Herodium.

It would have housed support people, slaves, possibly guard troops and probably had royal quarters for the royal family if they were not up in the upper palace.

The pool complex was a large formal garden (in a desert!) surrounding a huge pool which measured approx. 200 feet long by 135 feet wide by 9 feet deep. There was a round building in the center which was probably a pavilion. The pavilion was apparently reached by boat since no evidence of a bridge has been found.

Halls lined the east and west sides of the pool complex.

There was a Roman bath which was apparently revised and renovated after it was originally installed. There was a cold room, a hot room and a tepid room.

Directly north of the large palace was a course approx. 1,000 feet long by 90 feet. It was too narrow to be a hippodrome and too long to be a stadium. Netzer believes this course was related to the burial ceremony for Herod and was used to form up the funeral procession.

Adjoining the course at the west end was an elaborate monumental building. For a while Netzer thought it was the tomb, but further work revealed it elsewhere.

Netzer spent 38 years searching for Herod's tomb without success in lower Herodium. Then in 2007 the team discovered the tomb on the northeast slope of the mountain. While working near the monumental staircase they began to find fragments of reddish stone which

appeared to have come from an elegant sarcophagus. Following the red stones led to the discovery of Herod's mausoleum. Constructed of hard white limestone, the mausoleum is the only building on the site to use this stone.

It measures 30 feet by 30 feet and probably was 70 feet high. There is evidence of at least two more sarcophagi made of white limestone. Apparently Herod was not the only person to be buried here.

Netzer believes Herod was buried in the reddish sarcophagus, while family members occupied the others.

There is not universal agreement with Netzer on the location of Herod's tomb. Of course they did not find a plaque saying, "Here lies buried Herod the Great". Netzer believes there are strong reasons for this location.

Those who think Herod is buried at the base of the eastern tower must account for the Jewish aversion to human burial in a living space.

The site on the hill at the NE takes the burial site out of the palace or living space. The destruction of the red sarcophagus points strongly to it being Herod's. The Jews who occupied the palace of Herodium during the Jewish revolt of 66 AD hated Herod with a passion. It would have made perfect sense for them to destroy the sarcophagus.

The fact that the mausoleum is at Herodium, and that Josephus states that Herod is buried there lends weight to the theory.

An interesting surprise was found to the right of the monumental staircase—a 450-seat royal theater with a royal box.

It might be interesting to hear Josephus' account of the funeral procession of Herod at Herodium:

The king's funeral next occupied attention. Archelaus, omitting nothing that could contribute to its magnificence, brought forth all the royal ornaments to accompany the procession in honour of the deceased. The bier was of solid gold, studded with precious stones, and had a covering of purple, embroidered with various colours; on this lay the body enveloped in a purple robe, a diadem encircling the head and surmounted by a crown of gold, the scepter beside his right hand. Around the bier were Herod's sons and a large group of his relations; these were followed by the guards, the Thracian contingent, Germans and Gauls, all equipped as for war. The remainder of the

troops marched in front, armed and in orderly array, led by their commanders and subordinate officers; behind these came five hundred of Herod's servants and freedman, carrying spices. The body was thus conveyed for a distance of two hundred furlongs to Herodion, where, in accordance with the directions of the deceased, it was interred. So ended Herod's reign.

Note: On October 25, 2010 Ehud Netzer fell while working at Herodium, injuring his neck and back. He died from his injuries two days later. He was 76 and is survived by his wife Dvora, 4 children and 10 grandchildren.