

The Family of Herod

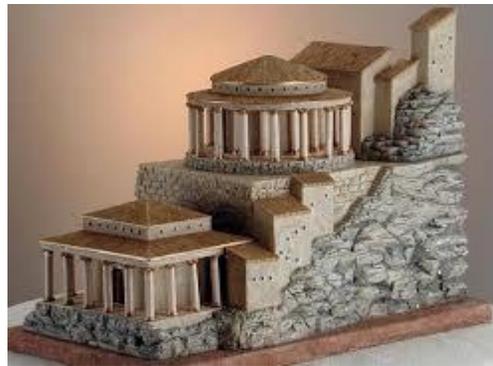
Sanford Beattie

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The gospels and the book of Acts record a lot of history along with their teachings. What Jesus and the apostles did was not done in a corner. They interacted with the rulers of the land. And the name that shows up most often in those scriptures is the name of Herod. Herod tried to kill Jesus. Herod killed John the Baptist. Herod killed the apostle James. Just who was this man? Or was it really only one man? It turns out that the story of Herod is even more pervasive in scripture than most people think. Herod's dynasty lasted from before the birth of Jesus to the destruction of the temple. And it will probably surprise many of you that no less than 11 members of the family, and 4 generations, are mentioned in scripture, and many had direct interaction with Christ and the apostles.

The patriarch of the family is known today as Herod the Great. He was of Idumean descent (meaning the tribe of Esau). He was given his kingship by Mark Antony, had his responsibilities expanded by Augustus Caesar, and he began ruling in Jerusalem in 37BC. His family had converted to Judaism a century earlier when the Maccabees overran their territory in the southern part of the Holy Land and forced the inhabitants to become Jews. But because of his racial descent, he was never fully accepted by the Jewish establishment. His family was only considered by them to be "half-Jews", and this conflict, trying to prove himself worthy to be the king of the Jews, colored much of his reign, and his behavior.

Herod was a great builder. Among other places, he built Masada on the shores of the Dead Sea, made famous as one of the last stands of the Jews during the conflicts surrounding the destruction of the temple in 70AD.



He also built the Herodium on top of and around a hill south of Jerusalem.



But he is most famous for his rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. He did this partly to try to gain acceptance by the Jews. Being a Jew, at least in his own mind, he recognized that not just any workers could build the temple, so he arranged to have the priests taught how to do the work. The rebuilding was begun some 16 years before the birth of Jesus. The temple proper was finished in only a year and a half, the new temple completely replacing the old one. Nevertheless, building, including the large temple mount complex, continued by Herod and his successors nearly up to the time of the destruction of the temple, which is why we read this in (John 2:19-21 NKJV) that "Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (20) Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple [so far, we might add], and will You raise it up in three days?"



This new third temple was magnificent. And it inspired the disciples: (Mark 13:1-2 NKJV) "Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*" (2) And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not *one* stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'" But we are ahead of the story.

Herod also tried to gain the Jews' favor through his marriages. He divorced his first wife, an Idumean like himself, in order to marry Mariamne, daughter of one of the last kings of the Hasmonean dynasty, begun with the family of the Maccabees more than 100 years earlier. It didn't bother him of course that she was considered to be uncommonly beautiful, and she was indeed his favorite wife. They married about the time he actually overthrew the Hasmoneans to claim the throne, in 37BC, and this marriage to a Hasmonean princess allowed him to claim to some extent that he was just a continuation of their reign. But as is so prevalent in the life of Herod, he was insanely jealous—so much so that when he was called away to answer charges that had been leveled against him, he ordered that if he were executed that Mariamne should be killed also so that no other man could have her. The plots and intrigue are way too complicated to relate here, but within 8 years, in about 29BC, those who opposed Mariamne had so convinced Herod that she was guilty of something that he had her put to death. He really had liked her, and he mourned his loss for a very long time.

After putting his second wife to death, he married another Mariamne, the daughter of a priest, and also exceedingly beautiful. But since he thought her being the daughter of a common priest was a bit beneath his dignity, he solved that issue handily by appointing her father to be the high priest. Can he do that? I'm afraid by this time in the priesthood, it was pretty common. That is generally how the high priests got their office, usually as a political reward. This is why John referred to Caiaphas 3 times as "the high priest that year". They changed frequently.

At some point though, Herod abandoned the idea that he should only have one wife at a time, and he married several others. Two more will figure into our story—one a Samaritan named Malthace, and the other named, of all things, Cleopatra. It is generally believed that she was not the queen of Egypt, also alive at this time, who infamously had more than just political relations with the up and coming rulers of Rome, including Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. But there is some evidence that she actually was the same Cleopatra, and that she met and found Herod to be just as interesting as the Roman rulers she encountered and bore sons to. It seems that the royal soap opera never ends when you start reading about it. In any case, the children these women bore all figure into our story.

Although he had put the first Mariamne to death, he still had a great fondness for their children. Their two sons were both in line to succeed him, and he was considering whether to split the kingdom between them, and perhaps their half-brother from his first marriage. One terribly complicating thing about sorting out Herod's family is that they had a great preference for some reason for names that began with A. The two boys were Alexander and Aristobulus. The half-brother was Antipater. There will be more before we are finished. But as I said, Herod liked his kids, that is, until he grew suspicious of them. About 20 years after putting their mother to death, their scheming half-brother, not wanting to share the kingdom, leveled charges of treason against them, and Herod had them put to death.

These attributes dominated Herod's character--his insane jealousy, his great desire to be revered and thought of as the rightful king of the Jews, and his proclivity to kill anyone he felt threatened by. And it had gotten worse over the years. And so it was that just a few years after putting these sons to death, while he was fighting against the real but often imagined threats to his life and kingship, an event occurred in Jerusalem, at the very temple he had arranged to be built, right under his nose.

(Luke 1:5-11 NKJV) "There was in the days of **Herod**, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. (6) And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (7) But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. (8) So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, (9) according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. (10) And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. (11) Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense."

The angel informed him that Elizabeth was going to bare him a son, that he was to name him John, gave instructions on how he was to be raised, and told him what this miracle child would do when he grew up. Six months later, the same angel visited a relative, perhaps a cousin, of Elizabeth, a young virgin betrothed to a man living in Nazareth, in the northern part of Herod's kingdom, and informed her that she, Mary, was going to give birth to the Son of God, and that she should name Him Joshua, or Jesus in the Greek language. The angel also said that this child would eventually sit on the throne of her ancestor, David the king, and that unlike David, His kingdom would never end.

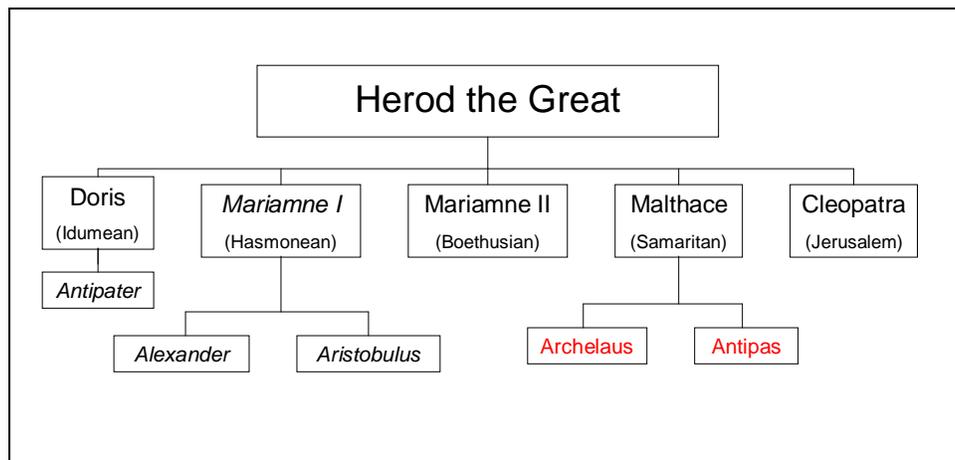
The two women met for 3 months to share this remarkable bond that they had. Mary returned home, apparently just before John's birth, which remained completely unnoticed by Herod. And Jesus' birth 6 months later would have remained unnoticed as well, except that it was accompanied by a remarkable sign in the heavens that attracted the attention of some men living far to the east of Jerusalem.

(Mat 2:1-9 NKJV) "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of **Herod** the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, (2) saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." [This did not sit well with the jealous and suspicious Herod who considered himself to be the king of the Jews, and was currently fretting over which of his remaining sons he would appoint to succeed him.] (3) When Herod the king heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (4) And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. (5) So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: (6) 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.'" (7) Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. (8) And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the young Child, and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also." (9) When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was."

(Mat 2:12-20 NKJV) "Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. (13) Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." (14) When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, (15) and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." (16) Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. (17) Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: (18) "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they were no more."

Remember Antipater, that scheming half-brother and heir to Herod's throne? Just 5 days before his death, Herod had him put to death for treason as well. Caesar Augustus is alleged to have said "it is better to be Herod's hog than to be his son." Herod's final act was to summon the principle men of the entire Jewish nation to his bedside, then had them imprisoned in the hippodrome with orders to kill them all as soon as he died, so that the nation would be mourning at his funeral, even if not for him. He died soon after, but the order was not carried out.

But Herod had plenty of sons left to inherit his kingdom. Two of them were by his Samaritan wife, naturally with names that began with A: Archelaus and Antipas. The latter seemed to be his choice until almost the last minute, when he changed his mind and put Archelaus into his will. Archelaus tried to assume the role of king, but the Jews appealed to Caesar Augustus, who decided to let him rule the half of his father's kingdom that included Jerusalem, Samaria and parts south, but not with the title of king. He ruled so badly, that after 10 years, he was removed from his position and the Romans ruled his territory directly for a while using a series of prefects, Pontius Pilate being the 5th such governor.



(**Mat 2:19-22** NKJV) "But when **Herod** was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, (20) saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." (21) Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. (22) But when he heard that **Archelaus** was reigning over Judea instead of his father **Herod**, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee."

His brother Antipas, however, was not overlooked by Caesar Augustus when he appointed Archelaus. He gave Antipas the territory of Galilee, and Scripture refers to him by his family name of Herod. This was the Herod who ruled Galilee all during the ministries of John and Jesus.

(**Luke 9:7-9** NKJV) "Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him [Jesus]; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, (8) and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again. (9) And Herod said, "John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see Him.

Antipas does not seem to have been as wicked as his father. Nor as capable a ruler. Some who have examined his behavior and character called him sly and ambitious, and a wily sneak. Jesus made his own observations:

(**Mark 8:15** NKJV) "Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of **Herod**."" And sometime later:

(**Luke 13:31-33** NKJV) "On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, "Get out and depart from here, for **Herod** wants to kill You." (32) And He said to them, "Go, tell that **fox**, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected.' (33) "Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the *day* following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem." Jerusalem was not part of this Herod's territory, so part of His message was that He wasn't sticking around anyway.

And there were other indirect interactions with Herod: (**Luke 8:1-3** NKJV) "Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve *were* with Him, (2) and certain women who had been **healed of evil spirits and infirmities**; Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, (3) and **Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward**, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance." The implication is that Joanna had also been healed of some infirmity, but in any case she was connected with Herod's inner circle.

Herod however did not see Jesus until the day of the crucifixion: (**Luke 23:4-12 NKJV**) "Then **Pilate** said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man." (5) But they were the more fierce, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from **Galilee** to this place." (6) When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. (7) And as soon as he knew that He belonged to **Herod's** jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. (8) Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long *time* to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. (9) Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. (10) And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. (11) Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked *Him*, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. (12) That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for before *that* they had been at enmity with each other."

(**Luke 23:13-15 NKJV**) "Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, (14) said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined *Him* in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; (15) "no, neither did **Herod**, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing worthy of death has been done by Him."

Antipas had a fairly long reign, from the death of his father Herod the Great, shortly after the birth of Jesus, until about 39AD when he was accused of treason by his nephew, and sent into exile by the emperor.

But Archelaus and Antipas had two more half brothers, by two other mothers that figure into our New Testament accounts. Their names don't start with A, surprisingly, but they have their own confusion, because both of them were named Philip. One of the things you discover when researching the family of Herod is that they intermarried—a lot. These marriages were usually across maternal lines, but cousins married as did uncles and nieces, and some of these marital relationships were incredibly complex, with multiple connections. You may remember that Herod the great married a second Mariamne, the daughter of the man he appointed to be the high priest. They produced one of the Philips, and this Philip married his niece, whose name was Herodias. They in turn produced a daughter. But this Philip had been removed from succession because of his mother's alleged treason, and while Antipas was a guest in their home, Herodias took a liking to this other uncle, perhaps also swayed by the fact that he was actually ruling, unlike her husband. And so, although Antipas was also married, to the daughter of an Arabian king, Antipas and Herodias eloped, without either dissolving their first marriages. Is it any wonder that this supposedly Jewish ruler was taken to task by John the Baptist:

(**Luke 3:19-20 NKJV**) "But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the **evils** which Herod had done, (20) also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison."

(**Mark 6:14-20 NKJV**) "Now King Herod heard of *Him*[Jesus], for His name had become well-known. And he said, "John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him." (15) Others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets." (16) But when Herod heard, he said, "This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!" (17) For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. (18) For John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." (19) Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; (20) for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

(**Mark 6:21-26** NKJV) "Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief *men* of Galilee. (22) And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I will give *it* to you." (23) He also swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." (24) So she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist!" (25) Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." (26) And the king was exceedingly sorry; *yet*, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her."

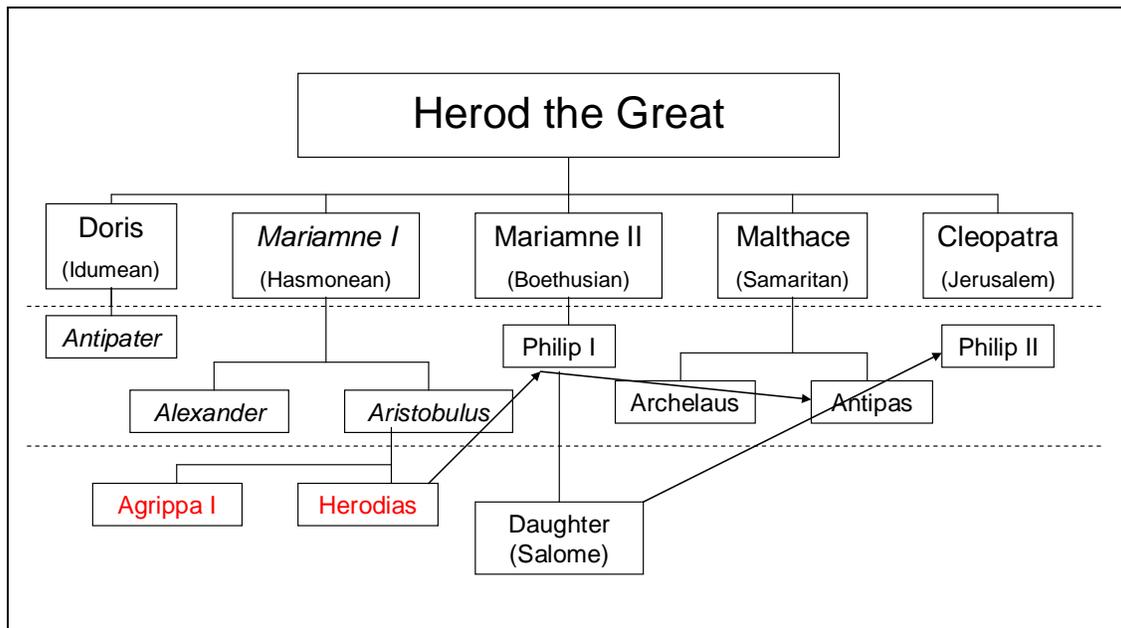
Apparently soon after John was beheaded, Jesus took his disciples on several journeys, out of Herod Antipas' territory of Galilee and into the territory of the second Philip, the son of Cleopatra, who had also been appointed to be a ruler of a portion of Herod the Great's kingdom:

(**Luke 3:1** NKJV) "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother **Philip** tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,"

This Philip is considered by many to be the best of the Herods. His territory was north and east of Galilee. Several events of the ministry of Jesus took place in his territory during this time, including the feeding of the 5000, the healing of a blind man, the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi (named after this Philip), and probably the transfiguration of Jesus to Peter, James and John. As with Antipas, and the other Philip, who married their niece Herodias, this Philip also married his niece—none other than the daughter of that Herodias, who had danced before Herod and requested the head of John the Baptist, known outside of scriptures by the name Salome.

So much for the first generation of Herod the Great's family, including 4 sons and 2 granddaughters who married 3 of those sons mentioned in scripture. But there are more.

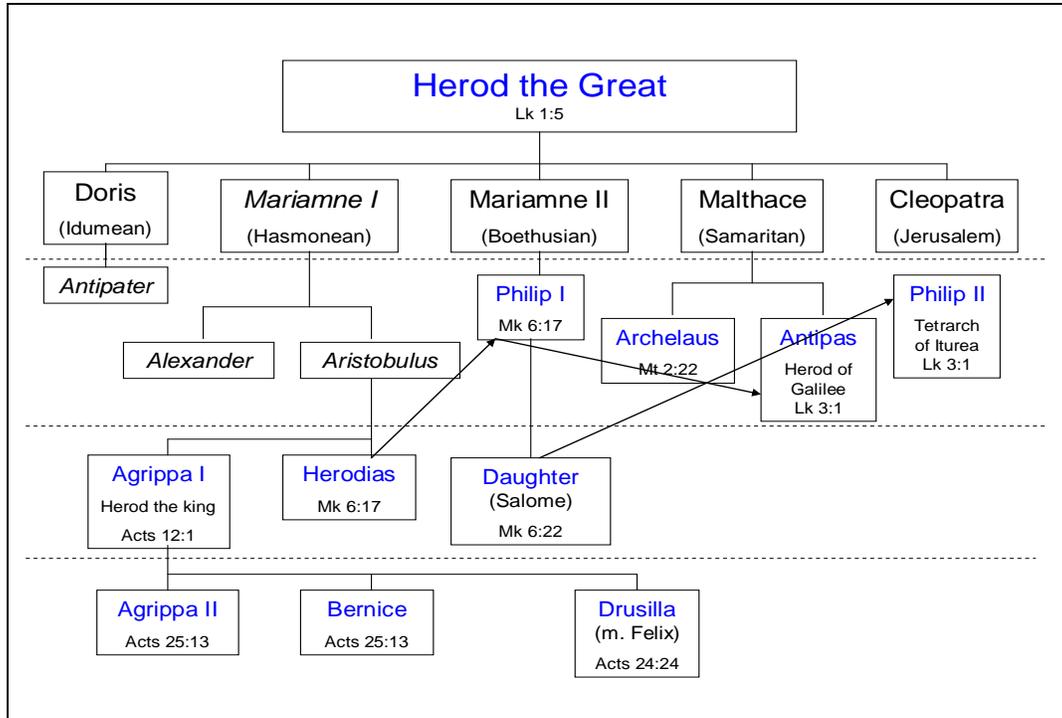
Remember Aristobulus, the executed son of Herod's favorite wife? He had at least three children, two of whom are mentioned in scripture. The first we have already met—none other than Herodias, the wife of Philip and Antipas. But she had a brother named Agrippa (another A name).



To emphasize the intermarriages that were taking place, one author described Agrippa this way: "he was the child of two first cousins, and was himself married to another cousin, who was the daughter of his aunt, who again was married to an uncle". While he did not have a good relation with Tiberius, the emperor during Jesus' ministry, he had a very close friendship with the next emperor, Caligula. So when Caligula came to power, first Agrippa was given the territory that Philip II had held north of Galilee. Then after Antipas was deposed, Galilee was added. And finally he was given Jerusalem and Samaria, which had been ruled by Roman prefects since the days of Archelaus. Now he ruled as much territory as his grandfather Herod the Great, and could properly be called again the king of the Jews. He was apparently gracious in manners and kindly in spirit. But he was also vain and egotistical. And while he was not a devout Jew, he was zealous, and therefore we read this about him in about 44AD:

(Acts 12:1-23 NKJV) "Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hand to harass some from the church. (2) Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. (3) And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread. (4) So when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover. (5) Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. (6) And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. (7) Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by *him*, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off *his* hands. (8) Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." (9) So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. (10) When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. (11) And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and *from* all the expectation of the Jewish people."

(18) Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. (19) But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed *there*. (20) Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's *country*. (21) So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. (22) And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" (23) Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died."



Agrippa I had three children, the great-grandchildren of Herod the Great. In about 57AD, after Paul was taken into custody in Jerusalem, he was transferred to Caesarea to protect him from the Jews who wanted to kill him. The man he was brought before was Felix, a Roman governor. His accusers stated their case, and Paul answered eloquently. Afterward we read this:

(Acts 24:22-27 NKJV) "But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of *the Way*, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case." (23) So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let *him* have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him. (24) And after some days, when Felix came with his wife **Drusilla, who was Jewish**, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. (25) Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." (26) Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him. (27) But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound."

Drusilla, the wife of Felix, was the youngest of the three, who were descended from Herod the Great's Hasmonean-Jewish wife. So not only was she Jewish, as specifically stated by Luke, but at least racially, so were the other two. An interesting side note about Drusilla. She and her son, named after his grandfather Agrippa I, were both in Pompeii in 79AD when Mt Vesuvius erupted and destroyed the town.

Drusilla's older brother and sister also met with Paul after the two years were finished, which we read about in Acts 25. When Festus finally heard Paul's case, probably around 59AD, Festus threatened to send him back to Jerusalem for trial, but Paul instead appealed to Caesar.

(Acts 25:13-27 NKJV) "And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.

Agrippa was the firstborn son of Herod Agrippa, and older brother of Drusilla. He had been placed in charge of the territory Philip II had ruled at one time in northeast Palestine. But he had also been placed in charge of the temple and the frequent political changes of high priest that were so common. As a result he was quite unpopular with the Jews, and he was not their king either. It is natural to assume that Bernice was Agrippa's queen. She was not. She was Agrippa's younger and Drusilla's older sister. Bernice was not at this time married, but lived with her brother, and regularly accompanied Agrippa on public occasions, usually with great fanfare. And there were scandals that surrounded these two as a result. The New Testament does not comment on the validity of these scandals or the nature of their relationship, but the rumors persist to this day. Paul only addresses the king:

(14) When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, **(15)** "about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him. **(16)** "To them I answered, 'It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.' **(17)** "Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in. **(18)** "When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, **(19)** "but had some questions against him about their own religion and about one, Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. **(20)** "And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters. **(21)** "But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar." **(22)** Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."

(23) So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in. **(24)** And Festus said: "King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer. **(25)** "But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. **(26)** "I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. **(27)** "For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.""

(Acts 26 NKJV) "Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." [Note how directly he talks to the king] So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: (2) "I think myself happy, **King Agrippa**, because today I shall answer for myself before **you** concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, (3) "especially because **you** are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg **you** to hear me patiently. (4) "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. (5) "They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. (6) "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. (7) "To this *promise* our twelve tribes, earnestly serving *God* night and day, hope to attain.

For this hope's sake, **King Agrippa**, I am accused by the Jews. (8) "Why should it be thought incredible by **you** that God raises the dead? (9) "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (10) "This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against *them*. (11) "And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted *them* even to foreign cities. (12) "While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, (13) "at midday, **O king**, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me.

Paul related what Jesus had said to him on the road to Damascus, and then in verse 19 he says:

(19) "Therefore, **King Agrippa**, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, (20) "but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. (21) "For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill *me*. (22) "Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come; (23) "that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles." (24) Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!"

(25) But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. (26) "For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. [Agrippa remained silent and thoughtful, and Paul returns to addressing him] (27) "**King Agrippa**, do you believe the prophets? I know that **you** do believe." (28) Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." (29) And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains." (30) When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; (31) and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing worthy of death or chains." (32) Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.""

Agrippa was the seventh and last of the Herodian kings. Perhaps he was not popular with his Jewish subjects because he wouldn't do them favors, like putting Paul to death, as his father had with James, or as Drusilla's husband had in keeping him imprisoned. The Jews however were bent on revolt, Agrippa tried unsuccessfully to persuade them not to. Knowing the inevitable result, he sided with the Romans, who destroyed Jerusalem, the temple, and in fact Agrippa's own portion of the kingdom as well. He retired to Rome and died near the end of the century, perhaps around the time of John's death. With that, the Herodian dynasty came to an end. The Church, however, survives to this day.