



# The Quarry Gospel Church

BIBLE STUDY - 25.11.20

## BIBLE STUDY - HEROD THE GREAT

### 1. WHICH HEROD?

- In historical records the first 'Herod' appears in c.100 B.C. and the last in c.100 A.D. During this 200 year period there were 8 Herods!
- 1st Herod's grandson is the 1st Herod in the Bible - Herod the Great  
(The Roman historian Josephus tells us his reign was 37 B.C. - 4 B.C. - later historians put his death at 1 B.C.)
- Jesus was born about 2 years before Herod's death

Herod the Great had 3 Sons who ruled after him, each granted a province to govern by Caesar:

i) Archelaus - he failed at controlling Judea

- when Joseph heard Archelaus was now reigning - he went to Nazareth and thus the prophecy that Jesus would be a Nazarene was fulfilled.

- following his failure to govern, Caesar put in place Roman "governors":

Pontius Pilate: 26-36 AD - dealt with Christ at his trial and crucifixion

Felix: 52-59 AD

Festus: 59-62 AD - dealt with Paul (*Acts 22-26*)

ii) Antipas - appointed Tetrarch of Galilee - removed by Caligula AD39

- played the biggest part in Jesus' ministry

- imprisoned and executed John the Baptist

- wondered if John the Baptist was Jesus reincarnated - (*Mark 6*)

- Jesus referred to him as "that fox" (*Luke 13*)

- Pilate sent Jesus to this Herod at his trial

iii) Philip - a quiet reign of territory to the north and east of Galilee

- mentioned in *Luke 3:1* along with his brother Antipas - these two and Pontius Pilate were governing everything that used to belong to Herod the Great

2 more Herods in the Bible:

i) Herod Agrippa (Herod the Great's grandson)

- given the authority over territories of Antipas and Philip

- executed James, brother of John (*Acts 12*)

- arrested Peter (*Acts 12*)

- was killed in an act of divine judgment (*Acts 12:21-23*)

ii) Herod Agrippa II (Herod the Great's great-grandson - his sister was married to Festus)

- invited to hear Paul's defence at Caesarea (*Acts 25*)

## **2. WHAT WAS HE LIKE?**

He was a survivor - a clever politician

### **a) He was a clever and efficient ruler**

- had an incredible disaster relief fund
- encouraged development of the synagogue system
- loved Greek culture and appealed to Gentiles - built baths, clubs, etc. to be like Rome
- placated Jews by enlarging and beautifying the temple and its courtyards.

### **b) He was a dreadful and cruel tyrant**

- he was always insecure of his position
- employed many spies
- Jews never let him forget he was an Arab and he resented their fondness towards their previous leaders
- married 10 times - 15 children - each vied for position
- He was allowed by Caesar to choose his own successor - recipe for family disaster and fighting
- After he came to the throne he slaughtered: the Sanhedrin, 300 court officers, his wife, his mother, his eldest son and two other sons!
- Herod the Great - "Not a nice man!"

## **3. HIS ROLE IN THE NATIVITY STORY** (Matthew Ch.2)

### **a) Christ was born during the reign of Herod the Great**

- Matthew actually says very little about the birth - recorded as a simple historical fact
- Matthew times the date of Christ's birth by Herod the Great

### **b) Herod's first involvement with Christ - the visit of the wise men**

- He was disturbed "*and all Jerusalem with him*" (Matthew 2:3)
- Herod the Great had awesome power:  
YET.. Wise men came from the East - heralding a new born "King of the Jews" - a title which Herod thought he owned.

**Spurgeon:** *"A stir begins as soon as Christ is born. He has not spoken a word; he has not wrought a miracle; he has not proclaimed a single doctrine; but 'when Jesus was born,' at the very first, while as yet you hear nothing but infant cries, and can see nothing but infant weakness, still his influence upon the world is manifest. 'When Jesus was born, there came wise men from the east,' and so on. There is infinite power even in an infant Saviour."*

## c) Herod's response to the visit of the wise men

### i) Political

- Herod used his cunning - political senses (*Matthew 2:4 onwards*)  
Asked the wise men to report back to him.
- He was gathering information - finding out "who" the problem was, so that he could murder him (a common course of action for Herod)
- N.B. He and the religious leaders could have gone to Bethlehem themselves (only a few miles away from Jerusalem) - why they didn't we don't know, but possibly because they just didn't believe in the prophecies.

*James 1:22-25 - "Do not merely listen to the word, but do what it says..."*

*Luke 6:46 - "Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I say?"*

REAL BELIEF CHANGES ACTIONS!

(Similar to our situation today)

### ii) Kill everyone that could be a danger!

- He was furious -(v.16)
- When he saw he had not been successful in using the wise men, he resorted to kill all those who may pose a danger.
- He had learnt from the wise men - worked out a 2year period in which the child may have been born. He took this information and instructed all children in Bethlehem up to 2 years of age to be killed.

In trying to stop Christ - Herod only succeeded in fulfilling the prophecies he refused to believe: Hosea (*Matthew 2:15*) and Jeremiah (*Matthew 2:17-18*)

## 4. FINAL THOUGHTS

***Proverbs 21:1 - "The King's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD;  
He turns it wherever He wishes."***

Such is God's sovereignty, that even as the powers in the world seek to stop God's purposes, they only help to accomplish all that He has planned! (this applies to earthly and heavenly powers)

- we see this in Herod
- we see this in the Cross - (Pilate etc.)
- we see it in the persecution of the early church, which helped to spread the church throughout the world.

**BEFORE GOD - EVERY KNEE MUST BOW**