Let God Be True!

Herods of the Bible

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The Herods of the Bible

Introduction:

1. Get in the Spirit about Jesus Christ with select verses (Ps 2:1-6; Is 9:6-7; Hab 2:6-9; I Tim 6:13-16).
2. We assemble on the Lord's Day to honor Jesus Christ; He is our risen, reigning, and returning king; we are the blood-bought followers of the Lamb; His final victory over all enemies is absolutely certain.
3. An unusual topic for a sermon(s), but these kings were prominent in the N.T. and illustrate great lessons, and many read of them without knowing their distinctions in the four-king Herodian dynasty.
4. They were direct enemies of Jesus our Lord and then of His apostles, and the Spirit inspired the history for fulfillment of prophecies and comfort of His people that nothing can hinder Christ's total victory.
5. Satan is the god of this world and prince of the power of the air and hates Jesus, and he is involved in civil governments, especially one as pagan as Rome, so efforts against Jesus are clear (Rev 12:1-9).
6. In the days of these kings, as Rome took over world dominion from Greece, the God of heaven set up a kingdom to be the greatest of all time with the greatest king and that would last forever (Dan 2:44).
7. We always eagerly exalt the Lord Jesus Christ to give Him all royal preeminence, and His triumph over the Herods' efforts against Him and His apostles glorify Him as King of kings and Lord of lords.
8. Direct and indirect references to the Herods in both testaments total about 160 verses as follows: Matt 2:1-23; 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; 8:15; Luke 1:5; 3:1,19; 8:3; 13:31-33; 23:5-12; John 2:20; Acts 4:27; 12:1-23; 13:1; 23:35; 25:13-27; 26:1-32; Daniel 11:36-39,44-45; Ps 2:1-12; Jer 31:15; Hosea 11:1.
9. There are six rulers of this dynasty mentioned and named in the Bible, Archelaus (Matt 2:22) and Philip (ruler, Luke 3:1; other Matt 14:3; Mark 6:17; Luke 3:19), but we want the four the Bible stresses: Herod the Great (37-4 BC), Antipas (4 BC-AD 39), Agrippa I (41-44 AD), Agrippa II (48-96 AD); any differences in years of reign are due to ruling different sections of the larger Roman Palestine area.
10. The Herodian dynasty of four main rulers replaced the Hasmonean/Maccabean Jewish rulers of Israel, and this can be easily observed in Daniel 11 and in secular history that knows about them in detail.
11. Rome gave them limited rule as vassal kings or tetrarchs; they increased their rule or dominion if they could; Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD, and the dynasty ended around 96 when Agrippa II died.
12. A helpful family tree of Herod the Great showing his wives, sons, and the other Bible Herods … Herods Family Tree (PDF)

Main Lessons from One or More of the Herods

A. ***Why Do the Heathen Rage?*** … for nothing would stop God's Son; Herod the Great killing children did not get God's Son; Antipas killing John and mocking Jesus did not get Him; apostles in a prayer meeting applied Psalm 2 to Antipas; Agrippa I killing James by the sword did not stop the apostles; Agrippa II

helped spread the gospel by getting Paul to Rome (Ps 2:1-12; Luke 23:5-12; Acts 4:27).

B. ***The LORD Shall Have Them in Derision*** … our glorious God and loving Father, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, laughed at the efforts of the mightiest on earth to stop His Son (Ps 2:4-6); the dominion or sovereignty of God is not the least hindered by man (Dan 4:35; Isaiah 46:10; Ps 33:8-11).

C. ***Kiss the Son*** … lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way; Herod the Great tried to kill Jesus and died a miserable death; Antipas mocked Jesus and died disgracefully in Gaul; Agrippa I killed Jesus' apostle James, and he died miserably by worms. We should kiss the Son any way we can … Kiss the Son (1), Kiss the Son (2).

D. ***Touch Not Mine Anointed*** … Herod the Great killed priests (and babies), Antipas beheaded John the Baptist, Agrippa I killed James, but Agrippa II was kind to Paul (Ps 105:14-15); Herod the Great died horribly; Antipas was banished to Gaul to die; Agrippa I died by God's worms; Agrippa II lived long.

E. ***Intellectual Assent Is Not Enough*** … Antipas feared John Baptist, knew he was just and holy, heard him gladly and made changes (Mark 6:20), and Agrippa II almost became a Christian (Acts 26:28); faith, repentance, baptism are required and continuing in His word as disciples (Acts 2:28; John 8:31).

F. ***Political Expediency Corrupts*** … Antipas would not back down with important guests at his birthday (Mark 6:26), and Agrippa I took Peter after killing James pleased the Jews (Acts 12:1-4), and these two examples leave out Pilate, who eventually chose to kill Jesus to honor Caesar (John 19:12-13).

G. ***Women More Bitter than Death*** … a warning by Solomon fulfilled by Herodias corrupting Antipas and killing John Baptist and getting her husband banished to Gaul for seeking the title of king (Agrippa I conspired against him as king), and Agrippa II incestuously tied to his sister Bernice (strong rumor).

H. ***Blindness of Heart and Mind*** … Herod the Great was not moved by wise men, a star, a prophecy; Antipas was not convinced by just and holy John and Jesus' many miracles; Agrippa I was not moved by incredible apostolic power well known among the Jews; Agrippa II would not fully embrace Christ.

I. ***Jesus is King of Kings*** … and He proved it by first destroying the Jews by the Romans and then by destroying the Romans by the Visigoths and so forth; He protected King James' family and England's government for William Tyndale's prayer for a Bible; love our Lord's title (Rev 1:5; 17:14; 19:16).

J. ***The Zeal of the LORD of Hosts Will Do It*** … to establish Jesus His Son on the throne of David with the government on His shoulder with marvelous names and titles; His rule and peace would have no end; He would rule the kingdom by decree and settle it with judgment and justice forever (Is 9:6-7).

K. ***The Gates of Hell Did Not Prevail*** … just as Jesus had promised about His church earlier (Matt 16:18), but His apostles went throughout the world with His kingdom gospel and turned it upside down (Acts 17:6), as devils were cast out and idolatry was reduced by converts and monotheism in Christianity.

Herod the Great Facts

A. Scriptures (Matt 2:1-23; John 2:20; Dan 11:36-39,44-45; Jer 31:15; Hos 11:1; Mic 5:2).

B. He was an Edomite (from Esau) that Rome had granted to be king of Judea (the Jews).

C. His paranoia, ambition, cruelty combined to kill wife, sons, infants, perceived threats.

D. He killed the Hasmoneans or Maccabees, though marrying Mariamne before killing her.

E. He greatly enhanced the temple, adding a palace and fortress; the time it took him and Antipas with

temple is said to be 46 years (John 2:20); and he built the fortress Masada.

F. He was troubled and all Jerusalem with him by wise men asking for "King of the Jews."
G. The priests/scribes told Herod of a prophecy for a Ruler/Governor of Israel (Micah 5:2).
H. Herod diligently examined the wise men to know when the star appeared for His birth, and he cunningly lied to them that he desired His location in order to worship him.
I. The wise men found Mary and young Jesus in a house, likely about 1+ years after birth.
J. God warned the wise men to avoid meeting again with Herod; they took another route.
K. God by His angel warned Joseph to take young Jesus and Mary to Egypt to avoid Herod.
L. He killed the children under two (likely males) in the Bethlehem area to kill the king; this terrible tragedy fulfills two different prophecies of the O.T. (Jer 31:15; Dan 11:37).
M. Herod died soon after, and God by His angel told Joseph to return to Israel (Hos 11:1).
N. Back in Israel, Herod's son Archelaus ruled Judea, so Joseph went north to Nazareth, which fulfilled another prophecy spoken by the prophets, but not written (Matt 2:23).
O. Herod died miserably around 4 BC, shortly after killing the children, likely from a combination of chronic kidney disease and a rare form of gangrene. Josephus described his body as being consumed with an "intolerable itching," edema, and gangrene that "produced worms." His order to kill prominent Jews to enhance mourning was ignored.
P. He perfectly fulfilled the consecutive prophecy of Daniel about "the king" (Dan 11:36-39,44-45) after Syria, Egypt, and Maccabees (Mauro's, Seventy Weeks, is excellent).

Herod the Great Lessons

A. ***Building of Grand Temple*** … did not matter, for it was politics and pride (Jer 7:1-15), rather than the heart, mind, soul, and strength of love for God that He expects from all.
B. ***Live by the Sword, Die by the Sword*** … his death was horrible (Matt 26:52; Rev 13:10), and this death was appropriate for family members he killed in addition to the infants.
C. ***Rule Your Spirit to Best the Mighty*** … Herod could not rule paranoia about threats to his office and title of King of Judea, so he killed any perceived threats (Pr 25:28; 16:32).
D. ***Glory of Fulfilled Prophecies*** … is a thing God boasts about and we love (Is 41:21-29); Matthew 2 about Herod has five (Mic 5:2; Jer 31:15; Dan 11:37; Hos 11:1; Matt 2:23).
E. ***Godliness Beats Achievements*** … though he built great things (Pr 10:7; 22:1; Heb 11:2), for if a man gains the whole world but loses his own soul is a horrific loss (Matt 16:26).
F. ***Word Was Made Flesh*** … and dwelt among us in spite of Herod (John 1:14; I Tim 3:16), for a virgin brought forth a son to be called Immanuel (God with us) in spite of Herod.
G. ***Use All Means of Grace*** … Herod did not use wise men, star, prophecy, scripture, etc., and no matter how common you may think Bible and preaching are, they must be used.
H. ***The Green Bay Tree*** … Herod died to go to hell and Jesus lives forever (Ps 37:34-38).

Kingdom Effect: *Herod the Great was known for natural ability and vile crimes against his family and*

subjects. Though he tried to destroy Jesus in His infancy, God protected His Son in Egypt, soon killed Herod with a terrible disease (Josephus), and brought Jesus to Nazareth where He lived before His anointing at 30. Herod the king of the Jews should have embraced the real King of the Jews, Who fulfilled all that was prophesied in spite of Herodian arrogance and ambition, with the Roman governor declaring Jesus the King of the Jews in three languages on the cross! The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall perform this!

****** From Herod the Great's death to Jesus starting His ministry is an interval of 30 years. ******

****** Herod's son Archelaus reigned about ten years until Rome deposed him and sent Pilate. *****

Herod Antipas Facts

A. Scriptures (Matt 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; 8:15; Luke 13:31-33; 23:5-12; Psalm 2:1-12).
B. He was son of Herod the Great and continued enhancing the temple (46yrs; John 2:20).
C. He did not have all his father's territories or title; he was tetrarch of Galilee (Luke 3:1).
D. Jesus called him a fox, not a lion, when hearing Herod would kill Him (Luke 13:31-33).
E. Jesus warned His disciples to beware of the leaven of Pharisees and Herod (Mark 8:15).
F. He feared and gladly heard John the Baptist, as just and holy, who rebuked his adultery.
G. Herod had taken his brother Philip's wife, Herodias (this one did not rule; Luke 3:1,19).
H. His evil wife Herodias convinced Herod to imprison John; she also wanted him dead.
I. But Herod did not kill him, for he feared political backlash, and he respected John much.
J. At his birthday party with nobility, he made a foolish vow that forced him to kill John.
K. As fame of Jesus grew, Herod speculated or feared Jesus was John back from the dead.
L. He was exceeding glad Pilate sent Jesus, who would not entertain him (Luke 23:5-12).
M. The prisoner exchange between Pilate and Herod fulfilled the second Psalm (Acts 4:27).
N. He died in disgrace after Caligula banished him to France after Agrippa I accused him.
O. A teacher at Antioch, Paul's church, Manaen, was brought up with Herod (Acts 13:1).

Herod Antipas Lessons

A. ***Enjoying Preacher Is Not Enough*** … it needs repentance / obedience (Ezek 33:30-33), for being a hearer only is not nearly enough as James warned very clearly (Jas 1:21-25).
B. ***True Religion Is All Things New*** … including dear sins (II Cor 5:17; 7:1), as the rich ruler could not sell his assets and Herod could not dump his Herodias (Luke 18:18-25).
C. ***Hasty Speech Will Cause Great Trouble*** … character worse than a fool (Prov 29:11,20), which Solomon warned about several different ways (Proverbs 6:1-5; 18:7; Eccl 5:2).
D. ***Oaths in Error, Danger, or Deadly Can be Voided*** … compare Solomon and Jephthah, the king did not keep his promise to Bathsheba, and Jephthah redeemed her from death.
E. ***Fear of Man Bringeth a Snare*** … like at his birthday, as Solomon warned (Prov 29:25).
F. ***Danger of Whorish Women*** … if cheating with you, they will against you (Eccl 7:26), in addition to Herod with Herodias, think of Samson and Delilah and Egypt's Cleopatra.

G. ***Touch Not Mine Anointed*** … should be used again for John (Ps 105:15; I Chr 16:22).

H. ***The Real Conspiracy Is Antichrist*** … Herod and Pilate against Jesus (Luke 23:5-12).

Kingdom Effect: *Herod the tetrarch (Antipas) wasted two great opportunities, one with John and another with Jesus. Though he killed John, the greatest born of women, John's special but limited ministry had ended. Herod wanted Jesus to entertain him, but he and his men of war mocked Jesus, yet our Lord answered nothing and fulfilled His crucifixion under Pilate, who had Roman jurisdiction in Jerusalem. So far from hindering the kingdom by these murders, the gospel exploded through 39 A.D., when Herod was exiled to France.Herod the fox, who wanted to be king (Mark 6:14), had met Jesus the King of kings forever.*

Herod Agrippa I Facts

A. Scriptures (Acts 12:1-23).

B. He was a grandson of Herod the Great by Aristobulus IV and ruled Judea and Samaria.

C. Rather than a tetrarch like his uncle Herod Antipas, he was king of Judea (or the Jews).

D. He grew up in Rome, so well educated, but those oratorical skills cost him his life later.

E. He persecuted the early church, killing James and willing to do more to please the Jews.

F. Not wanting to defile the Jewish Passover (*Easter* in Acts 12:4), he waited for it to end.

G. He imprisoned Peter with four quaternions of soldiers (16), but an angel got Peter out.

H. A serious ruler, he had the soldiers put to death that had lost Peter while chained tightly.

I. When making a speech in royal apparel, he accepted divine praise, so God killed him.

J. Josephus wrote that he had a terrible stomach pain for five days before worms ended it.

Herod Agrippa I Lessons

A. ***Touch Not Mine Anointed*** … should be used again for James (Ps 105:15; I Chr 16:22).

B. ***Blindness Is Damning Deceit*** … Peter's miracles and escape should have moved Herod.

C. ***Pride Comes Before a Fall*** … and this fall was fatal and horrible (Prov 16:18; 18:12).

D. ***Praise Should Not Produce Pride*** … which is common, from low to high (Prov 27:21).

E. ***Any Good Thing You Have Is a Gift*** … so why boast or act as if it were not (I Cor 4:7).

F. ***Give God the Glory for All*** … by walking humbly without vainglory (Mic 6:8; Phil 2:3).

G. ***Be Sure Your Sin Will Find You Out*** … killing James and losing Peter to die horribly.

H. ***Angels Serve the Kingdom of Jesus*** … one freed Peter from Herod, one killed Herod.

Kingdom Effect: *Herod Agrippa I by vexing the church, killing James, and imprisoning Peter helped by persecution to spread apostles and teachers out of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to the uttermost part of the earth, like Saul's persecution of the church had done before (Acts 1:8; 8:1-4). God's judgment on this Herod with a horrible death after accepting divine praise contributed to gospel and kingdom growth by multiplication, recorded in context (Acts 12:24). Herod should not have touched Jesus' beloved apostle, James, for he only lived to 55 and reigned but three years with royal authority in Judea.*

Herod Agrippa II Facts

A. Scriptures (Acts 25:13-27; 26:1-32).
B. King Agrippa II was the son of Herod Agrippa I.
C. He was not king of Judea but rather of smaller territories north of Judea by Claudius.
D. He oversaw Paul's trial before Festus and himself after Paul had appealed to Caesar.
E. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus is recorded here for the third time in Acts.
F. He almost converted to Christianity before this public gathering to examine the apostle.
G. He lived a long life with Rome's favor, maybe for his gentleness toward Paul on trial.
H. Historians like Josephus and Juvenal indicate he and his sister Bernice were incestuous.

Herod Agrippa II Lessons

A. ***Almost Is Terrible with God or Truth*** … when he could have converted (Acts 26:28).
B. ***Intellectual Assent Is Not Enough*** … for this Herod or for Herod the tetrarch with John.
C. ***He Would Lose Bernice, if Rumors True*** … his full sister (Acts 25:13,23; 26:30).
D. ***Press Violently Into the Kingdom*** … is the only way to receive the gospel (Luke 16:16).
E. ***Jesus Taught to Sell All You Have*** … in the cases of treasure and pearl (Matt 13:44-46).
F. ***The Ephesians Burned Books*** … with a value of 50,000 pieces of silver (Acts 19:19).
G. ***Paul Got to Rome for the Gospel*** … with converts in Caesar's household (Phil 4:22).
H. ***Be Ready Always to Answer*** … is Peter's instruction for what Paul did well (I Pet 3:15).

Kingdom Effect: *Herod Agrippa II allowed Paul to tell his impeccable standing among the Jews, his glorious conversion, and the resurrection of Jesus before many hearers with the king nearly converting publicly, which beautifully overrode Festus' accusation that Paul was mad. King Agrippa declared Paul innocent and helped him to Rome, where he preached to many, wrote epistles, and stood trial, with converts even in Caesar's household, so this Herod assisted our Lord's kingdom spread worldwide even to the Empire's capital. Agrippa did not convert and was a sinner, but God let him live to 92-100, unlike the others.*

Conclusion:

1. The only reason we would touch history of the Herodian dynasty is by Bible mention related to Jesus.
2. An unusual topic for a sermon(s), but these kings were prominent in the N.T. and illustrate great lessons, and many read of them without knowing their distinctions in the four-king Herodian dynasty.
3. They were direct enemies of Jesus our Lord and then of His apostles, and the Spirit inspired the history for fulfillment of prophecies and comfort of His people that nothing can hinder Christ's total victory.
4. Satan is the god of this world and prince of the power of the air and hates Jesus, and he is involved in civil governments, especially one as pagan as Rome, so efforts against Jesus are clear (Rev 12:1-9).
5. In the days of these kings, as Rome took over world dominion from Greece, the God of heaven set up a kingdom to be the greatest of all time with the greatest king and that would last forever (Dan 2:44).
6. We always eagerly exalt the Lord Jesus Christ to give Him all royal preeminence, and His triumph over the

Herods' efforts against Him and His apostles glorify Him as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Choose today … to ALMOST be a dedicated Christian … or to ALTOGETHER be a dedicated Christian.

For Further Study:

1. A helpful family tree of Herod the Great showing his wives, sons, and the other Bible Herods … Herods Family Tree (PDF).
2. The Maccabees (also Hasmoneans) were important Jews leading up to Herod the Great … The Maccabees, Maccabees.
3. The one use of "Easter" in Acts 12 in the Bible has troubled many, but there is a clear answer … Easter in Acts 12:4.
4. Daniel 11 detailed outline has Herod the Great in 36-39,44-45 and Caesar Augustus in 40-43 … Daniel Chapter 11.
5. God delights and boasts in fulfilled prophecies, for it is one of the best proofs He alone is God … Glory of Fulfilled Prophecy.
6. Herod the Great as "the king" of Daniel 11:36 is known by a consecutive context and Philip Mauro.

Herod Name	Relationship	Main Bible Events
Herod the Great (King of Judea)	Founder of dynasty	Ordered death of infants to try to kill the young child Jesus (Matt 2:1-23). He died shortly after this evil event.
Herod the Tetrarch **Herod Antipas** (Tetrarch of Galilee)	Son of Herod the Great	Beheaded John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12). Questioned Jesus before His crucifixion (Luke 23:5-12).
Herod the King **Herod Agrippa I** (King of Judea)	Grandson of Herod the Great by Aristobulus IV	Killed James (brother of John) and imprisoned Peter and died of worms after a speech (Acts 12:1-23).
King Agrippa **Herod Agrippa II** (King of Iturea, etc.)	Son of Agrippa I	With Bernice alongside heard Paul's defense in Caesarea before Paul sailed to Rome (Acts 25:13 – 26:32).