

God Was Never Silent

Part 4

Roman Rule

His Story from Malachi to Matthew

Review

- ✓ During Greek Rule:
 - ❖ For the first time all people began to speak a common language (koine) which eventually helped foster the spread of the gospel in Christ's time
 - ❖ The Hebrew Scriptures are translated into Greek and is referred to as the Septuagint
- ✓ Three Jewish religious groups came to power in the Judean region:
 - ❖ Pharisees
 - ❖ Sadducees
 - ❖ Essenes

Introductory Remarks

- ✓ During the times of the Greek Empire - Rome was becoming a major power in the Western Mediterranean
- ✓ To fully rid themselves of Greek rule, the Jews (still being led by Hasmonean descendants) sought the help of the Romans by pledging a mutual alliance of protection.
- ✓ Rome will subjugate Palestine in 63 B.C. and dominated this territory during the entire New Testament Period
- ✓ The Romans allowed Palestine to be somewhat “self ruled” – although they controlled the appointment of who was in charge

City

- Territory under Roman control
- Senatorial provinces
- Imperial provinces
- Principal client states
- Unconquered territory
- Provincial boundaries

- During the Babylonian Captivity (The Exile), Daniel will interpret a very important dream for King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2). He identifies 4 distinct kingdoms:

- ❖ The First Kingdom was the Babylonian Empire
- ❖ The Second Kingdom was the Persian Empire
- ❖ The Third Kingdom was the Greek Empire
- ❖ The **Fourth Kingdom** was the Roman Empire



“Finally, there will be a **fourth kingdom**, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. .” (Daniel 2:40)

This continues the period known as The Times of the Gentiles



Life for the Jews under Roman Rule

After the conquests of a Roman General named **Pompey** in the eastern end of the Mediterranean and those of Julius Caesar in Gaul (modern day France), the Jews found themselves under the rule of a new overseer known as the Roman Empire – approximately 63 B.C.

Life for the Jews under Roman Rule

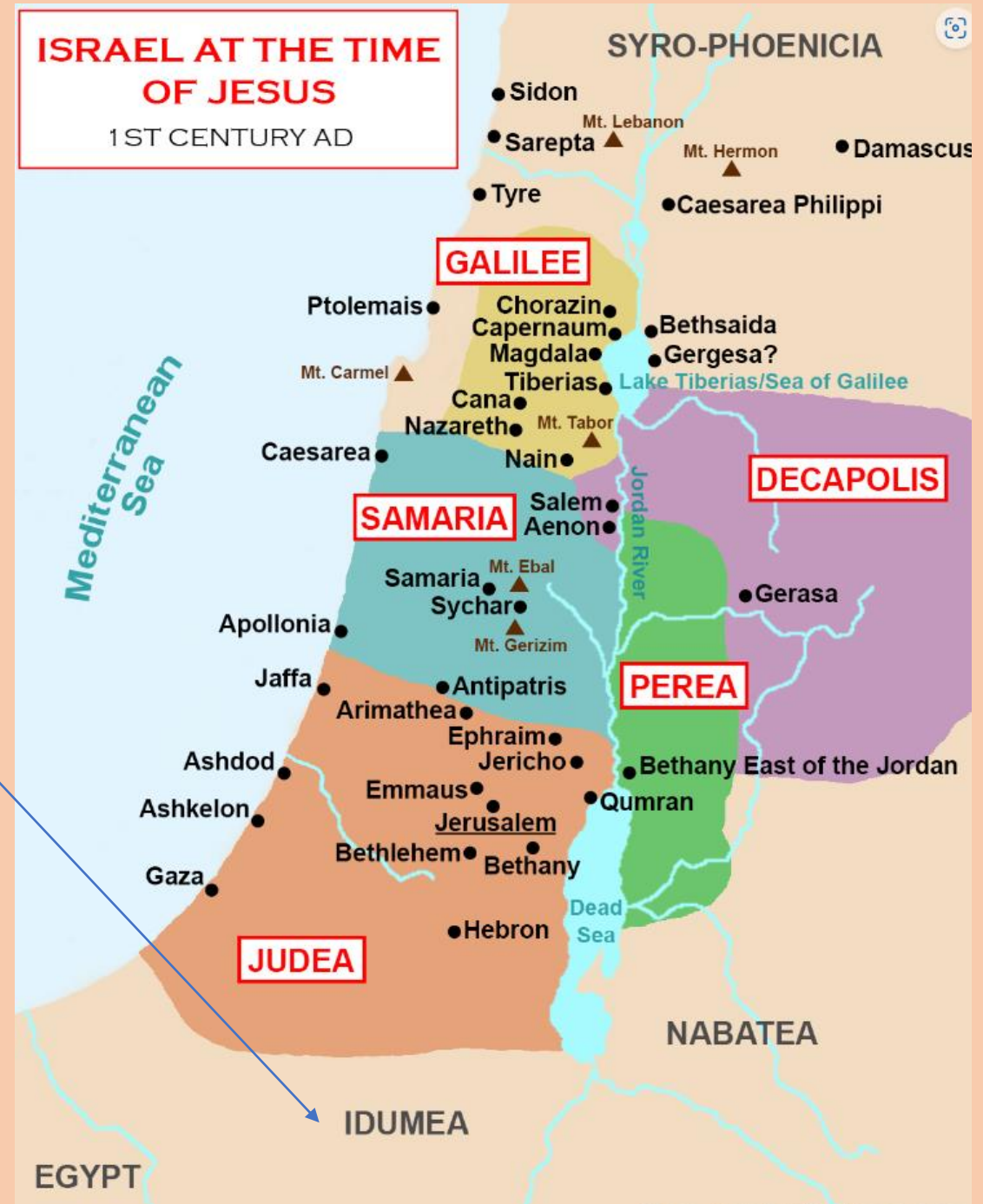
- ✓ The independence that was gained by the Jews from Greek dominance during the Maccabean Period (the Inter-Testament Period) was lost as Pompey (the Roman general and shared leader of the Roman Empire) appointed Antipater (Herod's father) as ruler of Judea. Thus, Judea became a Roman province of Syria – approximately 60 B.C.
- ✓ Upon the suspicious death of Julius Caesar (he shared power with Cassius and Pompey), there was an immense amount of turmoil in the Roman Empire
- ✓ It would be Cassius who imposes a tax on the Jews, and he passes the responsibility for collecting those taxes to Antipater and his two sons (Phasaël and Herod)

Life for the Jews under Roman Rule

- ✓ Upon the death of Julius Caesar, the Roman Empire would go through a series of change but eventually a man will rise to the top by the name of Octavian who becomes the **first official Roman Emperor** and was better known as Caesar Augustus
- ✓ Caesar Augustus was the driving force behind Pax Romana (Roman Peace) where the idea of “peace through strength” would govern the Roman Empire during his reign.
- ✓ It was during the reign of Caesar Augustus that roads (Roman roads) were constructed throughout the Empire for the ease of travel for troop movement and commerce. This would benefit the common person as well.

The Land of Judea During Roman Occupation

Judea conquered Edom (called Idumea by the Romans) during the Maccabean period and the Edomites were forced to convert to Judaism and integrate into Jewish culture



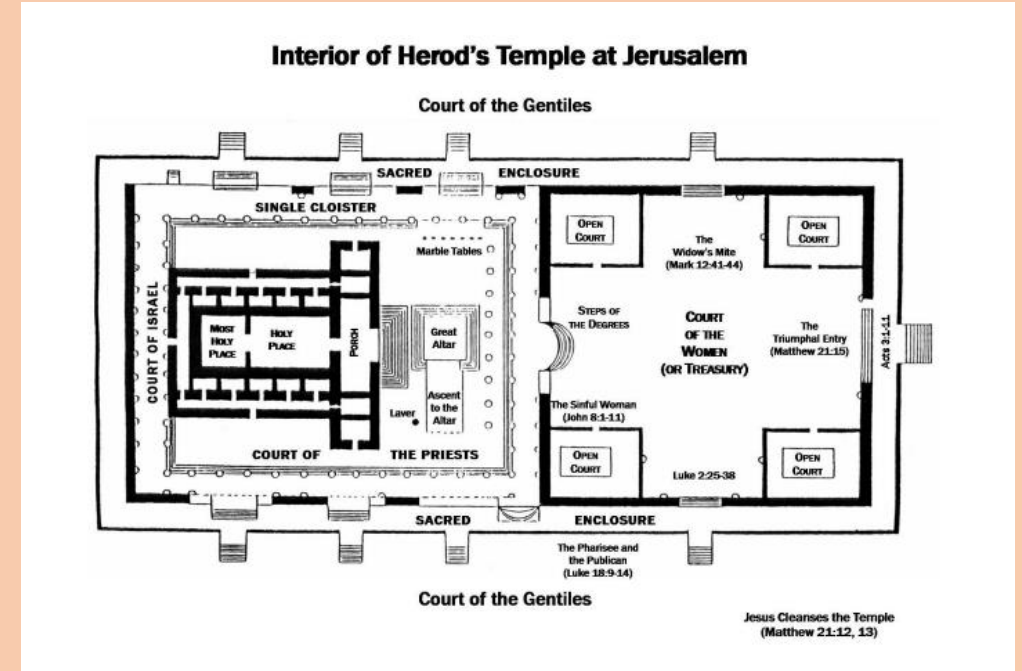
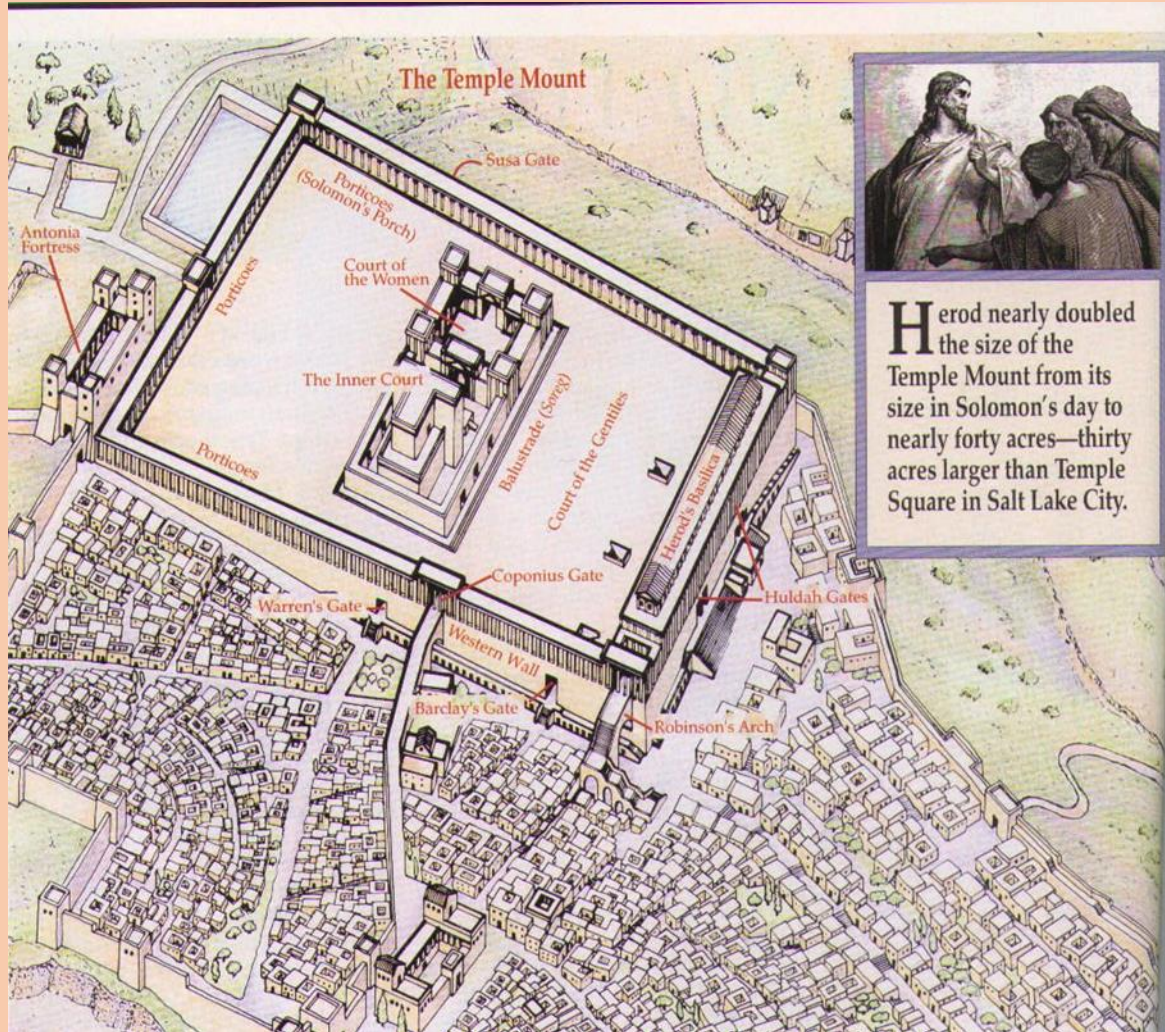
The Land of Judea During Roman Occupation

- ✓ Due to the integration of the Edomites into “Jewish culture” some of the “converted” Edomites found their way into leadership roles.
- ✓ The first governor of Edom was Antipas (an Edomite)
- ✓ Later Antipas’ son (Antipater) was able to establish relations with the Romans. After the Romans conquered Judea; Julius Caesar appointed **Antipater** as procurator of Judea in 47 B.C.
- ✓ Antipater appointed his sons (Phasael & Herod) as governors of Jerusalem and Galilee. This did not sit well with the Jews for Herod was an Edomite and not a natural Judean

The Land of Judea During Roman Occupation

- ✓ After Antipater was murdered in 43 B.C.; his sons (Phasael & Herod) were able to maintain control and were elevated to the position of tetrarch (provincial governor) by Marc Anthony
- ✓ **Herod the Great** (Antipater's son) was appointed "King of the Jews" by the Roman Senate and he began ruling sometime around 37 B.C. and did so until approx. 4 B.C.
- ✓ This is where we the **Herodian Dynasty** begins, and the Biblical record as well as recorded history will note their influences on the events of the New Testament

Herod the Great's Contribution



“The construction of Herod’s temple was begun in 19 B.C. and essentially completed in 64 A.D., a mere six years before it was destroyed by the Romans.”

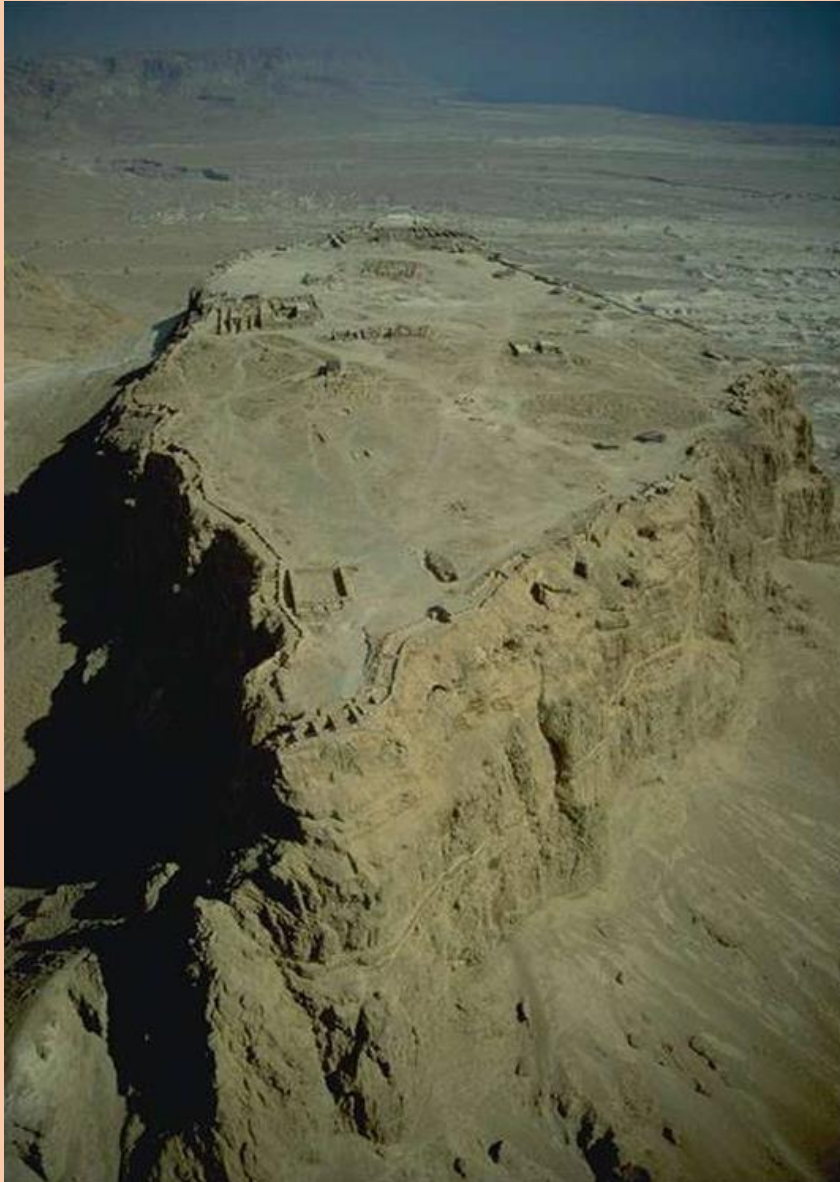
Dr. J. Vernon McGee

Herod the Great's Contribution

The large port of Caesarea was one of the King Herod's most impressive building projects. In 22 A.D. he turned a small Hellenist port on a seacoast that had no bay or natural harbor into one of the largest ports in the Roman Empire, second in size only to Rome itself. He named it in honor of Emperor Augustus.



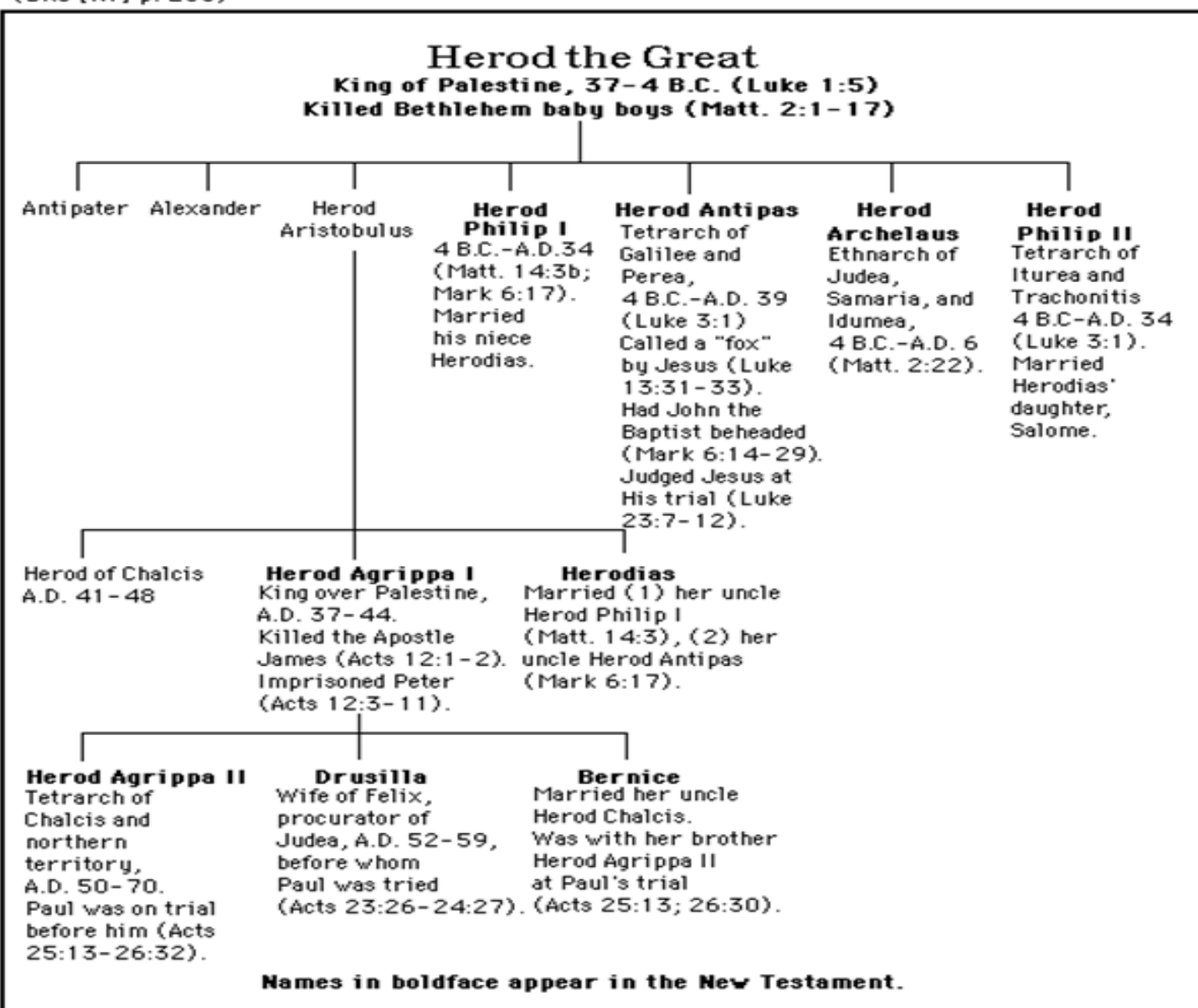
Herod the Great's Contribution



According to Josephus (Jewish/Roman Historian); Herod the Great fortified Masada between 37 and 31 B.C. as a refuge for himself in the event of a Jewish revolt.

King Herod and His Dynasty

- ✓ Herod will attempt to have Jesus killed shortly after His birth. He did this out of selfish motivation and fear and perhaps even driven by external evil forces
- ✓ Herod the Great died shortly thereafter, and his sons continued to rule
 - ❖ Herod Archelaus ruled over Judea and Samaria
 - ❖ Herod Antipas ruled over the region of Galilee (Note – he will oversee the trial of Jesus, Luke 23)
 - ❖ Herod Philip ruled over the region of Southwest Syria
- ✓ Misrule by the Herod's led to **Roman Governors** overseeing the affairs of the Jews...one such governor was **Pontius Pilate** who sentenced Jesus to death



God sent His Son...

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might **redeem** those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoptions as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5)

The Significance of the Birth of Jesus

Foretold by the Prophets:

“Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: **The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son**, and will call him Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14)

“For to us **a child is born**, to us **a son is given**, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)

The Significance of the Birth of Jesus

Foretold by the Prophets and angels:

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times” (Micah 5:2)

But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” (Luke 1:30-33)

The Events Surrounding the Birth of Jesus

- Elizabeth, Zacharias and the birth of John the Baptist
- Mary, Joseph and the visit by the angel
- The announcement to the shepherds
- The visit by the Magi
- Herod's attempt to kill Jesus

The Birth of John the Baptist

“In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were **righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commands and decrees blamelessly. But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.” (Luke 1:5-7)**

“Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. **Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to **call him John**. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth” (Luke 1:11-14)**

The Birth of John the Baptist

“He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, **in the spirit and power of Elijah**, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—**to make ready a people prepared for the Lord**.” (Luke 1:16-17)

“When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.” (Luke 1:57-58)

“And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and **he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel**” (Luke 1:80)

Some Noteworthy Items

- ✓ Zacharias (which means “**The Lord remembers**”) was a priest, **walked a blameless life** and **lived obediently to the Lord**. His life was in many ways a stark contrast from the other priests of his day who were corrupt.
- ✓ Elizabeth (which means “**The oath of God**”) was a **descendant of Aaron**. She too was a **godly woman** and worthy of the same recognition as her husband. She will give birth to John the Baptist (the one who would **prepare the way for the Messiah**).
- ✓ John will have a significant standing before the Lord and his life will reflect a pursuit of holiness, righteousness, and obedience. Some compare his life to that of Elijah the prophet

- ✓ It will be John who will preach about repentance in preparation for the Messiah and cause many to return back to the Lord:

“As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. **This is the one about whom it is written: I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.** Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it. **For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.** Whoever has ears, let them hear” (Matthew 11:7-15)

✓ **John the Baptist** is the fulfillment of Malachi 3:1-6 & 4:5-6:

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come, says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. So, I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the Lord Almighty” (Malachi 3:1-6)

“See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction”
(Malachi 4:5-6)

The Angel Appears to Mary

“In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the **angel Gabriel** to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a **virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph**, a **descendant of David**. The **virgin’s name was Mary**. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, **you who are highly favored!** The Lord is with you.” (Luke 1:26-28)

“Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; **you have found favor with God**. You will conceive and **give birth to a son**, and you are to **call him Jesus**. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the **throne of his father David**, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; **his kingdom will never end**. How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin? The angel answered, “**The Holy Spirit will come on you**, and the **power of the Most High will overshadow you**. So the holy one to be born **will be called the Son of God**.” (Luke 1:29-35)

Some Noteworthy Items

- ✓ **Joseph** (Mary's husband) was not the physical father of Jesus but his "royal lineage" provided the legal claim to the throne without the physical contamination of sin of that lineage. It is important to note that Jesus was King, not because of Joseph's "legal claim" but because He is declared so!
- ✓ **Joseph** was a righteous man (Matthew 1:19) and although he is not the focal point surrounding Christ's birth, he was used by God for a special purpose.
- ✓ **Mary** was a woman who was highly favored by God and she was the one who would carry the Savior of the world in her womb! Mary should not be the object of our worship as she herself is human like us and in need of redemption which is accomplished through faith in Christ (John 14:6)

The Birth of Jesus

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So, Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.” (Luke 2:1-7)

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times” (Micah 5:2)

The Angel Appears to Shepherds

“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **An angel of the Lord appeared to them**, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. **I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.** Today in the town of David **a Savior has been born to you**; he is the Messiah, the **Lord**. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:8-12)

“Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “**Let’s go to Bethlehem** and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about” (Luke 2:13-15)

The Shepherds and Others Rejoice

“So, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was **lying in the manger**. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, **glorifying and praising God** for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”

(Luke 2:16-20)

“When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. **For my eyes have seen your salvation**, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a **light for revelation to the Gentiles**, and **the glory of your people Israel**.” (Luke 2:27-32)

Some Noteworthy Items

- ✓ The precise year of Jesus' birth is unknown but many place it at approx. 6 B.C.
- ✓ The location of Christ's birth (Approximately 5 miles south of Jerusalem) was a village called Bethlehem (fulfillment of Micah 5:2).
- ✓ The governor of Syria (Cyrenius/Quirinius) ordered a census (for the purpose of taxation), it was this census that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.
- ✓ It is rather ironic that the "religious leaders" were not the ones to receive the announcement, but instead a group of lowly shepherds
- ✓ Simeon (a priest who was a righteous and devout man) desired to see the Messiah before he died, and God granted him that prayer. He would have understood Jesus' name to mean salvation. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

The Visit By the Magi

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him” (Matthew 2:1-2)

“When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “**In Bethlehem in Judea,**” **they replied,** “for this is what the prophet has written: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel’” (Matthew 2:3-6)

The Visit By the Magi

“Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **He sent them to Bethlehem** and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, **so that I too may go and worship him.**” (Matthew 2:7-8)

“After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. **When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.** On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they **bowed down and worshiped him.** Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And **having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route**” (Matthew 2:3-6)

God's Protection

“When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for **Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.**” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and **left for Egypt**, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.” (Matthew 2:13-15)

“When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.”
(Matthew 2:16)

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead” (Matthew 2:19-20)

Some Noteworthy Items

- ✓ The visitation by the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12) occurred during the time of Herod and happened after Jesus was born.
- ✓ Jesus was now called a child (Matthew 2:9, 11) as opposed to a baby or infant (Luke 2:12), so the assumption is made that He was **between 1-2 years old**
- ✓ Mary and Joseph were still in Bethlehem, but **no longer in the cave/stable** as Matthew tells us they were in a house. (Matthew 2:11)
- ✓ We are not told what prompted the Magi to follow the star (perhaps they received special revelation from God about the birth of Christ, or they had some sort of prior knowledge – we just don't really know), but their purpose in going was to bring gifts and **worship Him**

Some Noteworthy Items

- ✓ The star that the Magi followed was no ordinary star as stars (planets) travel from east to west, not north to south. This star (the one they had seen in the east) had now reappeared and led them to a **specific child**, in a **specific home**, in a **specific city** called **Bethlehem**
- ✓ The gifts were expensive and most conclude they had a symbolic meaning (gold – representing Christ's deity or purity, incense - representing the fragrance of His life, and myrrh – representing His death or sacrifice). We are told that **the Magi fell to the ground and worshipped Jesus.**
- ✓ Perhaps the gifts had another purpose; which was to be a provision for Joseph, Mary's and Jesus' long stay in Egypt. **The gifts could be sold to buy food**
- ✓ The Magi knew (by special revelation) that Herod planned to kill this child (Jesus), so **they did not return to Herod** and went another way home

Concluding Thoughts

- ✓ The Biblical record confirms, affirms and corroborates that the historical record is accurate as to the birth of Christ
- ✓ The Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) identify actual historical figures (such as Caesar Augustus, Herod the Great, Quirinius, Pilate) in their record of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- ✓ If the birth of Jesus was not as significant as some try to claim – then why did Herod the Great feel so compelled to destroy Him?
- ✓ If the birth of Jesus was not an historical fact, then why so much fuss about Him? If He wasn't who He claimed to be then why are people willing to die for Him?

Concluding Thoughts

“Nearly 2000 years ago in an obscure village, a Child was born of a lowly woman. He grew up in another village where He worked as a Carpenter. When He was about 30, He taught and preached.

This Man never went to College or Seminary. He never wrote a Book. He never held public office. He never had a family. He never traveled over 200 miles from His birthplace. While only in His 30's He was sentenced to death on a Cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had--the simple coat He had worn. His body was laid in a borrowed grave. Three days later this Man arose from the dead--living proof that He was, as He had claimed, the Savior whom God had sent, the Incarnate Son of God.

Nineteen centuries have come and gone and today the risen Lord Jesus Christ is the central figure of humanity. On our Calendars His birth divides history into two eras. One day of every week is set aside in remembrance of Him. Our Two most important Holidays celebrate His Birth & Resurrection. This one Man's life has furnished the theme for more songs, books, poems, and paintings than any other person or event in history. Thousands of Colleges, Hospitals, Orphanages, and other Institutions have been founded in honor of this One who gave His life for us. All the Armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the Governments that ever sat, all the Kings that ever reigned have not changed the course of history as much as this One Solitary Life.” (Author Unknown)