

Tyrants react to the birth of the king of kings

While angels, shepherds, godly men and women in Jerusalem rejoiced at the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, there were those whose reactions were exactly opposite.

When the Magi came to Jerusalem and asked King Herod the whereabouts of the babe born King of the Jews he was not pleased to say the least.

Matthew 2:3 records, "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."

Herod was notorious throughout the Roman Empire for his murderous response to anyone who might even vaguely threaten his tyrannical regime. He had killed his favorite wife for this reason, he also killed three of his own sons and countless others.

"The historians explained a recurring pattern in the life of Herod. He would hear a rumor that somebody was going to bump him off and take over his throne, but Herod would kill that person first. He would then go into depression. After awhile he would come out of his depression and would build, build, build. He would hear another rumor and would kill that person, then go into another depression. After awhile he would come out of this depression and would build, build, build. This cycle repeated itself a number of times in which numerous people were killed, including one of his ten wives as well as three of his sons! The shrinks diagnosed Herod the Great as a paranoid schizophrenic." [1]

Herod is the reason for the dark side of the Christmas account, the murder of the innocents in Bethlehem.

Matthew 2:16-18 "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew

all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

Some criticize this passage because writers of that day either did not record the event or because those who did, none of their writings were preserved. But the facts of Herod's history would point to the reality that this act recorded in Matthew is consistent with the deeds of Herod.

"It is true; Josephus does not record the slaughter of the innocents in Bethlehem. He does, however, record a number of ruthless murders by Herod in order to keep his throne secure.

Herod was crowned "King of the Jews" by the Roman Senate in 40 BC in Rome. He was, however, a king without a kingdom. Upon his return to the Land of Israel, he was given a Roman army and was eventually able to capture Jerusalem. The first order of business was to eliminate his Hasmonean predecessors. Mattathias Antigonus was executed with the help of Mark Antony and Herod killed 45 leading men of Antigonus' party in 37 BC (Antiquities 15:5-10; LCL 8:5-7). He had the elderly John Hyrcanus II strangled over an alleged plot to overthrow Herod in 30 BC (Antiquities 15:173-178; LCL 8:83-85).

Herod continued to purge the Hasmonean family. He eliminated his brother-in-law, Aristobulus, who was at the time an 18 year old High Priest. He was drowned in 35 BC by Herod's men in the swimming pool of the winter palace in Jericho because Herod thought the Romans would favor Aristobulus as ruler of Judea instead of him (Antiquities 15:50-56; LCL 8:25-29; Netzer 2001:21-25). He also had his Hasmonean mother-in-law, Alexandra (the mother of Mariamme) executed in 28 BC (Antiquities 15:247-251; LCL 8:117-119). He even killed his

second wife Miriamme in 29 BC. She was his beloved Hasmonean bride whom he loved to death [literally, no pun intended] (Antiquities 15:222-236; LCL 8:107-113).

Around 20 BC, Herod remitted one third of the people's taxes in order to curry favor with them, however, he did set up an internal spy network and eliminated people suspected of revolt, most being taken to Hyrcania, a fortress in the Judean Desert (Antiquities 15:365-372; LCL 8:177-181).

Herod also had three of his sons killed. The first two, Alexander and Aristobulus, the sons of Mariamme, were strangled in Sebaste (Samaria) in 7 BC and buried at the Alexandrium (Antiquities 16:392-394; LCL 8:365-367; Netzer 2001:68-70). The last, only five days before Herod's own death, was Antipater who was buried without ceremony at Hyrcania (Antiquities 17:182-187; LCL 8:457-459; Netzer 2001:75; Gutfeld 2006:46-61).

Herod the Great became extremely paranoid during the last four years of his life (8-4 BC). On one occasion, in 7 BC, he had 300 military leaders executed (Antiquities 16:393-394; LCL 8:365). On another, he had a number of Pharisees executed in the same year after it was revealed that they predicted to Pheroras' wife [Pheroras was Herod's youngest brother and tetrarch of Perea] "that by God's decree Herod's throne would be taken from him, both from himself and his descendents, and the royal power would fall to her and Pheroras and to any children they might have" (Antiquities 17:42-45; LCL 8:393). With prophecies like these circulating within his kingdom, is it any wonder Herod wanted to eliminate Jesus when the wise men revealed the new "king of the Jews" had been born."

So Herod's wicked deed recorded in Matthew is consistent with the extra biblical data we have regarding his character. The King was threatened by the birth of a baby boy in Bethlehem.

Ever since the birth of Jesus Christ, tyrants the world over

have had a similar reaction to He who was born King of the Jews. We have seen that for the past eight years with the current administration in the White House. We have seen that with the abuse of the followers of Jesus Christ who refuse to bow to the Sodomite totalitarians in our land. We have seen that in government run schools where even the word Christmas is banned all the while children are learning prayers to Allah. What is clear for the anti-Christ forces in our country, anything but Jesus will do. You can teach Wicca, Mohomendanism, Hinduism or any other belief system except Christianity. Why is that so? Because the babe born in Bethlehem is still a threat to those modern day tyrants.

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