

FIVE HERODS & THREE JAMES

Herod the Great (37 B.C. – 4 B.C.) was a ruler of Judea during the Roman occupation. The fact that he was a non-Jew, along with his notably cruel manner of ruling, made him largely distrusted and resented by the Jewish people. This Herod summoned the wise men at Jesus' birth and will remain infamous for his cruelty in slaughtering the children of Bethlehem.

Herod Archelaus (23 B.C. – 18 A.D.) was in charge of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea after the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C. It was fear about this ruler in Judea that prompted Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to live in Galilee rather than in Judea. *"But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee"* (Matthew 2:22).

Herod Antipas (20 B.C. – 39 A.D.) became the regional ruler in Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. He was the Herod rebuked by John the Baptist for taking the wife of his half-brother, **Herod Philip** (Mark 6:17-20). Antipas had John beheaded to fulfill an oath sworn to his daughter (Mark 6:20-29) and later worries that Jesus is John the Baptist back from the dead (Matt 14:1-12).

Herod Agrippa I (12 B.C. – 44 A.D.), was the grandson of Herod the Great who sought to maintain good standing with the Jewish people, ultimately gaining the respect of both the Sadducees and Pharisees. He appears in the New Testament in Acts 12:1-3 when he has James the Apostle, brother of John, killed and Peter imprisoned. He is eventually struck down for failing to give glory to God (Acts 12:21-23).

Herod Agrippa II (27 A.D. – 100 A.D.) would be the last of the Herodians to rule over Palestine until his death. Seen in Acts 25-26, it is Agrippa II who famously remarks to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?" to which Paul replied, "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains." (Acts 26:28-29).

THREE MEN NAMES JAMES

James the son of Zebedee, brother of the Apostle John. He is almost certainly the older brother of John since he is mentioned first in 17 of the 18 verses where the two of them are mentioned. Both men worked with their father

Zebedee (Matt 4:21) and with Simon Peter in the fishing business in the Sea of Galilee (Mark 1:16). James had certainly been a follower of John the Baptist as were all the early disciples (Acts 1:21-22). He immediately answered the call to follow Christ when he received it (Matt 4:18-22).

The *inner circle* of Jesus' disciples included Peter, James, and John. Only those three went up with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17:1). In the Garden of Gethsemane, these three were taken further than the other disciples to pray with the Savior (Mark 14:33). James was martyred by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2).

James the son of Alphaeus is one of the unknown of the original twelve apostles. None of his individual actions are recorded in scripture. He is mentioned as being in the upper room as the disciples prayed for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:12-13). Then, he disappears from the divine record.

James the brother of Jesus is mentioned by the Jews who came from Nazareth to see Jesus (Matt 13:54-55; Mark 6:3). James would be included in the brethren of Christ who did not believe in Him during His earthly ministry (John 7:5). However, something happened around the time of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. For one thing, Jesus made a special appearance to James after His resurrection (1 Cor 15:7). Then, we see that Mary, the mother of Jesus, and "his brethren" prayed in the upper room before the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14). James had become a believer and a disciple. We do not read about this third James again until after the death of James the son of Zebedee in Acts, chapter twelve, when the angel of the Lord released Peter from prison (Acts 12:17). By this time, James had a prominent place in the church at Jerusalem, for example, when he casts a deciding vote (Acts 15:19). Paul recognized James, along with Cephas (Peter) and John, to be "pillars" in the church (Gal 2:19). Paul also speaks of receiving certain men who "came from James" (Gal 2:12). Late in the book of Acts when Paul came to Jerusalem, James asked him to take a vow with the Jews there to show his continuation in Jewish practices (Acts 21:18-26). Paul refused, but the "vow" shows the character of the Christianity of James. James never left his Jewish practices. Traditionally, he is known for his extreme strictness to the law and is called James the Just.

He is also the James most likely to have written the New Testament *Letter of James*.