

**An Evil King's Death**

**K**ing Herod was dying. Called Herod the Great by the Romans, he made the Promised Land beautiful. A loyal friend of the Romans, he cruelly ruled over the Jewish people for 37 years. His three surviving sons were Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip.

Matthew 02:19 Teaching Guide (Map 2)  
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**An Evil King's Death**

**K**ing Herod was dying. He was called Herod the Great, a title given to him by the Romans for his magnificent building projects throughout the Promised Land of Israel, which rivaled the splendor of King Solomon's time. An evil king, he was a loyal friend to the Romans, while cruelly ruling over the Jewish people for 37 years. [Finally, he died at his palace in the city of Jericho] and his three surviving sons, Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip divided his kingdom.

Matthew 02:19 Teaching Guide (Map 2)  
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13.

An Evil King's Death  
- Herod's Kingdom  
Divided

“Bible Notes” – A Summary Study Guide

**K**ing Herod was dying, possibly from intestinal stomach cancer. He was called Herod the Great, a title given to him for his magnificent architecture throughout the Promised Land of Canaan. Herod's building projects had transformed the landscape into a spectacle that rivaled the splendor of King Solomon's time during the Golden Age of Israel.

As Herod transformed Jerusalem, in 20 B.C. he began work on the third temple. This ambitious project required the removal of the decayed 500-year-old temple of Zerubbabel. Herod also enlarged the temple mount, forming a thirty-five-acre base. Work on the temple with its surrounding complexes of courtyards and columned porches would last some eighty-four years before completion in 64 A.D. During its construction, work was always being done on the temple complex, though the daily sacrifices were never disrupted.

A master architect, Herod also fortified the massive walls of Jerusalem with fifteen-ton blocks of limestone and built magnificent palaces and mansions throughout the upper city for the rich, the impressive Fortress of Antonia named after his good friend Marc Anthony, and a theater along with a sports Hippodrome near the lower city where most of the common people lived. Yet Herod was a very evil king and a loyal friend to the hated Romans. He ruled the Jewish people cruelly for over thirty-seven years.

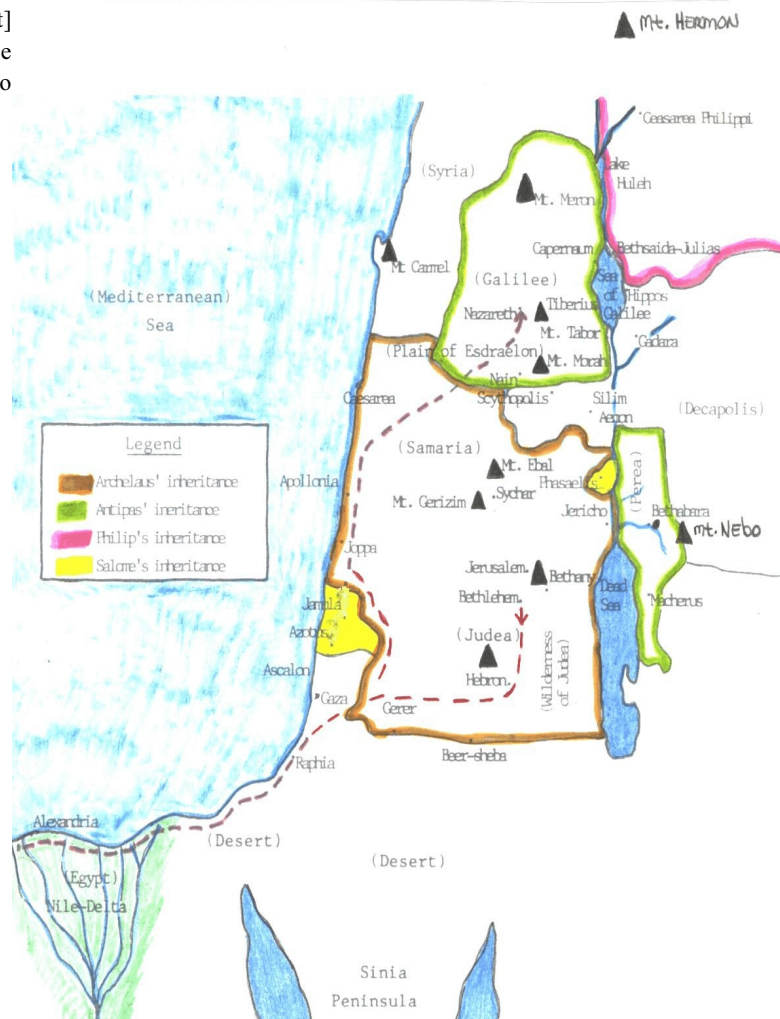
Finally, in April of 4 B.C., at his capital palace in the city of Jericho, he died a painful death at age sixty-nine. His three surviving sons were Archelaus, Antipas and Philip, who earnestly watched at his deathbed, knowing they would soon divide his kingdom.

[After Herod's death the Romans divided the Promised Land of Israel into sections: the largest being Samaria and Judea, which included Jerusalem and Idumea, the rural region of Galilee and rugged region of Perea, and finally Gaulanitis, which included southern Syria. As long as Herod's sons continued the routine of paying the required taxes to Rome, the areas remained relatively free to rule as they saw fit. But with the tyrant's death, revolts sprang up throughout the old kingdom as Jewish freedom fighters longed once more to rule themselves. Yet all were quickly crushed by the mighty Roman legions, and the Jewish leaders were executed.]

**Sermon#13,  
Biblical Scriptures:**

*Gospel of Matthew* - Chapter 2  
19. But when Herod [the Great] was dead, (behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt.)

**Herod the Great's Kingdom Divided**



## An Evil King's Death

[For Advanced Ministries Only]

The winter rainy season of the Promised Land of Canaan, which stretched from early November to late March, began as autumn faded. (Snow is even possible during December and January.) Then as spring's warmth broke through the chilly dampness, Herod the Great lay dying. Death came agonizingly slow to the aging tyrant. He had ruled over the Jews of the nation of Israel for 37 years. During his reign he committed countless acts of unspeakable violence in total loyalty to Rome. (see Matthew 2:19)

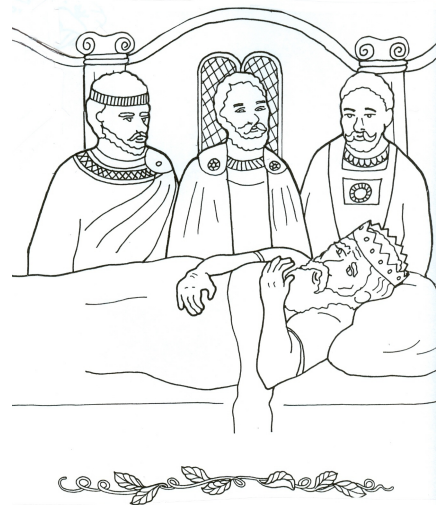
Within several months of the Bethlehem massacre, Herod the Great realized that his rapidly approaching death would provide an overwhelming jubilation throughout his jurisdiction. He shrewdly devised a plot that would ensure a massive mourning instead among the Jews of the Promised Land. His condition, intestinal cancer and advanced syphilis were extremely painful. The entire surface of his body itched and inwardly he felt tortured by slow unquenchable fires. His breath was so offensive from his illness that his attendants often gave in to nausea. Maggots, which hatched from the eggs that pestering flies had laid, infested the open lacerations on his skin and seemed to be constantly generating within his corroding body. As quickly as these were removed, hatched new ones took their place. A victim of a ravenous appetite, the order, “Food, food!” was constantly on his fevered lips. However, his stomach violently rejected whatever he tried to consume. Due to swollen legs, he could not walk. In trying to breathe, he choked and gasped with fueled a torturing cough and racked every agonized organ with him.

In a futile gesture, Herod eventually gave the orders for his attendants to take him to the curative springs in the wilderness beyond the Jordan River. Streets cleared of pedestrians by racing chariots prepared to trample anyone unfortunate enough to be unaware of the situation. Soldiers lined the avenue to the gates and blocked off every intersecting lane and alleyway. To be seen on a rooftop, meant death to that individual. With all precautions against violence ensured, Herod gave the command for departure. Unable to ride, his bearers carefully and slowly picked their way along the cobbled streets to the city walls as they carried him out of Jericho.

A night under the stars most likely aggravated Herod's condition. The season was the lovely Judea spring, sometime in early April. The barley was rippling and fig trees began to blossom. During this time occasional rains occurred with southerly winds. Fields and green patches among the rocks were aflame with the red blossom of the wild mustard, crimson poppies and scarlet anemones, which swayed to the moist breeze. In lively clusters, oleanders and peach orchards shook their airy blossoms into the blue immensity of the sky, but Herod saw none of this. He was in a hastened panic to get to the sulfur springs in which he had placed all hopes for a miraculous cure.

The springs of Callirrhoe, even today, are highly regarded by Arabs for curing rheumatism and arthritis, were believed discovered by a slave of King Solomon. Situated in the hottest, dreariest part of the Jordan, they offer little in appearance to arouse a cheerful frame of mind in the patient.

Finally, the king's party reached the ten sulfur springs. Pathetic eagerness and desperate hope glittered in Herod's eyes otherwise he seemed almost lifeless. With the utmost care, Herod was stripped and slowly lowered into a spring. The instant the vaporizing waters touched his body; Herod gasped, writhed and vomited while slipping into unconsciousness. His alarmed physicians quickly pulled the king from the spring, hastily bundling him and removing him from the area. A sullen resignation took possession of the monarch and he ordered his party back to Jericho to prepare for his certain death.



During his final weeks, Herod the Great's agony was aggravated by the realization that his demise would be a signal of a national jubilation. The thought of this grievously irritated him. Still retaining a glimmering spark of his super organizing skills, he commanded that a list of the chief men from every town and village throughout his domain be brought to him. On these lists, the king checked the names of some 3,000 people who were noted for devotion of religion, patriotism to Israel's homeland, or simply for lukewarm indifference to his policies. He ordered the men to be rounded up and confined in the rose quartz hippodrome at Jericho. Herod's sister Salomie in exchange for her becoming an heir to his written will, would execute them upon his death.

This false "King of the Jews" finally died in April 4 B.C. at age 69. Herod the Great breathed his last inside his royal palace fortress at Jericho, the capital. No doubt his 18 year old head heir Archelaus, Antipas and Philip, his three surviving sons, urgently watched at his deathbed, knowing they would soon divide their father's vast kingdom among themselves.

Immediately after the tyrant drew his last breath, the 3,000 captives in the hippodrome were released. Being in charge of the massacre and promised the, Herod's sister Salomie did not want to antagonize the new king by an unlawful seizure of power. [Salome had been promised the possessive wealth of the cities of Azorus, Jamnia, Phasaels (being 11 miles north of Jericho,) and Ascalon.] Archelaus, Herod's oldest son and expected new king of Judea, also would not jeopardize his chances of confirmation by Rome through an act of senseless butchery. So Herod the Great's death was indeed a cause for jubilation. The nation as a whole celebrated its' release from the hold of a ruthless tyrant and each small hamlet had its own particular reason for rejoicing in the safe return of its noblest citizens.

After ruling for 37 years, Herod the Great's body was carried in a grand procession on a gold bed over eight days from Jericho to a mountaintop mausoleum, which he designed himself. The entrance-way of 200 white marble steps gleamed in the sun all the way to Jerusalem. The tomb was actually taller than the pyramids of Egypt, which reflected the king's great building ability. Herod had transformed the interior into a regal monument and called it the "Herodian." It had served the monarch as a palace fortress while he lived, and its structure included a massive guard tower and stock with enough provisions to survive a five year siege. Yet, no tomb has ever been found within the mausoleum, hinting that Herod the Great was secretly buried in another location.