

THE DEATH OF HEROD

It is amazing how SOON the day of accountability comes knocking! Herod died in 4 BC, which was not long after Jesus was born – perhaps only a year or so. Shortly after his attempt to destroy the Christ child, he himself died. What a way to go out! Very tragic! And now he has all eternity to regretfully think on it in misery and torment!

Matthew 2:19 (NKJV)

19 Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

The way Herod died was what might be termed “*poetic justice*”. After playing the role of usurper as “*king of the Jews*” for 37 years (serving under the authority of Rome), Herod died. The Jewish historian Josephus recorded in great detail the account of his death.

“Tormented by the horrors of remorse, he would scream out for his loved and murdered wife Mariamne and her murdered sons. Moreover, Herod was in the grip of a loathsome disease. He was covered with sores and full of mortifying wounds, horrible to behold. He could not eat without agony. His guards had to be changed frequently because they could not stand the stench emanating from his rotted stomach. His breath smelled like death. All the crimes of Herod’s former years were visited upon his seventy-year-old body. Death worked on the carcass of the living man as though he were already dead.” – **John Phillips**

And yet even though he was in such a pathetic state, he still ordered the death of his son Antipater 5 days before his own death. As he was dying, he ordered many Jewish nobles to be rounded up and imprisoned. Josephus reported that Herod gave the order that upon his death, all these Jewish nobles were to be killed in order to ensure that there would be mourning throughout the land upon his passing. He was a very “nice guy” to the very end – NOT!

Postscript: Herod had ordered his sister (Salome and her husband) to see that the killing of the Jewish nobles was carried out, but upon his death, they gave the order that the prison doors be opened, and they all went free. Herod’s reign of terror was over.

Upon his death, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. This is the third time in Matthew 1 & 2 that an angel appeared in a

dream to Joseph (cf. 1:20, 24; 2:13, 19). It would almost make you wonder, “What am I going to dream about tonight?”

In this case, the angel communicated....

Matthew 2:20–21 (NKJV)

20 saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead.”

21 Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

God let Joseph know that Herod was dead and that he could now return to the land of Israel. And so he responded to do so. Note that all the way through here God is working through Joseph as the head of the home.

Joseph was to take the lead and take the young Child and His mother to the land of Israel. As the head of the home, it was his responsibility to lead and move his family there.