

King Herod

King Herod "The Great"

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MATTHEW 2:12 ¹² Then, being divinely warned in a dream to not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

Who was "Herod"?

"Herod," also known as "King Herod," "Herod the Great," and "Herod I," was an Edomite who was the king of Israel at this time.

How did an Edomite become king over the Jews?

Herod's grandfather had been the governor of Edom, which lay just south of Judea. In 47 BC, Julius Caesar made Antipater, Herod's father, the governor of Judea after Antipater rescued him from a siege in Alexandria, Egypt. Antipater died in 43 BC. In 40 BC, Parthians (Iranians today) attacked the Roman Empire's eastern fringe and briefly occupied Judea. Herod escaped to Rome, where the Roman Senate named him "King of the Jews," gave him a Roman army, and told him to retake Judea, which he did in 37 BC.

For how long did Herod rule Israel?

Herod ruled Israel as king, albeit as a Roman proxy, from 37 BC until his death in 4 BC.

Why is he called, “Herod the Great”?

Herod commissioned large building projects, including expansion of the temple of Jerusalem, which some began to call, “Herod’s temple.” He also built the harbor at Caesarea and numerous fortresses, including at Masada ([photos](#)).

Did the Jews accept Herod as their king?

The Jews, who descended from Jacob, never accepted as their king, Herod, who descended from Jacob’s rival brother, Esau. Herod knew this, was paranoid about being dethroned, and surrounded himself with 2,000 bodyguards. Herod killed hundreds of innocent people, including everyone he considered a threat to his throne, including three of his own sons, two of his brothers-in-law, one of his mothers-in-law, and Mariamne, who was said to be his favorite wife (he had ten wives). On his deathbed, Herod realized that the Jews will celebrate, not mourn, his death. To ensure that the Jews mourn when he dies, Herod commanded Jewish nobles from across Israel to come to him in Jericho. When they arrived, he put them in Jericho’s hippodrome and ordered all of them to be killed when he dies; Herod’s sister Salome prevented the massacre by countermanding right after his death. It was this narcissistic, paranoid murderer who heard that a “King of the Jews” (see [Bethlehem of Judea](#)) had been born to challenge his throne, and away from whose murderous plot that the [wise men](#) were “**divinely warned**” (Matthew 2:12) and re-directed.

MATTHEW 2:13-15 ¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise,

take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.”¹⁴ So, having arisen, he took the young Child and His mother during the night and departed for Egypt,¹⁵ and was there until the death of Herod, so that it might be fulfilled which had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

When did Joseph, Mary and Jesus “flee to Egypt” (Matthew 2:13)?

The “angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream” when the wise men “had departed,” and, “having arisen, he took the young Child and His mother during the night and departed for Egypt” (Matthew 2:14), so it was during the night of the wise men’s visit; they escaped in haste.

Why did they leave in such haste?

Bethlehem of Judea is only 6 kilometers (4 miles) from Jerusalem, so when Herod told the wise men to return to him after locating Jesus, he would have expected them to return to him the next day. When they didn’t, he would have dispatched his murderers (see slaughter of the innocents) right away, hours after Joseph, Mary and Jesus had escaped during the night.

Who is the “prophet” (Matthew 2:15)?

Hosea: “**When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.**” (Hosea 11:1)

Isn’t God calling His son the nation of Israel, which He led out of Egypt?

Many words in the Old Testament also embody prophecies fulfilled in the New Testament. See Psalms 22 and Isaiah 53.