

FROM CROSS
TO CROWN



THE STORY
OF JESUS
IN THE
GOSPEL
OF MARK

 LifeGroup
Bible Studies

FALL 2025
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Kingdom of God

- Mark 1:14–15
- Mark tells us Jesus began His public ministry after John was arrested, but he doesn't tell us why John was arrested until chapter 6.
- This backstory may seem like a lot of political history, but it impacts who the people believed should be king and what they expected of the Messiah.

Kingdom of God

- At this point, Herod the Great, who ruled Judea when Jesus was born, was dead, and his sons ruled different parts of his kingdom.
- Herod Antipas, who ruled over Galilee, was the Herod who arrested John the Baptist because John said it was sinful for him to be married to Herodias, the ex-wife of his half-brother Herod Philip I (Mark 6:17–18).

Kingdom of God

- In OT law, it was forbidden to marry your brother's wife (Leviticus 20:21) except in the case of Levirate marriage, when a man had to marry his brother's wife if his brother died without a son to care for her and carry on the deceased brother's name (Deuteronomy 25:5–10).
- But it is even more complicated than Herodias's marrying her brother-in-law; both Philip and Antipas were also her half-uncles.

Kingdom of God

- Who were the Hasmonean dynasty? In the Old Testament, God said only a son of David would rule in Israel.
- When Israel split into north and south after Solomon (~ 926 BC), a son of David ruled in Jerusalem (South/Judah) until the Jews were sent into exile in Babylon (586 BC).
- When they returned from the Exile (538 BC), Judah, as a territory under Persia, had a governor – not their own king.

Kingdom of God

- Persia was taken over by Greece in 333 BC.
- In 166 BC, the Jews revolted against the Greek emperor Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
- He persecuted them and desecrated the temple.
- The Maccabean Revolt is an important event in history and also the reason Jews celebrate in Hannukah.

Kingdom of God

- The Maccabees (the Jewish family who led the revolt) established the Hasmonean dynasty and ruled Judah from 140 BC to 37 BC, when Judea was made a Roman client state and Mark Antony appointed Herod the Great, an Idumean, as ruler.
- Herod the Great married Mariamne, the last of the Hasmoneans, in an attempt to legitimize his rule in the eyes of the Jews.

Kingdom of God

- Eventually Herod felt threatened by Mariamne and had her and both their sons, Alexander and Aristobulus (Herodias's father), executed.
- This left Herodias an orphan, so Herod made her marry his next oldest son Philip (her half-uncle) to legitimize his claim to the throne. But Philip didn't want to be part of the drama and stayed in Rome, where he had been educated.

Kingdom of God

- When Herod died, his kingdom was split between his other three sons.
- Decades later, Herodias wanted to return to Judea where she felt she was the rightful heir to the throne, so she ditched Philip for Antipas. Having the power to choose divorce, usually only reserved for men, tells us a lot about Herodias's power and headstrong will.

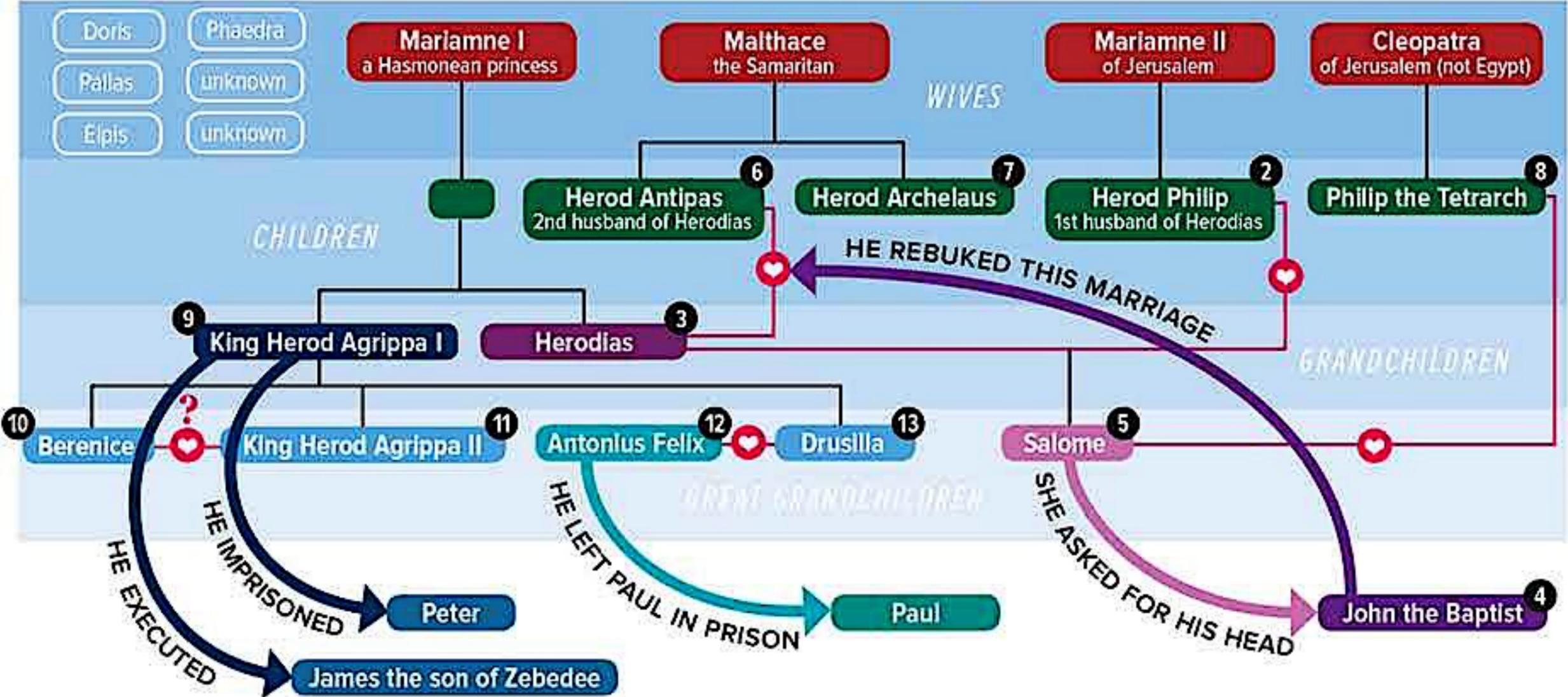
Herod the Great
Governor of Galilee (r. 47–37 B.C.E.)
King of the Jews (r. 37–4 B.C.E.)

HE TRIED TO KILL **Jesus**

OTHER WIVES

- Doris
- Phaedra
- Pallas
- unknown
- Elpis
- unknown

Herod the Great's Family Tree



Kingdom of God

- This is the political chaos into which John the Baptist came preaching the coming of Messiah.
- Herodias and Herod Antipas were threatened by John's criticism, which wasn't just a moral issue.
- Questioning the legality of their marriage could affect their claim to power in the eyes of the people.

Kingdom of God

- They were also threatened by his preaching that Messiah was coming, the true rightful heir to the throne, a son of David.
- Knowing this backstory helps us understand the danger Jesus put Himself in by not only preaching for people to return to God and be forgiven of their sins but that “the time is fulfilled” and “the kingdom of God is near.”

Kingdom of God

- This is why John had been arrested before Jesus even began preaching.
- The ministry of Jesus was so much bigger than human political games, but the rulers of the world saw Him as a threat to their power because the people still thought of Messiah in terms of a physical king over the physical nation of Israel.

Kingdom of God

- In His preaching, Jesus was reframing their understanding of the kingdom of God.
- It wasn't about who was on the physical throne in Judah in the first century, but God's reign over all creation.
- Jesus didn't come to restore independence to Israel.

Kingdom of God

- But He also didn't come just to reconcile individual people to God. That's why He preached the Gospel of the kingdom, not just repentance and faith.
- His redemption isn't just about individual salvation but also redeeming all of creation from the brokenness caused by sin (Romans 8:20–22). The end goal is His final kingdom, the new creation, where there is no more evil, suffering or pain (Revelation 21–22).

Discipleship

- Mark 1:16–20
- After He announced the kingdom, Jesus went straight to calling His first disciples. He started with two pairs of brothers who were all fishermen – Simon (Peter), Andrew, James and John – three of whom became His inner circle of disciples.
- Mark's story of their calling is very short.

Discipleship

- Walking by the sea, Jesus saw Simon and Andrew and said, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men,’ and immediately they left their nets and followed Him.” Then He called James and John, and they immediately left their father and followed Him.
- In Mark’s story, we don’t know if they had heard about Jesus before from the buzz around town or had heard Him speak or met Him before.

Discipleship

- John said Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, had heard Jesus speak, and told Peter He was the Messiah (John 1:35–42), but we get none of those details here.
- Mark doesn't explain this but instead conveyed the immediacy of their response to Jesus and completeness of how they left everything and followed Him.



Discipleship

- Jesus called and they immediately left everything to follow Him.
- Whether they had heard about or met Him before didn't matter. When He called them to follow, they dropped everything and followed.
- They didn't hesitate.

Discipleship

- They didn't worry about how they would provide for themselves or how their families would survive when they were gone.
- They simply left.
- This was an act of complete and total faith. They had no idea what the future held, but they trusted that Jesus held their future and that was enough for them.

Discipleship

- They left their fishing businesses behind, but Jesus told them they would become “fishers of men.” Luke added more detail, that Jesus gave Simon a miraculous catch of fish before He told him they would become fishers of men.
- Mark streamlined the story to focus on the point he was making – instead of fishing for food, the disciples would “fish” for people.

Discipleship

- It's significant that Jesus called fishermen as His first disciples, not because they bring anything to the table but because they don't.
- Rabbis typically chose only the cream-of-the-crop students to be their disciples.
- All boys studied in the synagogue until age 13, when most began working in their family business.

Discipleship

- The men Jesus called were already working in their trade, so they had not been selected to continue studying to become rabbis.
- Later in Acts, the crowds were shocked that the disciples preached so well since they were uneducated, ordinary men, but it was because “they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13) and the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit that had come upon them at Pentecost (Acts 2).

Discipleship

- That Jesus chose these ordinary, very flawed men shows us that following Jesus isn't reserved just for the cream of the crop.
- God can use anyone as ambassadors of His kingdom, because He gives us the words and skills by the power of His Holy Spirit. God doesn't *call the equipped; He equips the called.*

Discipleship

- These ordinary guys dropped everything and followed shows us that discipleship isn't an ordinary life.
- Discipleship isn't just saying the sinner's prayer to get your "ticket into heaven" and going on with your life as before.
- It's offering your whole life as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1–2).

Divine Authority

- Mark 1:21–28
- In only 20 verses, Jesus has been moving quickly.
- He and His disciples went into Capernaum, and He started teaching in the synagogue *immediately*, on the very next Sabbath. Then *immediately* after He taught, He cast a demon out of a man in the synagogue.

Divine Authority

- It was common for a traveling rabbi to teach in the synagogue.
- The people of Capernaum would have welcomed Jesus' preaching.
- In the Sabbath service, the preacher would stand to read a passage from the Torah, then sit down in the "chair of Moses" to expound upon the reading.

Divine Authority

- Any scribe or teacher who sat in this chair was considered to be speaking with authority, just as Moses did when he judged the people (Exodus 18:13).
- But when the people of Capernaum heard Jesus speak, they heard a whole different kind of authority, an authority that came from His very nature, not a special seat or role in the synagogue.



Divine Authority

- Jesus immediately cast out a demon, which showed His authority over the supernatural realm.
- The evil spirit knew who He was – the Holy One of God – and said so.
- The spirit assumed Jesus came to destroy them, which lets us know that (1) Jesus is sovereign over all things, and (2) His ultimate mission is to destroy evil.

Divine Authority

- From the beginning of his Gospel, Mark was establishing the authority of Jesus and a proper understand of the Gospel of the kingdom of God.
- Because a Gospel is not just a story; it's not just a biography; it's not just a history book.
- The purpose of Mark's Gospel is not just to give you information about Jesus.

Divine Authority

- It's even more than just to get you to believe in Jesus. His goal is to get you to follow Jesus.
- To lay your life down to Him as king.
- Because Jesus isn't like anything else in this world or the supernatural world.
- He is the Holy One of God, who deserves our worship.

Divine Authority

- The people in this story responded with amazement at Jesus' teaching and His power.
- Mark wanted this to be our response, too. But just thinking Jesus is amazing is not enough.
- He wanted us to make the decision to follow Jesus as those first disciples did. And not to tarry about it, but to do it immediately, as they did.

Divine Authority

- Mark's Gospel has a sense of urgency.
- Not just because Jesus may come back soon, but because every minute we don't choose to follow Jesus is a minute our life is missing the joy, peace and love we could have if we did follow Jesus.
- If Jesus is really this amazing, we should not waste another minute. We should drop our nets and follow Him.

Resources

