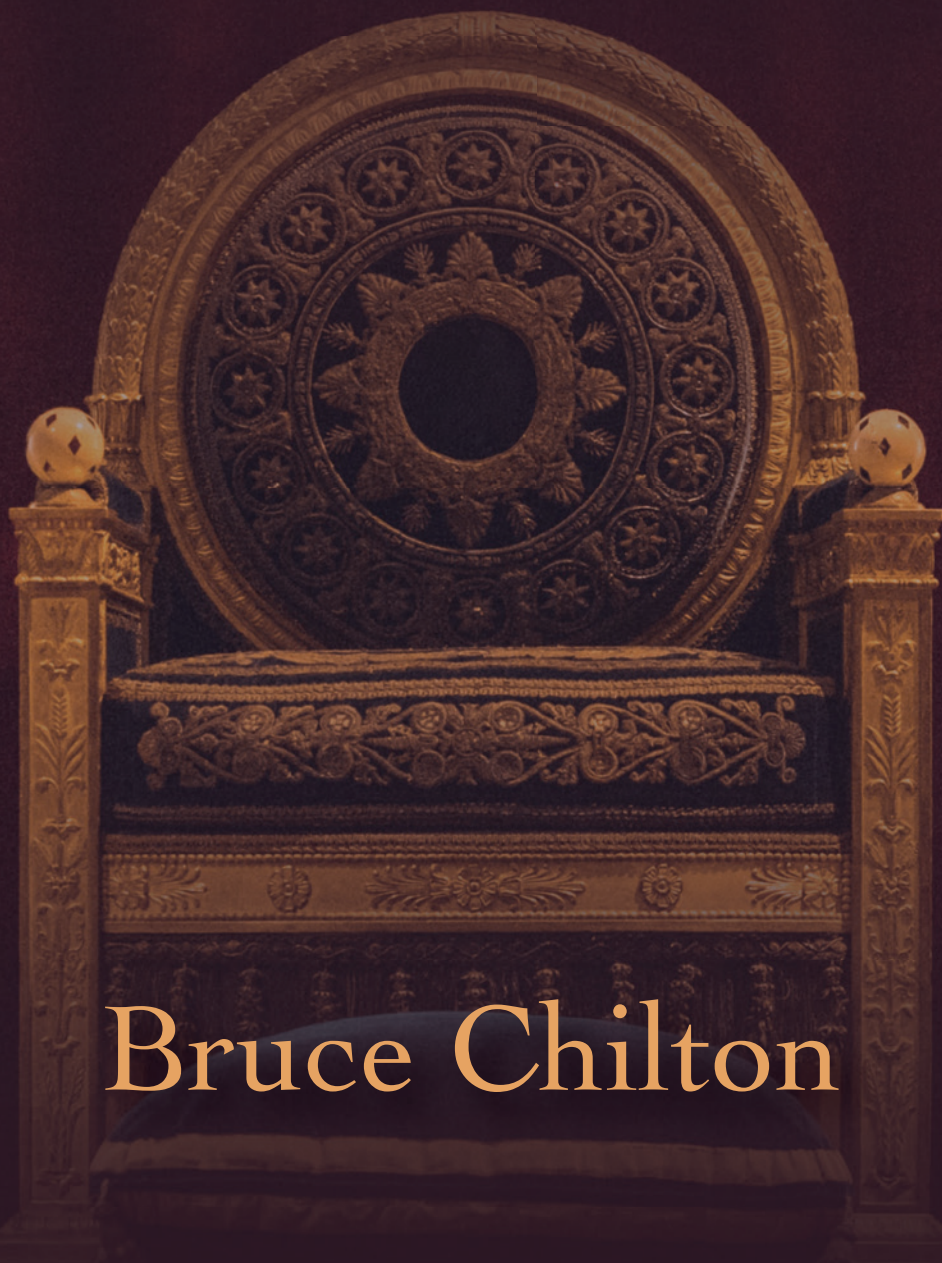


the Herods

Murder, Politics, and the Art of Succession



Bruce Chilton

the
Herods

the
Herods

Murder, Politics, and the Art of Succession

Bruce Chilton

Fortress Press
Minneapolis

THE HERODS

Murder, Politics, and the Art of Succession

Copyright © 2021 Fortress Press, an imprint of 1517 Media. All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in critical articles or reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from the publisher. Email copyright@1517.media or write to Permissions, Fortress Press, PO Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN 55440-1209.

All Scripture quotations are the work of the author. All rights reserved worldwide.

Cover image: Photo by William Krause on Unsplash

Cover design: Landerholm

Print ISBN: 978-1-5064-7428-1

eBook ISBN: 978-1-5064-7429-8

CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Introduction	ix
1. ANTIPATER	1
Setting	2
The Maccabees	5
The Essenes	12
Antipater in the Maccabean Hegemony	16
2. HEROD'S DEBUT	29
Caesar and Antipater in the Conquest of Egypt	30
Caesar's Man in Judea	32
Jerusalem, Religious Politics, and the Sanhedrin	35
Herod's Campaign in Galilee	43
Hybris	50
3. KING HEROD	57
Death, Revenge, and the Parthian Threat	58
Theoretical Monarch	69
King of the Jews	77
4. MARIAMME	85
Marital and Priestly Strategies	86
Cleopatra	87
Octavian and the Imperial Transition	99
A Time to Build and a Time to Tear Down	103
5. ARCHELAUS	117
Introduction	118
Archelaus's Play for Power	119
Imperial Intervention	131
The End of Archelaus and the Sadducees' Opportunity	140

6. ANTIPAS, HERODIAS, AND PHILIP	147
Salvaging the Dynasty: Antipas and Philip	148
Antipas's Tiberian Breakout	152
Executing John the Baptist	156
Pontius Pilate, Jesus, and Antipas's Ambitions	160
7. AGRIPPA I	175
Agrippa's Revenge	176
The Edict of Caligula	183
The Claudian Settlement and Agrippa's Glory	189
After Agrippa	200
8. BERENIKÉ AND AGRIPPA II	205
The Queen	206
The Neronian Opportunity, Confrontations in Jerusalem	210
Open War	219
Defeat and the Last Herodian Meteorite	230
EPILOGUE	235
Chronology	253
Dramatis personae	259
Notes	267
Bibliography of Sources	347
Index of Historical Figures	353
Index of Scholars	361

PREFACE

THE HERODIAN DYNASTY was complex, conflicted, and compelling; so is the considerable scholarship that approaches the vivid figures responsible for its emergence and demise. I would not have taken up the issue of the Herodians' impact on governance without considerable encouragement, moral support, and practical help from many colleagues. An afternoon's conversation with Joan Bingham brought vividly alive the interest that Herod the Great, always the center of the narrative, could evoke in acute readers. A series of experimental forays, guided by Gail Ross and Ken Wapner, led to the conclusion that the issue of governance was much larger than Herod himself (big though he was) and that the arc of the dynasty needs to be traced for its political impact to be assessed.

Just as this finding came home to me, I was finishing my study of the resurrection of Jesus, another topic whose complexity is a challenge.¹ The editor, Carey Newman, exerted a catalytic influence on my address of the issues involved and my approach to presenting them. In the case of the Herodians, Carey's contribution has been even greater, as we have devised a way to coordinate the moving parts of the Herodian machine. In deciding how to anticipate readers' interests, as well as where to explain more and where to leave matters for inference, I have been greatly helped by Francis Karagodins, a student at Bard College, as well as by Carey. Francis read the proofs of *Resurrection Logic*, showing editorial skills in the process, so it was natural to involve him earlier on in the composition of *The Herods: Murder, Politics, and the Art of Succession*. Library staff at Bard College have provided me with unfailing support, even during the worst days of the pandemic in New York State. The director, Betsy Cawley, provides an example of how institutions, however stressed, need not fail under the pressure of events.

In taking on authorly accountability for the inevitable faults that works of history are heir to, I am heartened that I have no responsibility

whatever for the lapses of Josephus, the principal source for all work of this kind. These are so striking that a scholarly literature, some of it cited here, has developed to account for all his apparent *bêtises*. Typically, the problem is addressed by considering his perspective first and then applying that analysis to what Josephus says.² Here I prefer to analyze his individual assertions of fact before coming to an assessment in regard to his aims (which appears in the epilogue). Since he was himself a political player and militant leader near the end of the events he narrates, his actions—like those of the Herodians he both admired and criticized—shaped his preferred theory of governance at least as much as his theory guided his actions. Power (like the resurrection) generates its own characteristic logic, in the first century as in the twenty-first.

Bruce Chilton

FEAST OF AIDAN OF LINDISFARNE