Wait, There’s How Many Herods in the Bible?

­­­1. **Herod the Great (ruled 37-4 B.C.)**He’s the guy in the Christmas story. Super powerful client king answerable to Rome. Tried to trick the wise men. Killed the babies in Bethlehem (not to mention some of his own sons and wives). Not cuddly at all. Actually, you wouldn’t invite any of these Herods to become your “bosom friend,” but especially not “the Great.”

2. **Herod Archelaus (ruled 4 B.C.-A.D. 6)**He was one of Herod the Great’s three sons mentioned in the Bible. He received one-half of his father’s territory, the area surrounding and near Jerusalem (Judea and Samaria). Joseph was unwilling to move Mary and toddler Jesus to Bethlehem after fleeing to Egypt because Bethlehem was in this Herod’s territory and, like his father “the Great,” Herod Archelaus wasn’t known to be very cuddly either. He got replaced by a Roman procurator less than ten years into his reign; that’s why Pontius Pilate is the man in charge at Jesus’ crucifixion rather than one of the “Herods.”

3. **Herod Antipas (ruled 4 B.C.-A.D. 39)**Jesus called him “the Fox” (Luke 13:32). Received a quarter of his father’s territory (Galilee and Perea). Divorced his first wife and married Herodias, the wife of his brother (who was yet a different “Herod”). Killed John the Baptist. Pontius Pilate sent Jesus to see this Herod as part of Jesus’ trial since this Herod was visiting Jerusalem at the time Jesus was sentenced to death. Did you know that Pilate and Herod Antipas became friends that day (Luke 23:12)?

4.     **Herod Philip the Tetrarch (ruled 4 B.C.-A.D. 34)**Got the remaining quarter of his father’s territory (north and east of Galilee—mostly ruled over Syrians and Greeks). Married his niece, Salome, the daughter of Herodias (Herod Antipas’s wife-of-sin).

5.     **Herod Agrippa I (ruled A.D. 37-44 [41-44 in Judea])**Grandson of Herod the Great and nephew of Herodias, Herod Antipas’s wife. Eventually ended up ruling over even more territory than did his grandfather, Herod the Great. In the book of Acts he is known as the one who put Peter in prison (Acts 12:1-5)…although he couldn’t *keep* him there (12:6-19)!  Also…“He did not give God the glory” when referred to as a god by the people of Tyre and Sidon and was thus struck by an angel and “eaten by worms” (Acts 12:20-23). Yes…I know…TMI…but it’s an easy way to remember which “Herod” he is.

6.     **Herod Agrippa II (ruled A.D. 50s until long after the end of the Jewish war; died around A.D. 93)**Like his father Herod Agrippa I and great-grandfather Herod the Great he ruled over a large territory. He’s the one who interviewed Paul along with the Roman procurator Porcius Festus when Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea (in Palestine) after Paul’s third missionary journey (Acts 25-26). Agrippa exclaimed to Paul (literal translation): “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian” (Acts 26:28). Or was his statement ironic? Either way, Paul ended up appealing directly to Caesar and so had no more contact after this with the final powerful “Herod.”

After this last Herod, we don’t hear anything more of the dynasty of Herods (until, of course, they named a luxury department store after them…oops, wrong spelling).

An even briefer summary:

**Herod the Great:**Christmas story

**Herod Archelaus:**Joseph to Nazareth instead of Bethlehem because of him

**Herod Antipas:**Killed John the Baptist

**Herod Philip:**Ruled area north and east of Galilee

**Herod Agrippa I:**Eaten by worms

**Herod Agrippa II:** Trial of Paul in Caesarea

Baby boys are frequently named “Paul.”  I’ve never heard of any couple naming a newborn baby “Herod.”  It’s hard to imagine anyone wanting to reverse this trend.

[[1]](https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2014/how-many-herods-are-there-in-the-bible%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref1) There are even more “Herods” (the dynastic name) in history, but I’m only mentioning the ones who get mentioned in the Bible.