

fit from a quality crash course in Septuagint studies, and this is the best available volume for that purpose. The book should also be considered for biblical introduction or Old Testament courses and for church and academic libraries. The book will also promote more rigorous thinking about the dynamics of Bible translation in general while providing the tools for a more accurate understanding of the transmission of the biblical text and the historic influence of the Greek Old Testament and its proper use today.

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The Herods: Murder, Politics, and the Art of Succession, by Bruce Chilton. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2021. xvii + 346 pp. \$16.10.

Bruce Chilton has served as Professor of Religion at Bard College, a liberal arts school with Episcopalian roots, since 1987. He has had a prolific writing career with over 80 titles to his name including works on targumic literature, ancient Judaism, the historical Jesus, and early Christian theology. When I saw his name as the author of a book on the Herods, I figured his expertise on these historically significant individuals would provide valuable background to the events recorded in the Gospels and Acts. Chilton did not disappoint.

Before evaluating the book, I must inform the reader of Chilton's presuppositions which I inferred not only from the book itself but also from a survey of Chilton's other works. First, Chilton is not an inerrantist, and he has no problem asserting that the biblical record does not always match the historical record (as he reads history). For example, he believes that Herod the Great died at least 5 years before Jesus was born and that John the Baptist was beheaded by Antipas at least a decade before Jesus began his public ministry (255–56). Second, Chilton holds to basic historical-critical assumptions in biblical interpretation such as a seventh century B.C. date for the writing of Deuteronomy (37), inconsistencies "often appear in biblical accounts" (138), John the Baptist was Jesus's mentor (163–64), the temple cleansing was carried out by "several hundred sympathetic" followers of Jesus including Barabbas (168), and the gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John were composed in A.D. 80, 90, and 100 respectively (258). Third, Chilton believes that theologically motivated writings such as the New Testament and 1 and 2 Maccabees are not as historically reliable as writers like Suetonius or Josephus (though he does acknowledge Josephus's propagandist tendencies [248–49]). For example, the dating of John the Baptist's death in the Synoptic chronology is not accurate because its "usage as a catechetical instrument makes it an unreliable historical tool" (313).

Lest the reader be completely dissuaded from reading an author with such proclivities, Chilton holds to two positive presuppositions:

(1) a man named Jesus did actually minister in Galilee and Judaea in the third and fourth decades of the first century, and (2) Jesus and his followers have had a far greater influence in the world than the Herodians ever exerted or could ever have hoped to exert (235).

The Herods includes eight chapters covering the principal individuals of the dynasty in chronological order—Antipater, the founder of the dynasty (chap. 1); Herod the Great, his rise to power and early years as king (chaps. 2 and 3); Mariamne, Herod's Maccabean wife (chap. 4); Archelaus, the ethnarch (chap. 5); Antipas, Herodias, Philip, two of Herod's sons and the wife they shared (chap. 6); Agrippa I, grandson of Herod and last king of the dynasty (chap. 7); and Bereniké and Agrippa II, siblings and co-monarchs of a dwindling territory (chap. 8). The author also provides an introduction and epilogue as well as appendices covering chronology and significant individuals. Furthermore, Chilton provides endnotes (80 pages worth), a short bibliography, and two indexes of historical figures and scholars.

The author clearly states his purposes for writing in the introduction: (1) "to relate a complicated history in a coherent way" (xiii) and (2) to trace "the relationship between the Herodian project and political theologies within Judaism and Christianity" (xiv). Did he succeed? Indeed.

The first purpose is primary, and Chilton accomplishes it with alacrity. First, each chapter begins with a succinct paragraph describing the events therein along with one line of a descriptor for the main character covered in that chapter. For example, Archelaus is "the ethnarch: vain, beleaguered, capricious, brutal" (117); Herod the king is "resourceful, resilient, remorseless, and heroic" (57); and Bereniké is "poised, devoted, and relentless" (206).

Second, Chilton provides well-documented, current, and authoritative support for the events he describes. He clearly has a comprehensive knowledge of ancient historians such as Josephus (whom he cites hundreds of times), Suetonius, Philo, Tacitus, Dio Cassius, Livy, Macrobius, Plutarch, and Strabo. Chilton also aids the reader with numerous references to numismatic material (e.g., 163, 317), which describes the coins minted by each of the Herods; we gain great insight into how the Herods viewed themselves and their political standing with Rome simply by seeing what they inscribed on their money. When I suggest that Chilton's resources are current, this is not meant to discredit older material. In personal correspondence with the author (3/15/22 email to this reviewer) he explained, "the work is intended to be informed rather than exhaustive. In several cases, scholars whose arguments have been superseded in the course of discussion have not been mentioned. That is not at all to deny their influence; the interest rather is in orienting readers in such a way that by investigating works cited, they will be brought immediately to issues of substance, and eventually to earlier and ancillary contributions."

A third way Chilton achieves his main purpose is by including an abundance of historical, cultural, and social background information

from the Second Temple period, particularly its final 200 years. By artfully weaving short descriptions of such people and groups like the Maccabees (5–12), Essenes (12–16), Pharisees (40–42), λεσπτης (brigands like Barabbas and the two thieves crucified with Jesus [45–49]), Sadducees (132, 305–6), and *sicarii* (219) into the Herods' story, Chilton helps the reader get acclimated to the world of Jesus and the apostles. I found quite illuminating his descriptions of the Herods' foreign policy (27), the derivation of the term *Palestine* (34), the origins and makeup of the Sanhedrin (36–40), Herod the Great's building projects (92–108, 301) [note: the palace at Masada, Herodium, and harbor at Caesarea Maritima were amazing examples but the rebuilding of the temple—begun in 20 B.C. and completed in A.D. 66—was his most impressive; the rebuild required 10,000 stone masons and included the mining and placing of stones, the largest of which weighed 570 tons], and the differences between theocratic and secular governments (239).

Chilton achieved his second purpose simply by telling the Herods' story. They were masters at befriending the right politician at the right time while also catering to the religious sensibilities of the diverse Jewish population they ruled. The Herodians used religion more than politics as a means to carry out effective governance in one of the most religiously and politically volatile places in the world of the first century A.D. The epilogue (235–51) summarizes this reality very well.

My understanding was enlightened by a number of explanations provided by Chilton, but here are three in particular: (1) the village of Emmaus was burned to the ground during a Jewish revolt while Archelaus ruled in Judea (it was remembered by Jews as a symbol of broken hope); thirty years later Jesus arrived there in one of his first post-resurrection appearances (Luke 24:13–35) and brought true hope for redemption and freedom found only in him (130–31). (2) As Jesus walked from Jericho to Jerusalem, he was near the city of Archelaïs, which Archelaus built and named after himself; this was the time Jesus told the parable of the nobleman who left, received a kingdom, and returned to deal harshly with his opponents (Luke 19:11–27)—the ironic similarity to Archelaus should not be missed (136–37). (3) Antipas minted coins with a reed and Jesus contrasted John the Baptist's ministry with a shaking reed in Luke 7:24–28; we should notice the comparison between John and Antipas (163–64).

Alongside these helpful observations I also found several points of disagreement: (1) Archelaus carried out the slaughter of the innocents in Bethlehem rather than Herod the Great (138); (2) Jesus was hinting at Galilean revolution when instructing Peter about the temple tax in Matthew 17:24–27 (167); (3) James, brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church, was a Nazirite (188); (4) the Olivet Discourse was written to make sense of the temple destruction in A.D. 70 (227–28); and (5) Jesus's final trip to Jerusalem was motivated by a desire to avoid execution by Antipas (243).

Finally, I have two suggestions and two quotations. First, the suggestions: (1) footnotes are much preferred to endnotes; and (2) a chart

of the Herodian family tree would have been a welcome addition to the appendices. Second, I must share these memorable statements: (1) “Although Caligula has become known as the most pretentious of all Roman emperors [37–41 C.E.], even by comparison, his friend Agrippa never appeared to suffer from modesty, false or not” (179); and (2) “Emperors encouraged client kingship as a utilitarian convenience, but only as long as it was in fact utilitarian” (237).

I enjoy books most which are well-written and which make me think. *The Herods* scores highly on both these counts. I found myself smiling, frowning, questioning, and nodding—all while reading the same page! This book is not for everyone. But for the discerning reader who wants to learn about the Herodian dynasty which ruled the land while Jesus and the apostles lived, one will not find anything better.

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Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John's Gospel, by Andreas J. Köstenberger. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021. xiii + 188 pp. \$27.99.

Research professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Andreas J. Köstenberger has long been established as one of the foremost scholars of Johannine literature and theology. Having written an exegetical commentary on John's gospel (BECNT [Baker, 2004]), a theology of the gospel and letters of John (*A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* [Zondervan, 2009]), as well as numerous other works on the fourth evangelist, Köstenberger has made yet another contribution to the studies of John's gospel. His latest work, *Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John's Gospel*, has a clear aim to “keep a close eye on the big picture—the main plot line and the flow of argument” of the gospel of John (2). Based on a series of lectures given at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Köstenberger provides a compelling journey through John's gospel that he states, “can serve as a companion that...will further illumine John's core message” (3).

True to his stated purpose, Köstenberger—in less than 200 pages—provides an overview of John's gospel consisting of three parts (i.e., Part 1: The Cana Cycle, Part 2: The Festival Cycle, and Part 3: Conclusion to the Book of Signs and the Book of Exaltation). Each of these parts also consists of three chapters which examine anywhere from one to several chapters of the gospel, keeping focus on the high-level narrative plot that John develops throughout.

After examining both internal and external evidence for Johannine authorship, as well as the prologue of 1:1–18, Part 1 explores what Köstenberger calls “The Cana Cycle” (chaps. 2–4 in John's gospel). The Cana Cycle derives its name from the fact that this literary unit of John's gospel starts and ends with signs Jesus performed in Cana of