

## 101 THE RED DRAGON OF REVELATION 12

*“Then another sign appeared in heaven: a huge red dragon with seven heads, ten horns, and seven royal crowns on his heads. His tail drew one third of the stars of the sky, and threw them to the earth. The dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.” Rev 12:3-4*

**Introduction:** The book of Revelation depicts two villainous figures with very similar descriptions: the Red Dragon of Revelation 12 and the Beast of Revelation 13, both with seven heads and ten horns. However, crowns are situated on the heads of the dragon but on the horns of the beast. This contrast indicates that the dragon of Revelation 12 is not the beast of Revelation 13.

In Preterist Paper #93, we made the case that dragon imagery was used for ruthless tyrannical rulers. In the Old Testament, for example, Pharaoh was a dragon as well as Nebuchadnezzar. In this paper, we will seek to show that the red dragon depicts two tyrannical forces inimical to the budding Christian movement: the High Priesthood represented by the dominant High Priestly family of Annas and the similarly prominent first century royal family, the Herod Dynasty.

### A. High Priest Annas had six sons who also served as High Priests.

1. Annas (also Ananus), father to six other High Priests....AD 6-15
2. Eleazar, son of Annas.....AD 16-17
3. Caiaphas, son-in-law of Annas .....AD 18-36
4. Jonathan, son of Annas.....AD 36-37
5. Theophilus, son of Annas.....AD 37-41
6. Matthias, son of Annas.....AD 42-43
7. Annas II, son of Annas.....AD 62

### B. Thesis: The High Priestly family of Annas was the seven heads of the Red Dragon.

**Background:** Jesus told the story of a rich man with six relatives in Luke 16:19-31, the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. This rich man died and was in torment in Hades. He wanted Abraham to warn his five brothers and father to change their ways. The kinsmen in this parable appear to be modeled after the powerful High Priestly Annas family. Caiaphas, the current High Priest when Jesus told the story, was the rich man in the tale. His family dominated the priesthood in the first century with all seven holding the High Priestly office for about half of the first 70 years of the first century. They were Sadducees, the “billionaire class,” in charge of the corrupt and lucrative temple sacrificial operation. This family was representative of the highest office responsible for so much Christian persecution conveyed in the imagery of Revelation 12. Although most of these men are not named in the New Testament, we know from scripture that the High Priests were key in the widespread suffering, imprisonment and killing of Christians. See Acts 9:1-2, Acts 22:4-5, and Acts 26:9-12.

### C. Brief overview of known High Priests of the Ananas family.

#### 1. Annas (Ananus)—High Priest and father to six High Priests.

Annas appears to have been the “boss” of the family. Although no longer the official High Priest, Jesus was taken to Annas first for questioning in preparation for the fraudulent trial that followed. See Jn 18:13. Luke even references Caiaphas’ high priesthood as “the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.” See Lk 3:2.

#### 2. Caiaphas—High Priest and son-in-law of Annas.

After Jesus left the Annas interrogation, he was taken bound to the courtyard of Caiaphas’ palace for questioning. See Jn 18:24. The gospels show Caiaphas as a key planner and driver of the sham trial of Jesus. He was representative of the corrupt religious system, the “ruler of this world,” referenced in John. (See Mt 26:3-4, Mt 26:57, and P. P. #66 “The Ruler of this World is not Satan”)

#### 3. The Annas family was conspicuous in the arrest, imprisonment and threats to Peter and John. See Acts 3-4.

*“The next day the rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, along with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and many others from the high priest’s family. They had Peter and John brought in and began to question them: ‘By what power or what name did you do this?’” Acts 4:5-7*

#### 4. Annas II son of Annas I

Josephus reported that Ananus son of Ananus ordered the death of James, the pious half-brother of Jesus and his companions around AD 62. With this unlawful action, he outraged many people and was expelled from the High Priesthood after serving only 3 months. Josephus, “Antiquities of the Jews” 20.9.1

**Note:** It is unknown if the “most excellent Theophilus” of Luke 1:3 is the fifth High Priest on the list above.

**D. There are ten active members of the Herod Dynasty named in the New Testament.**

1. Herod the Great, patriarch of the Herod Dynasty
2. Herod Archelaus, son of HtG
3. Herod Antipas/Herod the tetrarch/King Herod—son of HtG
4. Philip the Tetrarch—son of HtG
5. Herodias—granddaughter of HtG
6. Salome—great granddaughter of HtG
7. Herod Agrippa 1—grandson of HtG
8. Herod Agrippa 2—great grandson of HtG
9. Bernice—great granddaughter of HtG
10. Drusilla—great granddaughter of HtG

**E. Thesis: The Herod Dynasty was the ten horns of the Red Dragon.**

**Background:** There are eleven members of the Herod dynasty named in the New Testament, however, Herod Philip (not to be confused with Philip the Tetrarch) is mentioned only in passing and was never a ruler nor on the public stage. He was the husband of Herodias who divorced him and married his brother (Mk 6:17-18). Only the remaining ten are verifiable Herod dynasty actors in the New Testament.

**F. Brief Overview of the Herod Dynasty Actors****1. Herod the Great**

Herod had five wives and multiple descendants with much intermarriage between them. Possessed by fear of losing his kingship to the new-born Messiah, Herod ordered the slaughter of the male infants of Bethlehem. See Mt 2.

**2. Archelaus—son of Herod the Great**

Upon returning from Egypt, Joseph took Mary and Jesus to live in Nazareth in Galilee because Archelaus governed Judea. He apparently had the reputation of being cruel and impulsive like his father. See Mt 2:22-23.

**3. Herod Antipas—son of Herod the Great, called “Herod” or “Herod the tetrarch” in the N.T.**

Herod the Tetrarch took his brother’s wife, Herodias, imprisoned John the Baptist and had him ruthlessly killed. See Mt 14, Mk 6 and Luke 3:23.

**4. Philip the tetrarch—son of Herod the Great**

Philip ruled the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis. See Luke 3:1. (Not to be confused with Herod Philip, Mk 6:17-18.)

**5. Herodias—married Herod Antipas, brother to her first husband**

Furious with John the Baptist for condemning her marriage to Antipas, Herodias prompted her daughter to ask Herod for the head of John the Baptist when he offered her whatever she wanted. See Mt 14:1-12.

**6. Salome—daughter of Herodias**

Salome, not named in the text, asked for the head of John the Baptist at the behest of her mother, Herodias, after being promised whatever she wanted in return for her dance performance. See Mt 14:1-12 and Mk 6:14-29.

**7. Herod Agrippa I**

Herod had James, the brother of John, put to death and imprisoned Peter, apparently planning to kill him as well. See Acts 12:1-4. When Peter miraculously escaped prison, Herod had the guards executed. See Acts 12:19. Agrippa’s prideful acceptance of the praise of the people accompanied his death. Acts 12:22

**8. Herod Agrippa II—Great Grandson of Herod the Great, son of Agrippa I.**

Agrippa heard Paul’s legal case and his sharing of the gospel. He was dismissive of the ramifications of the gospel regarding himself, saying, “In a short time you think to make me a Christian?” See Acts 25-26.

**9. Bernice—daughter of Herod Agrippa 1**

After the deaths of two husbands, Bernice reportedly cohabitated with her brother, Agrippa II. See Acts 25:13, 23.

**10. Drusilla—daughter of Herod Agrippa I**

Drusilla left her marriage to the king of Emeza to marry Felix, who became the governor of Judea. See Acts 24:24.

**Concluding thoughts:** The dragon’s residence “in heaven” indicates its exalted status. The temple was the representation of heaven on earth which the High Priests ruled. The Herods lived in palaces and were highly honored with pomp and circumstance (Acts 25:23). The “red” of the dragon resonates with the High Priest vestments as well as perhaps the brilliant colors of the royal court. These two families’ cruel treatment of the followers of Jesus fits the Revelation 12 narrative. We put forth this thesis for your examination.

**Note:** The title of High Priest was life-long. See P.P. #26 for the full list of first century High Priests.

**Note:** Printable Herod dynasty: <https://overviewbible.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Family-Tree.jpg>