

## 52 SEVEN KINGS OF REVELATION

**INTRODUCTION:** In this discussion, we seek to make the case that the seven kings of Revelation 17 were a well-known Jewish zealot family that stretched in time from the days of King Herod to the Roman and Jewish War. *"The seven heads [on the beast... are seven kings. Five have fallen, the one is, and the other has not yet come. When he comes, he must continue a little while."* Rev. 17:9-10

### I. Popular preterist theory: Roman Emperors were the seven kings of Revelation 17.

1. J. Caesar 2. Augustus 3. Tiberius 4. Caligula 5. Claudius 6. Nero 7. Galba 8. Otho 9. Vitellius 10. Vespasian

**II. Jerusalem was situated on seven hills:** Mt. Scopus, Mt. Olivet, Mt Corruption, Mt. Ophel, Mt. Zion, New Mt. Zion, and hill of the Antonia Fortress.

### III. Names of zealot dynasty members and dates of activity/death (also see VIII)

1. **Hezekiah** 47 BC, Led a rebellion against Rome, was killed, and enrolled as a Jewish martyr.
2. **Judas** the Galilean, AD 6, Son of Hezekiah.
3. **Jacob** AD 46-48. Grandson of Hezekiah, son of Judas. Brother to Simon and Jair.
4. **Simon** AD 46-48. Grandson of Hezekiah, son of Judas. Brother to Jacob and Jair.
5. **Jair** (bio. unknown) Brother of Jacob & Simon. Grandson of Hezekiah, Son of Judas. Father of Eleazar.
6. **Eleazar** ben Jair AD 66-73. Great grandson of Hezekiah. Grandson of Judas. Son of Jair.
7. **Menahem** AD 66. Great grandson of Hezekiah, Grandson of Judas. Probably cousin of Jair.

### IV. Josephus called the zealots, the fourth philosophy.

1. Essenes 2. Sadducees 3. Pharisees 4. Zealots

### V. "Zealots" was an umbrella term which included sicarii.

Zealots were ideologically driven in the mission to free themselves from Roman rule and "be ruled only by God," so they claimed. Josephus routinely called them "robbers" seeming to be something of a synonym for "zealots," highlighting their lawlessness. The sicarii/daggersmen/assassins were a subset of the zealots and tended to be loyalists to the Hezekiah family.

### VI. References and likely references to zealots in the New Testament

1. **Lk 6:15** *"Simon the zealot..."*

Simon, disciple of Jesus, was identified as a zealot.

2. **Acts 5:37** *"Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the enrollment, and drew away some people after him. He also perished, and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered abroad."*

This is a reference to Hezekiah's son, Judas of Galilee, the powerful zealot leader around AD 6.

3. **Acts 21:38** *"Aren't you [to Paul] the Egyptian, who before these days stirred up to sedition and led out into the wilderness the four thousand men of the Assassins?"*

Paul was mistakenly identified as a notorious Egyptian zealot leader, who was sicarii.

4. **Mk 15:7** *"A man named Barabbas was imprisoned with rebels who had committed murder during an insurrection."*

This description bears the marks of Barabbas being a zealot.

5. **Mt. 27:44** *"The robbers also who were crucified with him [Jesus] cast on him the same reproach."*

Josephus referred to zealots alternatively as robbers. "Robbers" may have been synonymous with zealots.

6. **Mk 14:48** Jesus answered, *"Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to seize me?"*

Jesus may be saying they were acting under the pretense he was a zealot to justify their actions.

7. **Lk 22:3** *"Satan entered into Judas, who was surnamed Iscariot..."*

The Encyclopedia Britannica states "Iscariot" is likely a corruption of "sicarii."

8. **2 Th. 2:7** *"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only there is one who restrains now, until he is taken out of the way."*

We believe the mystery of lawlessness was the zealot movement and the Roman government was the restrainer. The execution of Hezekiah's two grandsons, Jacob and Simon, by the governor of Judea, would have taken place about three years prior to Paul's writing the Thessalonians. (See Preterist Papers #31, #20)

## **VII. Historians support the key role Hezekiah's family played in the build-up to the war with Rome.**

- 1. Martin Hegel:** "A historical outline of the Jewish freedom movement between the reign of Herod I and 70 AD has to begin at the point where Josephus speaks about the Jewish 'robbers.' Which is the most general term that he uses to include all the groups opposing foreign rule. We come across these 'robbers' quite abruptly in connection with the sending of the young Herod to Galilee as commander-in chief."
- 2. Josephus first spoke of "robbers" regarding Hezekiah:** Herod captured "the robber captain Hezekiah," took him prisoner, and "had him put to death with many of his robbers." Antiquities 14.9.2-3
- 3. Kaufmann Kohler-Jewish Encyclopedia, "Zealots"** The zealots were an "aggressive and fanatical war party from the time of Herod until the fall of Jerusalem [AD 70] and Masada [AD 73]. The members of this party bore also the name Sicarii.... The reign of the Idumean, Herod, gave the impetus for the organization of the zealots as a political party..."
- 4. Menahem Stern:** "Hezekiah and his son were the founders of a dynasty of leaders of an extremist freedom movement, a dynasty which it is possible to trace until the fall of Masada... They, the proponents of the Fourth Philosophy, were the first to raise the standard of revolt... and preached rebellion throughout the length and breath of the Diaspora."
- 5. The Jewish Encyclopedia (1906).** "He [Hezekiah] fought for Jewish freedom and the supremacy of the Jewish law at the time when Herod was governor of Galilee (47 B.C.)... Hezekiah gathered together the remnants of that [assassinated Jewish] king's army in the mountains of Galilee and carried on a successful guerrilla war against the Romans and Syrians, while awaiting the opportunity for a general uprising against Herod.... [Herod] advanced against Hezekiah, took him prisoner, and beheaded him, without the formality of a trial; and he also slew many of his followers. This deed excited the indignation of all the patriots. Hezekiah and his band were enrolled among the martyrs of the nation."

## **VIII. A short summary of zealot dynasty members 47 BC to AD 73**

- 1. Hezekiah:** led a rebellion against Rome, was executed by Herod without a trial and enrolled as a Jewish martyr. For many years, devout Jews continued to petition for redress of crimes against Hezekiah.
- 2. Judas the Galilean:** led a great rebellion against the Roman census/taxation. See Acts 5.
- 3. Jacob:** led rebellion against Roman rule. Was executed by crucifixion by the Roman governor of Judea.
- 4. Simon:** worked with and was executed with Jacob.
- 5. Jair:** zealot activity unknown except he was father of Eleazar
- 6. Eleazar ben Jair:** captured Masada from the Romans in 66. After Menahem killed the high priest in Jerusalem in AD 66, Eleazar helped defend him. However, when Menahem was killed, Eleazar fled to Masada where he was the tyrant leader for the duration of the war.
- 7. Menahem:** raided Masada of war equipment and supplies, bringing them to Jerusalem and presented himself as a warrior king and messianic figure. He killed the anti-war High Priest Ananias and was in turn himself killed after only a month of "glory." All hope was dashed, for a time, upon his demise.

**IX. "The eighth":** Rev 17:11 tells us "the eighth" was a continuation of the seven. We believe this is a reference to non-dynastic Simon bar Giora (including his nephew Eleazar ben Simon), who revived the hopeful, although disastrous, zealot spirit after the demise of Menahem, by defeating the Syrian Roman Legion.

### **NOTES:**

**Reading Josephus:** We recommend starting with "Book" 2, Chapter 10 for an easier read. See P.P. # 26 for helps.

**Recommended reading:** "The Wars of the Jews" by Josephus.

**Highly Recommended:** "An Overview of the Zealot Movement and 12 Key Leaders" by Adam Maarschalk

<https://kloposmasm.files.wordpress.com/2018/01/an-overview-of-the-zealot-movement-and-12-key-leaders-by-adam-maarschalk.pdf>

**Beast/Seven Kings:** See Preterist Papers #42, #28, #36, #37, #38 for other beast/seven kings studies and #39, #40 for Solomon as "666."

**Ten Kings:** See Preterist Paper #21 (written before our present understanding of the beast being zealot-led Israel.)