

# NT Chronology and the Death of Herod the Great



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NEAS 2019, San Diego

This presentation was given at the 2019 meeting of the Near East Archaeological Society in San Diego, CA, on Friday, November 22, 2019. Its purpose was to compare the consensus or majority chronology for the reign of Herod the Great with the chronology developed by W. E. Filmer, "Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great," *Journal of Theological Studies* ns 17 (1966): 283-98.

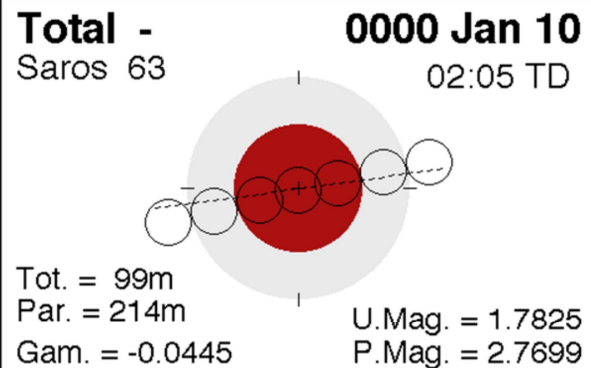
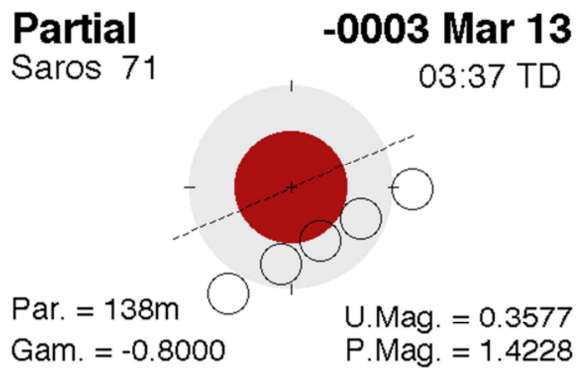
The consensus chronology is built on an implicit acceptance of the correctness of two Roman consular years given by Josephus for events in the life of Herod, the first for his appointment as king by the Romans and the second for the year in which Herod and Sossius besieged Antigonus in Jerusalem.

It will be shown that accepting these two consular dates has produced conflict with: 1) The history of the time as found in Roman authors; 2) The method of counting years elsewhere in Josephus; and 3) The post-exilic Sabbatical year calendar that is firmly established by archaeological, inscriptional, and numismatic evidence. The Filmer/Steinmann chronology that puts Herod's investiture by the Romans and his capture of Jerusalem in 39 BC and 36 BC, respectively, and Herod's death in early 1 BC, will be shown to be compatible with everything except Josephus's erroneous consular dates.

## Josephus said there was a lunar eclipse shortly before Herod's death

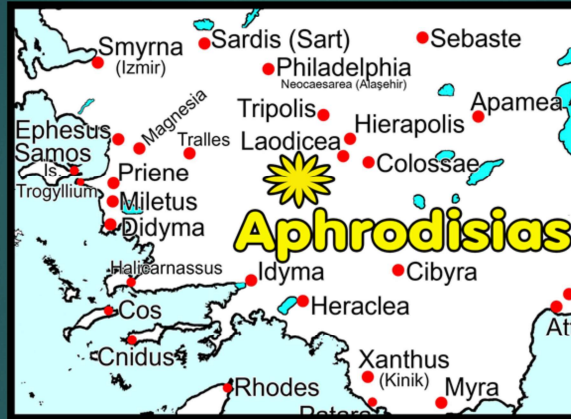
Partial lunar eclipse of March 13/14, 4 BC, shortly before Herod's death in Nisan 4 BC, as dated by Schürer

Total lunar eclipse of Jan. 9/10, 1 BC, shortly before Herod's death in early 1 BC, as dated by Filmer



Three major events in Herod's life are his investiture as *de jure* king by the Romans, his capture of Jerusalem 3 years later, and his death. Josephus says a lunar eclipse was observed a few weeks before Herod's death. The slide shows the two candidates for the eclipse. The NASA diagram of the eclipse on the left is advocated by those who hold that Herod died in 4 BC. In this partial eclipse, one edge of the moon went through the full umbra of the earth. Advocates of the minority view say that the eclipse was the full lunar eclipse of January 10, 1 BC.

Decree from Roman Senate inscribed at Aphrodisias, Asia Minor. Date is important: October 2, 39 BC.



Source: Joyce Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome* (1992).

Map courtesy of Steven Rudd, [www.Bible.ca](http://www.Bible.ca)

**This shows that Roman Senate was in session, with both Antony and Octavius present, at a time consistent with Herod's appointment by Romans, 39t BC (a Tishri-based year) in the minority view.**

The inscription from Aphrodisias shows that Roman Senate was in session, with Antony and Octavius present, at time consistent with Filmer's chronology for Herod becoming king, which was in 39t (the Jewish year that began on Tishri 1, 39 BC). The Senate approved Antony's initiative to bestow the kingdom of Judea on Herod. This would have to be after Sept. 20, 39 BC (= 1 Tishri) in order to be in 39t, and the Aphrodisias inscription shows that the Senate was indeed in session after Tishri 1 of 39 BC. It is interesting also that in the Aphrodisias inscription Antony is mentioned first, then Octavian, then the Senate, showing that Antony, who was 44 years of age at this time, was a more dominant figure in late 39 BC than Octavian, who had just turned 24.

Filmer, who wrote in 1966, was not aware of the archaeological find from Aphrodisias, published in 1992, that supported his date for Herod receiving his kingship at sometime not long after Tishri 1 of 39 BC.

The consensus view has Herod appointed as king by the Senate a year earlier, in the fall of 40 BC. The next slides will show that this date contradicts major events in the history of the time.

## Ventidius

☞ Ventidius was the Roman general chosen by Mark Antony and the Roman Senate to fight the Parthians. Before the campaign could begin, Antony and Octavian needed to put an end to their own conflict. This was accomplished by the Treaty of Brundisium, September 40 BC.

☞ After this reconciliation, Antony and Octavian still had to deal with Sextus Pompeius, who was causing famine in Italy because of his pirate operations out of Sicily. A (temporary) peace with Pompeius was accomplished at Misenum about eleven months after the Treaty of Brundisium.

☞ Plutarch wrote (*Life of Antony* 33): “After the treaty [of Misenum] was completed, Anthony despatched Ventidius into Asia, to check the advance of the Parthians.” Dio Cassius (48:36-39) agrees with Plutarch: Ventidius did not leave Rome until after the Treaty of Misenum.

Roman authors agree: the war against the Parthians did not commence until after the Treaty of Misenum. It also makes sense that Antony, Octavius, and the Senate would not start a campaign against the Parthians until a peace was negotiated between Antony and Octavius. This was accomplished at Brundisium. It also makes sense that another problem needed to be taken care of before a war against the Parthians could begin. The problem with Sextus Pompeius was resolved, temporarily, at Misenum.

### **Ventidius and Herod**

☞ According to Joyce Reynolds (*Aphrodisias and Rome*, p. 71), inscriptions at Aphrodisias are compatible with dating the Treaty of Misenum to the second half of August, 39 BC. After this, **Ventidius** departed for Syria, probably arriving there in the early fall of 39.

☞ Josephus (*War* 1.290, *Ant.* 14.394) says that when Herod arrived at Ptolemais after his 7 days in Rome, **Ventidius** was already there and the Parthians were gone. Therefore Herod could not have been appointed king by the Roman Senate any earlier than the fall of 39 BC.

☞ Appian (V:75) makes this explicit. He writes, “After these events [at Misenum]. . . Antony . . . set up kings here and there, as he pleased . . . in Idumea and Samaria, Herod . . .”

Josephus agrees with the Roman authors: Herod did not arrive at Ptolemais until after the Treaty of Misenum was signed, *after which* Ventidius departed for Syria, *after which* Herod arrived there. Herod was in a hurry to start the campaign against the Parthians and their surrogates in Judea because his mother, his fiancée Mariamne, and other relatives were under siege in Masada by the forces of Antigonus. He therefore stayed only seven days in Rome (*Ant.* 14.14.5) before departing for Ptolemais, where Antony and the Roman Senate expected him to initiate the raising of a Judean army to assist Ventidius.

## Consequence

☯ There is therefore a remarkable concurrence of evidence from Josephus, Plutarch, Dio Cassius, and Appian that shows that Herod was made king by the Romans no earlier than the fall of 39 BC. However, Josephus's wrong consular dates would have Herod leaving Rome at least 8 months before the Treaty of Misenum, when Syria was still under enemy control. Schürer's chronology is built on Josephus's wrong consular dates, thereby contradicting the evidence from the Roman authors and also from Josephus himself.

The Jewish way of dating events was by the year of the reigning king, not by Roman consular years. In his first book, the *War*, Josephus gave the years of Herod's reign but did not associate them with Roman consular years. When he wrote *Antiquities*, he added the consular years, but apparently made a mistake of one year for one of the events, and then, since his regnal data indicated three years between Herod's investiture and his siege of Jerusalem, he calculated a second consular year. There should have been some suspicion that he might have made a mistake in this, because all agree that his Olympiad year for Herod's investiture is at least one year too early.

This means that the first of the three benchmarks in the life of Herod, namely his investiture by the Romans, the evidence is solidly in favor of the minority view that it occurred in late 39 BC.

## Dio Cassius on the year 37 BC

☞ The consensus chronology puts the siege and capture of Jerusalem by Herod and the Roman general Sosius in 37 BC. This is contradicted by Dio Cassius. After describing events that he dates to the consular year corresponding to 38 BC, Dio writes (*History* 49:23),

During the following year [37 BC] the Romans accomplished nothing of note in Syria . . . Sosius, because anything he did would be advancing Antony's interests rather than his own . . . spent the time in devising means, not for some success and incurring Antony's envy, but for pleasing him without engaging in any activity."

Note: "Syria" included Judea. See Roman authors and also Luke 2:2.

Note: "without engaging in any activity" is incompatible with the 5-month siege of the capital of the Jews, and its capture—a major victory for Roman forces.

*Once we realize that the consular dates that Josephus gave for Herod's investiture by the Romans and subsequent capture of Jerusalem are one year too early, several things fall into place, including the Sabbatical year calendar.*

So whose consular years do we accept: Josephus's or those of the Roman historians Dio, Appian, and Plutarch? Consider also that Josephus's consular dates conflict with his chronology elsewhere, as shown on the previous slide.

There is no conflict, however, of these ancient records with the minority view that holds that Herod's appointment as king by the Romans took place in the fall of 39 BC, i.e. in 39t BC by our notation.

It was just shown that the first of the three benchmarks in the life of Herod, namely his investiture by the Romans, the evidence is solidly in favor of the minority view that it occurred in late 39 BC. Dio Cassius shows that the second benchmark, his siege of Jerusalem, also contradicts the consensus view that places this in 37 BC. Following is more evidence that this date is one year too early.

## Zuckermann, 1857

Benedict Zuckermann, "Ueber Sabbatjahrcyclus und Jobelperiode," *Jarhesbericht des juedischtheologischen Seminars "Fraenckelscher Stiftung"* (Breslau, 1857). English translation by A. Löwy, *Treatise on the Sabbatical Cycle and the Jubilee*, Sepher-Hermon Press, New York, 1974.

In 1857, Benedict Zuckermann produced his landmark study on Sabbatical and Jubilee years. For the period of the Second Temple, he looked for a sure date for one Sabbatical year. He thought he had found this in Josephus's mention (*Ant.* 14.16.2, 15.1.2) that a Sabbatical year was in progress when Herod and Sosius besieged Antigonus in Jerusalem (*Treatise*, p. 46). Josephus's consular year for this event placed it in the summer of 37 BC, implying that a Sabbatical year would have started in Tishri of 38 BC (38t). When Zuckermann desired to check how this worked out, he immediately—on the next page of his text—ran into problems, as shown on the next slide.

Josephus *Ant.* 13.234, on Sabbatical year starting in late summer 135 BC (dated in 1 Macc 16:14): “The siege dragging on (ἐλκομένης, present middle participle of ἔλκω), there came around (ἐνίσταται) the Sabbatical year.

Zuckermann did not like this. He wrote, “However, whether it be that here JOSEPHUS is chargeable with carelessness in style, and with making use of an illogical construction, or that he, by mistake, placed the beginning of a Sabbatical year in the spring . . . so much is sure, that Josephus designates as Sabbatical the year when SIMON was murdered and HYRCAN besieged the murderer of his father . . .” (*Treatise*, p. 47)

When Zuckermann found that his Sabbatical calendar, derived from Josephus’s consular years for Herod, did not match those of Josephus and 1 Maccabees for the Hasmonean period, he offered these explanations:

1. Josephus was not proficient in Greek (“carelessness in style”)
2. Josephus’s sentence was illogical (i.e. it disagreed with Zuckermann)
3. Josephus thought Sabbatical years began in the spring

After deriving his starting point based on Josephus’s consular year, Zuckermann decided to check it against two Sabbatical years in the Hasmonean period, as derived from Josephus and 1 Maccabees. He immediately ran into a conflict: both Hasmonean Sabbatical years appeared to be one year later than his newly-constructed calendar would allow. Here are quotes from how he handled (or mishandled) the conflict with his calendar.

In a footnote on p. 46, Zuckermann says that the sentence in Josephus stating that a Sabbatical year commenced when Hyrcanus was besieging Ptolemy “has proved a difficulty to learned inquirers, because it seems to express that the Sabbatical year only commenced after the siege had lasted some length of time . . .” Zuckermann tries various ways to get around this. He settles on a translation of the relevant sentence in Josephus as follows “The siege lingered on for some time, and the year had already arrived in which the Jews had Sabbatical rest . . .”.

This cannot be supported by the original Greek of Josephus. The first verb in this sentence, ἐλκομένης, is a participle and is therefore closely connected with the main verb ἐνίσταται, “there came around”. Preserving the participial connection between the participle and the main verb, a somewhat wooden translation into English would be “The siege dragging on, there came around” the Sabbatical year.

Josephus’s consular years for Herod have produced conflict with other ancient sources dealing with the history of this time, conflicts that those who advocate the consensus chronology have not been able to resolve. This includes Zuckermann and Schürer. Schürer thought he had another confirmation of his chronology in Zuckermann’s Sabbatical-year calendar, but that was built on the same mistake: wrong consular years for Herod in Josephus. Accepting these consular years has made the consensus view incoherent.

Those who adhere to the consensus view need to consider why the Filmer/Steinmann approach has harmony with the data that have been presented, and then explain how that harmony came about if the Filmer/Steinmann chronology is wrong. That chronology dates Herod's death to 1 BC, consistent with the 11 early Christian writers cited by Finegan (*Handbook*, p. 291) who date Christ's birth to late 3 or early 2 BC. This, in turn, supports the date of the Crucifixion on April 3 and the Resurrection on April 5 of AD 33.

Notice also that Zuckermann's conclusion ("so much is sure, that Josephus designates as Sabbatical the year when Simon was murdered . . .") is completely illogical and in contradiction to Josephus's sentence: Zuckermann says that Josephus places Simon's murder in a Sabbatical year, when what Josephus said quite plainly, especially in the original Greek, was that Simon was murdered, and after this his son John Hyrcanus besieged the murderer Ptolemy, and after that, while the siege was dragging on, a Sabbatical year began. Yet Zuckermann's illogic, and its resultant calendar for Sabbatical years that is one year too early, is accepted by all those who follow the consensus chronology of Herod.

*A great earthquake, called “The Sabbatical year earthquake,” was experienced in Palestine in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. That the Sabbatical year was AD 748/49 is attested by inscriptional, archaeological, and numismatic evidence.*

Inscriptional:	A text found in the Cairo Geniza dates the earthquake to 23 Shevat (18 January), 679 years after burning of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Temple: AD 69† + 679 = 748† = <b>January 18, AD 749.</b>
Archaeological and numismatic:	31 gold denarii were found in a building destroyed by the earthquake, the latest minted in A.H. 131. A.H. 131 began on <b>August 31, AD 748.</b>

Reference: Y. Tsafir & G. Foerster, “The Dating of the ‘Earthquake of the Sabbatical Year’ of 749 C.E. in Palestine,” *BSOAS* 55 (1992) 231-5.

**This Sabbatical year, AD 748†, is in agreement with the Sabbatical calendar of Wacholder that puts Herod’s siege of Jerusalem in 36 BC = Sabbatical year 37† (Filmer & Steinmann).**

Neat: this has attestation from three different disciplines! The year was AD 748†;  $748 + 37 - 1$  (no year zero) = 784 years, 112 cycles, after Sabbatical year 37† BC. This is in agreement with Wacholder’s calendar of Sabbatical years and the minority (Filmer/Steinmann) view that places the Herod and Sossius’s siege of Jerusalem in the summer of 36 BC. The consensus year of the siege and capture of Jerusalem is 37 BC, a year in which Dio Cassius said that the Romans “accomplished nothing worthy of note in Syria,” and “Sossius, because anything he did would be advancing Antony’s interests rather than his own . . . spent the time in devising means, not for achieving some success and incurring his [Antony’s] envy, but for pleasing him without engaging in any activity” (*History*, 49:23). For Roman writers, “Syria” included Judea—see also Luke 2:2.

*Other Sabbatical years that agree with Wacholder's calendar and with summer of 36 BC for the Sabbatical year that was going on when Herod and Sossius besieged Jerusalem*

Event	Sources	Tishri-based yr	Years/cycles before/after 37t
Siege of Beth Zur	1 Macc 6:20, 33, 49	163t	126 yrs, 18 cycles
Siege of Ptolemy in Dagon	1 Macc 16; <i>Ant.</i> 13.234	135t	98 yrs, 14 cycles
2 <sup>nd</sup> Temple was destroyed in "latter part" (מוצאי) of a Sabbatical year	<i>Seder 'Olam</i> 30	AD 69t	105 yrs, 15 cycles
A legal contract looked forward to Sabbatical 6 years from Shevat, year 2 of Bar-Koseba rebellion (Jan/Feb AD 134 = 133t)	Wacholder, "Calendar," p. 27	AD 139t	175 yrs, 25 cycles
"Sabbatical year earthquake"	Tsafir & Foerster	AD 748t	784 yrs, 112 cyc.

**None of these Sabbatical years allows a Sabbatical year to be in progress in the summer of 37 BC, which is the date of Herod's and Sossius's siege of Jerusalem according to the consensus view.**

Here are some other Sabbatical years that show that Zuckermann's Sabbatical-year calendar was one year too early, based as it was on Josephus's wrong consular year for Herod's siege of Jerusalem. I have chosen those that are most firm in their dating. Wacholder, whose name is associated with the revised calendar, sometimes used evidence that was ambiguous, or that he did not treat in a satisfactory manner. So, although Wacholder's calendar is correct, I don't accept everything he wrote. In particular, his treatment of the *Seder 'Olam* passages is unsatisfactory. He did not realize that three separate chapters of the *Seder 'Olam* show that Jerusalem fell to the Romans in the latter part of a Sabbatical year (summer of AD 70), strongly supporting his calendar versus that of Zuckermann.

A contract found at Wadi Murabba'at is dated according to the years of the Bar-Koseba rebellion. It looked forward to a Sabbatical year beginning in the fall of AD 139, which is AD 139t – 69t = 70 years, or 10 Sabbatical cycles, after the Sabbatical year in which Jerusalem was taken by Titus, AD 69t. Those who support the consensus view say that this means we have to start the Bar-Koseba rebellion in 131n, instead of the 132n that is well attested by independent sources including numismatics.

All these dates of post-exilic Sabbatical years are consistent with Herod's siege in 36 BC (Filmer and Steinmann).

### Conflict of the consensus Sabbatical-year calendar with the Petronius narrative

In a long passage (*Ant.* 18.261-309), Josephus relates the trouble that arose when Gaius Caesar (Caligula) ordered a statue of himself to be set up in the Jerusalem Temple. In the fall of AD 40, he sent the governor Petronius to Phoenicia to build the statue. But “many tens of thousands of Jews” protested, saying they were willing to die rather than see their temple desecrated. Their protests lasted “...for forty days. Furthermore, they **neglected their fields**, and that, too, though it was **time to sow the seed**.” Petronius, at the risk of his life, told the Jews that he would inform the emperor of their concerns, and that they should “Go, therefore, each to your own occupation, and **labor on the land**” and “**tend to agricultural matters**” while he sent an appeal to the emperor. Caligula, on receiving Petronius’s letter, sent a letter demanding his death. However, this letter reached Petronius after he received news of the murder of Caligula on January 24, AD 41.

These Jewish patriots who were willing to die rather than see their Temple desecrated would not have been tilling their land in a Sabbatical year. However, AD 40/41 would be a Sabbatical year if Herod’s siege of Jerusalem was in 37 BC, the (incorrect) consensus date.

The episode of Caligula’s statue is the subject of an even longer treatment than that of Josephus in the the *Legatio ad Gaium* (Embassy to Gaius (= Caligula)) of Philo of Alexandria. The *Legatio* exceeds 33,000 words in the text that has survived. Philo led the delegation that went to Rome to protest to Caligula about the treatment the Jews were suffering in Alexandria, and when he arrived at Rome in the fall of AD 40 he learned of Caligula’s plan to put the statue in the Holy of Holies.

The chronology of these events conflicts with the Sabbatical-year calendar of Zuckermann. Of interest here are the repeated references to agricultural activities—activities that pious Jews—who were willing to die rather than see their Temple desecrated—would not have engaged in in a Sabbatical year. Yet in the consensus chronology, AD 40t has to be a Sabbatical year if 37t BC, their year for Herod’s siege of Jerusalem, was a Sabbatical year.

Advocates of the consensus chronology for Herod have not dealt well with the Caligula statue episode. In Schürer’s first edition, he recognized the problem and said, “The year A.D. 40-41 could not have been a Sabbath year.” In the second edition, he devoted a paragraph to the issue but concluded that the evidence from Josephus’s consular years, in conjunction with Zuckermann’s Sabbatical-year calendar (which he apparently did not realize was based on those consular years), outweighed the testimony of Josephus and

Philo. This despite the fact that Philo was a direct witness of, and participant in, the events involved.

How about later writers? In the third edition of Schürer, that of Vermes and Millar, ten pages are devoted to issues related to Caligula's statue, but there is no mention of the problem that its chronology presents to the consensus chronology for Herod. It was glossed over.

Jonathan Goldstein, another advocate of the consensus chronology for Herod, wrote in his commentary *I Maccabees*, p. 316:

"Wacholder (p. 168) asserts that the year from Tishri, 40 C.E., to Tishri, 41 C.E., could not have been a sabbatical year because Josephus in his account of the momentous events of the reign of the Roman emperor Caligula attests that pious Jews of Judaea sowed their fields in that year (*BJ* ii 10.5.200; *AJ* xviii 7.3–4.271–74). But Philo (*Legatio ad Gaium* 33–34.249–57) puts the same events, not at the time of the autumn sowing, but at the time of the spring harvest. **Hard as it may be to explain how Josephus could have been mistaken, it is harder still to explain how Philo could have been in error . . . The problem is still unsolved** (the suggestions of Vermes and Millar in Schürer, *History of the* [p. 317] *Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* . . . are unsatisfactory too; Philo and Josephus cannot both be correct). But one certainly cannot take Josephus' chronology of the events of Caligula's reign as a sure basis for a theory of the dates of the sabbatical year."

Comment: we don't need to "take Josephus' chronology" for the events of Caligula's reign; his chronology is fully established by Roman authors, as well as by Josephus and by Philo of Alexandria. Goldstein cannot explain the contradiction between the Caligula statue incident and the chronology of Sabbatical years accepted by those who follow the consensus dating of Herod's reign. All sources agree that the events related to Caligula's statue are dated from the fall of AD 40 to the spring of AD 41. This is another example of the strange measures that are resorted to by those who put implicit faith in Josephus's consular years—compare it with Zuckermann's twisting what Josephus wrote about the Sabbatical year in 1 Maccabees 16.

The solution is that their dating of Herod's siege of Jerusalem is one year too early: the siege was in the summer of 36 BC, with the Sabbatical year beginning in the preceding fall (Tishri of 37 BC), in accordance with Wacholder's Sabbatical-year calendar. Goldstein's statement, "The problem is still unsolved" should be expanded to say "The problem is still unsolved by those who adhere to Schürer's chronology for Herod, but it has been solved by those who follow the lead given by Filmer and Wacholder, who put the siege in 36 BC.

The failure of consensus scholarship to deal with the Caligula statue episode is discussed at more length in an article by Andrew Steinmann and myself that is scheduled to appear in the December 2019 issue of *JETS*.

## Josephus dated events in the life of Herod according to a Tishri-based calendar

In *Antiquities* 1.81/1.3.3, Josephus says that the calendar for festivals and matters related to divine worship began in Nisan. He continues:

ἐπὶ μέντοι γε πράσεις καὶ ὠνάς καὶ τὴν ἄλλην **διοίκησιν** τὸν πρῶτον κόσμον διεφύλαξε

“concerning, however, buying (πράσεις) and selling (ὠνάς) and the other administration (**διοίκησιν**) he [Moses] preserved the earlier arrangement.”

BAGD: **διοίησις** is defined as “administration, management.”

LSJ: “control, government, administration, treasury department.” In both BAGD and LSJ there is no meaning of “ordinary affairs” as rendered by Whiston, and later, Thackeray. By using the word **διοίησις**, Josephus informed us that the calendar he would be using in affairs of government (administration) was a Tishri-based calendar.

One of the assumptions made by Schürer in order to get his chronology to work is that Josephus, and Herod himself, measured Herod’s years of reign according to a calendar that began the regnal year on Nisan 1. The minority view assumes a Tishri-based year, as used in Judah throughout the kingdom period. It is often overlooked in this discussion that Josephus makes it quite clear, in his original Greek, that he would be using Tishri-based years in discussing governmental matters such as the reigns of Herod and his successors.

Thackeray unfortunately followed, or perhaps just copied, Whiston’s translation, although no such meaning is given in the lexicons.

Consensus presuppositions for dating Herod: Nisan years, inclusive (non-accession) counting of years, acceptance of Josephus’s consular dates, and Zuckermann’s calendar of Sabbatical years. If any one of these presuppositions is wrong it would break the consensus chronology. They are all wrong.

Calculation of Herod's death according to the consensus formulae  
(Nisan-based years, inclusive counting for elapsed times)

37 years after (ἀπό) being installed by Romans in 40n:  $40n - 36 \text{ (inc.)} = 4n$   
 34 years after (ἀπό) besieging Jerusalem in 37n:  $37n - 33 \text{ (inc.)} = 4n$

Herod's last year by both calculations began on Nisan 1, 4 BC. Archelaus was on the throne on Nisan 14, when Passover began. During those 14 days, the following events had to happen if the Nisan reckoning and dates for Herod of the consensus view are to be accepted.

Event	Min. # days
Word of Herod's death was sent from Jericho to Jerusalem in order to gather the vast amount of wealth and funeral trappings to be used in the funeral procession. After the wealth was accumulated, it was sent to Jericho.	3
Cortège, with much pomp and military display, proceeded to Herodium, ~20 to 25 miles, and body was buried. (Kushnir-Stein: "no less than three days")	3
Seven day period of mourning follows after burial day.	7
After mourning period ended, Archelaus feasted the multitude and was well received.	1
Agitators worked among the people and changed their mood to hostility.	1
Archelaus sent his general to the crowd. He was stoned. He subsequently sent "many men."	1
The Passover began.	0

The present slide shows a difficulty when it is assumed that Herod's reign is reckoned by Josephus in terms of Nisan years. There is not enough time for these events—16 days at the very minimum—even if Herod obligingly died at the earliest possible time in this 13-day interval.

There is no reason to doubt the essential factuality of Josephus's account of Herod's death and funeral, as described both in *War* and *Antiquities*. His source was probably Nicolaus of Damascus, Herod's friend and biographer. The account is also consistent with the magnificence that would be expected for this event.

In the extensive charts that Schürer uses to display the chronology of Herod, dates are given in terms of AUC and BC years, thus obscuring the difficulty of the narrow timeframe for Herod's death. In a long footnote beginning on p. 1.464 of Schürer's *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* and continuing on to page 465 he devotes one sentence to the problem. After citing the Mishnah and the Talmud that say that New Year for kings was on 1 Nisan, he writes "If this be so, the thirty-fourth year of Herod would begin on the 1st Nisan of the year B.C. 4, and Herod must in that case have died between 1st and 14th Nisan, since his death occurred before the Passover." He does not try to explain how all these events could fit into 13 days, even assuming that Herod conveniently died on 1 Nisan. Perhaps he avoided an explanation because he knew that any explanation

he gave would not have given the reader a favorable impression of his credibility. This is unmistakably “glossing over.”

Reference in row 2 is to Alla Kushnir-Stein, “Another Look at Josephus’ Evidence for the Date of Herod’s Death,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 14 (1995), p. 76. Alla Kushnir-Stein says that the working assumptions of consensus view “leaves less than two weeks for all the events described by Josephus between the king’s death and Passover, which is plainly impossible.”

There is no problem like this in the minority view that has Herod’s final year beginning on Tishri 1 (Oct. 1) of 2 BC, with his death sometime between the lunar eclipse of January 9/10 and the Passover that started three months later, on April 8 of 1 BC.

### Summary up to this point:

- 1) Appian, Dio, Plutarch, and Josephus provide material related to the activities of Ventidius that shows that the consensus date for Herod's investiture by the Romans, 40 BC, is one year too early.
- 2) The correct Sabbatical year calendar, that of Wacholder, as well as Dio's statement about Roman inactivity in 37 BC, show that the consensus date of 37 BC for Herod and Sosius's siege of Jerusalem is one year too early.
- 3) Since Herod ruled 37 years from his investiture and 34 years from the death of Antigonus, conclusions 1) and 2) mean that Herod had to die later than 4 BC.
- 4) The next 4 slides will show that Josephus consistently used non-inclusive (accession) years in dealing with Herod, with the consequence that Herod did not die in 4 BC (consensus), but in early 1 BC (Filmer) = 2<sup>nd</sup> BC by Tishri years.

## Six events for which the inclusive reckoning of the Schürer consensus gives an inconsistent date

Event	Consensus formula	OK?
(§1) 6 Hasmonean rulers from Simon through Aristobolus; total of reigns agrees with 79 yrs between Simon becoming high priest in 142n and Pompey capturing Jerusalem in 63n.	If Inclusive counting is assumed, one year must be subtracted for each of the 6 rulers, giving 73 yrs	No
(§2) 45 years from Herod's appointment as στρατηγός in late 47 or early 46 BC, age 25, until his death at age about 70.	$47n + 25 - 70 = 2n$	No
(§3) Herod began siege of Jerusalem in third year (τρίτον ἔτος) of his appointment by Romans.	$40n - 2$ (act) = 38n. Not possible; siege began after Nisan 1, 37 BC in the Schürer chronology and after Nisan 1 36 in minority chronology.	No
(§4) In Herod's 18th year from appointment as king by Romans, Augustus Caesar comes into Syria (20 BC). Work starts on Temple.	$40n - 17$ (act) = 23n	No
(§5) Work begins on Temple in Herod's 15th year, also called his 18th year (see §4).	$37n - 14$ (act) = 23n $40n - 17$ (act) = 23n	No
(§6) Jerusalem fell to Herod 27 years, to the day, after it fell to Pompey in 63 BC. Non-inclusive counting is required.	$63n - 27 = 36n$ (conflicts with 37n, consensus date)	No

It might seem that all that is needed, then, is to move the consensus calendar down one year. This would put the date of Herod's death in 3 BC rather than the 4 BC of the consensus. Or it could be as late as 2 BC if we assume Tishri years with Herod's last year starting in Tishri of 3 BC. However, one more step is necessary. Schürer assumed that the year to which Herod's sons antedated their reigns, 4 or 5 BC, was the year of Herod's death. In order to match this with 37 years from Herod's investiture and 34 years from the death of Antigonus, he had to assume that Josephus really meant 36 years and 33 years, i.e. that Josephus used inclusive numbering for the years of Herod. Andrew Steinmann and I have written a paper that examines all the times when Josephus dated things as related to the reign of Herod. The paper will appear next year in *Bibliotheca Sacra*. This slide and the next three summarize what we found. We have tried to be complete, looking at all relevant passages, with no special pleading.

"on the very same day, the Day of the Fast." The Greek word is νηστείας, the same word used in Acts 27: 9 to refer to the Day of Atonement.

This and the following three slides are abstracted from Tables 1 and 2 of the paper by Andrew E. Steinmann and Rodger C. Young, "Elapsed Times for Herod the Great in Josephus," to be published in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, June-Sept. 2020 issue.

## Seven more events for which the inclusive reckoning of the Schürer consensus gives only one correct calculation

(That does not mean its associated date for Herod, 37n, is correct)

Event	Consensus formula	OK?
(§7) Hasmonean government ended “after μετὰ 126 yrs.” μετὰ requires non-inclusive reckoning.	$162n - 126 = 36n$	No
(§8) Aristobolus was HP for “one year only”	2 yrs by inclusive reckoning	No
(§9) Battle of Actium, Sept. 2, 31 BC, was in Herod’s 7th year	$37n - 6 \text{ (act)} = 31n$	Yes
(§10) Herod on his deathbed: Hasmoneans ruled 125 years, to deposing of Antigonus	$162n - 125 = 37n$ (Hasmoneans used Seleucid Nisan reckoning)	No
(§11) Herod reigned 34 yrs after (ἀπὸ) Antigonus was slain, but 37 yrs after (ἀπὸ) declared king by Romans (Nisan 1-13 of 4 BC gives insufficient time for events associated with Herod’s death)	$37n - 33 \text{ (act)} = 4n$ $40n - 36 \text{ (act)} = 4n$	No
(§12) Hyrcanus II, appointed high priest by Pompey in 63 BC, ruled 24 yrs, followed by Antigonus, 3 yrs 3 months. Total is 27 yrs 3 months, agreeing with 27 yrs from Pompey’s capture of Jerusalem to Herod’s.	Inclusive reckoning would mean 23 actual yrs and 2 actual yrs, 3 mo: total 25 yrs 3 mo, contradicting 27 exact yrs	No
(§13) 28 high priests & 107 years from Antigonus to fall of Jerusalem in AD 70	$40n \text{ (BC)} + \text{AD } 70n - 1 \text{ (no yr 0)} = 109 \text{ years}$	No

Item 10) contradicts 7). We would not expect 10) to be exact; the 126 years of 7) must be the correct time.

One curiosity here is that the consensus view for (9) gives the correct year for the Battle of Actium, although to do so it must take Herod’s starting year as the year in which he conquered Jerusalem, rather than the year in which he was appointed as king by the Romans that is the more common starting place in Josephus. The compound errors of the consensus view (wrong starting year, wrong use of a Nisan calendar, and wrong use of inclusive numbering) cancel each other out to give the correct time for the battle. The fact that the consensus formula seems to work cannot be used to disprove the minority view, however, because the minority view also gives the correct date for the Battle of Actium, and it starts from a more probable starting date. Josephus did not switch from his consistent method of counting for Herod (accession years in a Tishri-based calendar) to use the faulty consensus method in order to get this date; his consistent method elsewhere is also consistent here, and it is only by a coincidence of three errors canceling each other out that the consensus system appears to work for this date.

This and the preceding slide show that the consensus chronology for Herod has multiple internal contradictions to its basic assumptions that were thought necessary in order to accommodate its date of 4 BC for the death of Herod. The consensus chronology for Herod

is absolutely incoherent. It also contradicts well-established evidence from Roman and Judean history.

Six events for which the non-inclusive reckoning,  
following Filmer, gives consistent (and correct) dates

Event	Non-inclusive formula	OK?
(§1) 6 Hasmonean rulers from Simon through Aristobolus; total of reigns agrees with 79 yrs between Simon becoming high priest in 142n and Pompey capturing Jerusalem in 63n.	Non-inclusive counting shows the numbers agree.	Yes
(§2) 45 years from Herod's appointment as στρατηγός in late 47 or early 46 BC, age 25, until his death at age about 70.	$47t + 25 - 70 = 2t$	Yes
(§3) Herod began siege of Jerusalem in third year (τρίτον ἔτος) of his appointment by Romans.	$39t - 2 \text{ (act)} = 37t$	Yes
(§4) In Herod's 18th year from appointment as king by Romans, Augustus Caesar comes into Syria (20 BC). Work starts on Temple.	$39t - 18 = 21t$	Yes
(§5) Work begins on Temple in Herod's 15th year, also called his 18th year (see §4).	$36t - 15 = 21t$ $39t - 18 = 21t$	Yes
(§6) Jerusalem fell to Herod 27 years, to the day, after it fell to Pompey in 63 BC. Non-inclusive counting is required.	$63t - 27 = 36t$ (νηστείας: Day of Atonement, 36 BC)	Yes

These charts were derived from my proceeding through *Antiquities* and *War* looking for all places where Josephus gave an elapsed time that related to the reign of Herod. This was motivated by the treatment of some of these elapsed times in Steinmann, "When Did Herod the Great Reign," *Novum Testamentum* 51 (2009) 1-29. It was very gratifying to see the harmony in date-computations based on Filmer's hypotheses, as contrasted with the incoherence of the same calculations when starting with the hypotheses of the consensus (Schürer) chronology.

Six more events for which non-inclusive reckoning and Tishri years give consistent, and we believe, correct dates

Event	Non-inclusive formula	OK?
(§7) Hasmonean government ended “after μετὰ 126 yrs.” μετὰ requires non-inclusive reckoning.	$162n - 126 = 36n$ . (Hasmoneans used Seleucid Nisan reckoning)	Yes
(§8) Aristobolus was HP for “one year only.”	1 yr, non-inclusive reckoning	Yes
(§9) Battle of Actium, Sept. 2, 31 BC, was in Herod’s 7th year.	$39t - 7 = 32t$	Yes
(§10) Herod on his deathbed: Hasmoneans ruled 125 years, to deposing of Antigonus (Note: Herod was not going to be exact; §7 is exact)	$162n - 125 = 37n$ (Hasmoneans used Seleucid Nisan reckoning)	No
(§11) Herod reigned 34 yrs after (ἀπό) Antigonus was slain, but 37 yrs after (ἀπό) declared king by Romans.	$36t - 34 = 2t$ $39t - 37 = 2t$	Yes
(§12) Hyrcanus II, appointed high priest by Pompey in 63 BC, ruled 24 yrs, followed by Antigonus, 3 yrs 3 months. Total is 27 yrs 3 months, agreeing with 27 yrs from Pompey’s capture of Jerusalem to Herod’s.	Non-inclusive numbering works correctly here and elsewhere in Josephus	Yes
(§13) 28 high priests & 107 years from Antigonus to fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 (see Steinmann, <i>NovT</i> , 2009).	$39t + AD\ 69t - 1$ (no yr 0) = 107 years	Yes

In looking for elapsed times that Josephus gave when referring to Herod the Great, I was careful to choose the relevant texts. These charts are not the result of a selective or special pleading process. There are some elapsed times, such as that a famine occurred in Herod’s thirteenth year, that are somewhat difficult to check by external circumstances, and I have not discussed the lengthy analyses that some have given to these events in order to determine their year of occurrence. Those who are involved in these more problematic studies should, however, take into consideration the findings illustrated here, namely that Josephus consistently used Tishri-based calendar and accession years for Herod, as they attempt to resolve these other, more problematic, dates.

In the presentation as given in November of 2019, I had Item 9 as a “No” for the Filmer chronology. That was because of a mistake in my reasoning. I had assumed that, since Josephus placed the Battle of Actium in Herod’s seventh year, and the “seventh” was an ordinal number, then six actual years had passed, yielding  $39t\ BC - 6\ (act) = 33t\ BC$ , which is too early for the Battle of Actium. However, I forgot that when accession reckoning is in effect, the “first year” or “year one” of a regent is the complete year after the partial year in which he took office, so that non-inclusive numbering is necessary. Although the Antiquities and War passages use the ordinal, “seventh year” of Herod for the Battle of Actium, in accession reckoning this does not imply inclusive numbering. In the accession-year system, a king’s “first year” was the year after his “zero” or accession year, and his

seventh year would be a full seven years after the accession year. This is amply demonstrated for the regnal years of the divided monarchy (see, for example, 1 Kgs 15:25, 28, 33, etc.), and also in Babylonian and Assyrian official records. 39 Tishri 1 in 31 B.C. was on September 21, so that the Battle of Actium took place toward the end of Herod's seventh Tishri-based year, 32<sup>d</sup> BC.

### --Summary--

- ☞ The tables just shown demonstrate how the Filmer/Steinmann chronology matches the timing of events in Herod's life in everything except events related to Josephus's wrong consular years. It is also consistent with what Roman authors wrote about Herod.
- ☞ In contrast, the tables show that the consensus system of interpretation that places the death of Herod in 4 BC continually contradicts itself. The system is absolutely incoherent.
- ☞ The consensus system also contradicts several well-established facts from Roman and Judean history—the career of Ventidius, Roman military inactivity in 37 BC, the timing of the Sabbatical years, etc.
- ☞ The inability of scholars who are pillars of the consensus chronology to handle “stubborn facts” was demonstrated—Zuckermann, Schürer, Vermes & Millar, Goldstein . . .
- ☞ Consequently, anyone who builds their chronology for the life of Christ on this faulty system will come out with our Lord's birth in 5 or 6 BC and His death and glorious Resurrection in some date other than April of AD 33, producing conflict with secular history and an erroneous chronology for the entire NT period.

The four pillars of the consensus scholarship for the chronology of Herod:

1. Zuckermann's Sabbatical year calendar
2. Inclusive numbering in Josephus for the life of Herod
3. Nisan years in Josephus for the life of Herod
4. Josephus's consular years for Herod's investiture by the Romans and his siege of Jerusalem

If any one of these can be shown to be false, Herod's death can no longer be calculated as occurring in 4 BC. Today's demonstration has shown that all four of them are false. It has also endeavored to show that Filmer's chronology for Herod is in agreement with the proper understanding of these four points, giving the correct date for Herod's investiture in late 39 BC, his siege of Jerusalem in the summer of 36 BC, and his death in early 1 BC. The consensus scholarship, with its death of Herod in 4 BC, requires that our Lord had to be born in 5 or 6 BC instead of the late 3 or early 2 BC that is reported by virtually all early Christian historians who wrote on the subject. Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p. 291, lists these Christian authors as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Julius Africanus, Hippolytus of Rome, Hippolytus of Thebes, Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Cassiodorus Senator, and Orosius.

*That's all, folks!*

A pdf file of this slide presentation is available  
at [www.rcyoung.org/articles/Herod.pdf](http://www.rcyoung.org/articles/Herod.pdf)

If there were no other considerations, I would reject the consensus chronology because of its conflict with Sabbatical/Jubilee years. Zuckermann missed a great opportunity by not taking advantage of the SO statements that place a Jubilee in Josiah's 18<sup>th</sup> year, and another, which the SO calls the 17<sup>th</sup>, 14 years after the city fell (Ezek 40:1). He could have constructed a pre-exilic Sabbatical-year and Jubilee-year calendar based on just one of these. They both imply that counting for the Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles began in 1406 BC. See Young, "The Talmud's Two Jubilees and Their Relevance to the Date of the Exodus," *Westminster Theological Journal* 68 (2006), 71-83, <http://www.rcyoung.org/articles/jubilee.pdf>, or "Evidence for Inerrancy from a Second Unexpected Source: The Jubilee and Sabbatical Cycles," *Bible and Spade* 21:4 (Fall 2008), 109-122, <http://www.rcyoung.org/articles/unexpected2.pdf>.

I was surprised by the harmony that exists in Josephus's chronology once we realize his mistake for the two consular years. Actually he made one mistake, then the other followed when he consulted his table of consuls and separated the second one three years from it because his regnal-year data showed three years between Herod's investiture and the siege of Jerusalem. In *War*, he went by reign lengths, the Judean method, and provided no consular years. That mistake came later. Even Schürer recognized that Josephus's Olympiad for Herod's investiture by the Romans was one year too early.