



Pictures of the Herodium, left to right: ruins of the fortress, aerial view of the mountain, artist rendering of the palace

The Manger and the Herodium: Where do we look for the liberation at Christmas?

Herod the Great ruled in Judea from 37-4 BCE as a tetrach king for the Roman Empire. His quest was to make Judea (and therefore himself) stand out in the Roman Empire through massive building projects. Between 20 and 10 BCE, he doubled the size of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and replacing the old worship structure with a magnificent new building. The ancient historian Josephus named this one of the biggest construction projects of the first century BCE.

Alongside the Temple project, Herod also built a monument to himself, called the Herodium. It was a fortress constructed over a hill, with massive pillars holding up a constructed seven-story mountain on top of it. The inner parts of the mountain contained a synagogue, Roman baths, and more. The top was a luxurious palace. It was constructed 3 miles southeast of Bethlehem.

In Luke 2, on hills that were likely a short walk from the Herodium, an angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds and said, *"Don't be afraid! Listen! I bring good news of great joy, news that will affect all people everywhere. Today, in the town of David, a Liberator has been born for you! He is the promised Anointed One! You will know you have found Him when you see a baby, wrapped in a blanket, lying in a feeding trough.."* - Luke 2:10-12 (*The Voice*)

Don't go looking for a liberator at the Herodium or even the Temple. Go look in a feeding trough. The deliverance won't come through power or manipulation. It is coming through the birth of a baby to a poor family in a small town. This is the good news for all people.

**Where do you see people looking for liberation today?
Where might the angel tell us to look for our liberators?
What does it mean to you to see God come to earth in such a humble form?**

Copyright (c) 2022 by 40 Orchards - All Rights Reserved - 40orchards.org

Pictures of Bethlehem, left to right: a cave (stable), a stone feeding trough (manger), a shepherd on a hillside

