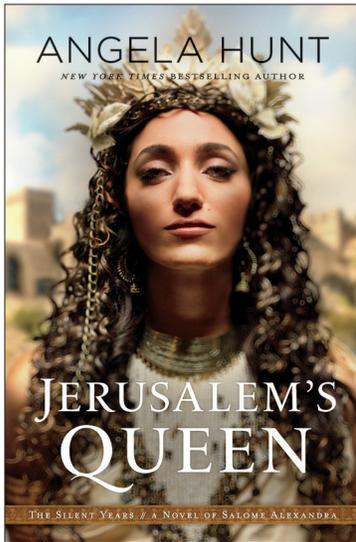




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH ANGELA HUNT



Jerusalem's Queen

THE SILENT YEARS
by Angela Hunt

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1. I must confess, I'd never heard of Salome Alexandra, Queen of Jerusalem, before encountering your novel. Who was she?

I'd never heard of her either, until one of my theology professors mentioned her. Not much information is available about her, and what little information there is often contradicts itself. For instance, most Jewish history books say that she was the widow of Judah Aristobulus, who later married his brother, Alexander Jannaeus, but that couldn't be possible because the high priest was required to marry a virgin. And we know that Judah Aristobulus married Salina, not Salome. Most people assume they were one and the same, yet they were not.

2. What made this woman worthy of a book? What did she do that was so unusual?

She was a good queen, and honestly religious. Her husband, Alexander Jannaeus, was high priest and king, and he was horrible. He ordered purges, he crucified hundreds of Pharisees and made his victims watch their families being murdered, he kept concubines—he was not a righteous man. But Salome Alexandra was a righteous woman, and after her husband died she reigned in his place and cleaned things up. She made sure girls were educated as well as boys, she changed the way marriage contracts were negotiated (so that women were provided for), and she blessed her people. The Jews said the years of her reign were “golden years,” when God blessed Judea.

3. Why didn't those golden years continue after Salome Alexandra's death?

Because she had two sons—one who was like her, with the other very much like her husband. The wild one attacked her heir right after her death, and their bloody war caused the Romans to invade, establishing, in the long run, Roman rule. Judea became a Roman province, Herod became king, and the last kings of the Hasmonean dynasty were killed.

4. What surprised you most as you researched this period? What was it, fifty years before Christ's birth?

Salome Alexandra died in 67 BC, and the thing I found most fascinating was that many of the Jews of that time professed a real interest in studying Bible prophecy. The Torah scholars sensed that one epoch had concluded with the return of the Judeans from Babylonian exile, and a new one was about to begin. The Essenes, in particular, were looking for a messiah—or two, since they saw clear signs that God was getting ready to send a king and a high priest. They were looking for Christ, but they hadn't quite figured out that the king and priest would be one person, and that God would send Him as a tiny baby who would be born to die so that we might be born again.