



Somebody Greater Than Herod

Text: Mathew 2: 1-7

¹ Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, ² Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. ³ When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. ⁵ And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, ⁶ And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule *my* people Israel. ⁷ Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. [\[1\]](#)

John Lennon wrote a song called “Imagine” that says we should imagine that there is no Heaven, nothing to die for, no religion, and everybody living life in peace. There is no peace in this world without Jesus Christ. Imagine what this world would be like without Jesus Christ. It would be much worse than it is. Imagine what the United States would be like; much, much worse.

Without Jesus we would not enjoy many of the things that we take for granted today. Without Jesus there would be no nativity, no gift exchange, no family get-togethers, no bright lights, no “First Noel”, no “Silent Night”. In all seriousness, without Jesus we would not know the forgiveness of sin. We would all still be carrying our past sins. I am so glad Jesus came!

Our nation is on a dangerous track to remove the nativity and Jesus out of Christmas. Some places are refusing to allow employees to refer to Christmas in any way since it really is a Christian celebration. Many have managed to establish enough commercialization at Christmas time that many in our world could celebrate the season without including Jesus at all. Many are content to just leave Jesus out of Christmas. It's an oxymoron if I have ever hear one!

If we remove the nativity from Christmas in America, Christmas could degenerate into another Mardi Gras.

Mardi Gras was originally established by the church as a celebration dinner before a 40 day fast leading up to the passion of Christ on Easter. Mardi Gras has now become a drunken, nude, immoral, decadent, heathen party that has nothing to do with the 40 day fast (lent), or with the passion of Jesus leading up to the resurrection.

I say we keep Christ in Christmas! We must remember that Christmas is all about God’s greatest gift to us and not about us giving gifts to each other. Giving gifts to each other is all fine, but when it dominates over the Christ in Christmas, our gift-giving becomes out of balance with the true value of the season.

If Jesus had never arrived, we would still be living under the old covenant of the Old Testament. Since Jesus had not yet come, it was just the law that they had to go by. Without Jesus, most of us would not have been included in God’s covenant people. At the time, God’s covenant was with the Jewish people. The Gentiles were not included in God’s plan in the Old Testament. We would not want to live our life under the old covenant. The old covenant was exclusive, not inclusive. The penalty for sin under the old covenant was death by stoning. It makes sense to think the Apostle Paul, who lived under both covenants said the new covenant is better than the old covenant.

We know the love of Jesus Christ, but just to imagine a world without Jesus is a very painful thought. I

would rather face the worst of human tragedy and have Jesus in my life than to be without Jesus in my own life and never have any suffering or pain. The good news is that Jesus promises us eternal life without pain or sorrow! Now the most spiritual among us face pain and sorrow, but not in Heaven! The Spirit Jesus Christ is in our world as I speak, and even those who do not know Him live under His love and anointing.

Our text reveals to us that Herod was king during the time in which Jesus was born. Herod was supposed to be the leader of the priests and prophets, but he did not know the scriptures. Herod was a controlled king under Roman occupation. Herod was half Jewish and half Gentile, yet he was not popular with either the Israelis or the Romans.

Caesar did not care for Herod because Herod required a lot of attention. Herod went to Caesar every time a difficulty arose, which was a common occurrence. Herod was married 10 times, but instead of divorcing a woman when he became tired of her, he instead just had the lady killed.

As cruel as he was, Herod was quite a builder of buildings. Herod built 6 palaces, including Masada, the Hanging Palace, and Herodia (which was built on top of a mountain after having its peak cut off).

Speaking of being a builder, he is very famous for rebuilding the temple after its destruction.

Herod had 1000 priests trained as masons to rebuild the temple. Herod's temple did not even come close to the glory of Solomon's temple. It would be like destroying a palace and replacing it with a cabin.

Herod built the temple mount up to the point that it covered 1/6th of the city.

After Herod's workers finished constructing the temple, he had a large golden eagle mounted over the main door. This made the Israeli's quite upset since they knew God's command concerning not making any graven images. The Israelis believed that Herod's idol was preventing the glory of the Lord from entering the temple. The bottom line was that God's glory had not visited the temple in over 400 years.

The sad reality about the Jewish religious systems maintaining themselves without God's presence shows how that religion does not need God to continue in a rut. We must crave the presence of God and realize that religion alone does not cut the cake.

When a rumor spread around that Herod was dead, a group of young Jewish priests removed the golden eagle and destroyed it. Herod was not dead, and when he heard about it he made an example of the priests by having them burned alive on the steps to the temple.

Herod's kingdom was a picture of the world without the Savior: it was a dark world filled with greed, lust, hate, and murder.

Matthew, chapter 2, tells us the story of the 3 wise men from the East who were following the Eastern Star that proclaimed the birth of the prophesied Governor. These wise men came to worship the newborn king, the Christ-Child, and they were to finance God's plan for the child. After they worshipped Jesus, the wise men were warned in a dream to not return to Herod, but to go home another way. These wise men were being used by God for His purpose, thus God was protecting them.

Verse 13 tells us that an angel came to Joseph and warned him that Herod would try to find baby Jesus and kill him. The angel told Joseph to take his family into Egypt. Egypt was the leading nation in the region, and it was a very costly place to survive. The gifts from the wise men that consisted of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, were used by God to finance the exile. We can all know that whatever God has called each of us to do, He will finance us to do it. If God called you or I to live in a place that is expensive, He will provide us with the finances to live there.

Herod began to understand what was going on, that a new governor or king over Israel had been born. This news troubled Herod. Herod was somewhat of a tyrant and insecure, so when he heard about this new king, he looked at him as a threat.

Faking a desire to worship, and possibly crying crocodile tears, Herod inquired of the wise men what time the star appeared. Verse 5 tells us that Herod consulted the priests to find out where the new king was prophesied to be

born.

Herod was so threatened by the new governor that he came up with a conspiracy to have Jesus killed. Herod perverted the facts he knew. In other words, he used the knowledge of the wise men and what the prophecies said to come to the conclusion that the child must be under 2 years old. Herod ordered the death of every male child in Bethlehem that was 2 and under.

Josephus was a Jewish historian who broke ranks with the Jews and attached himself to the Romans. Josephus documented the history of the inner workings of the Jews. Josephus was the most accurate of all historians, but he chose not to write about the death of the boys as recorded by the scriptures in Mathew. Some scholars argue that this means that the death of the male infants did not really happen. Since the Bible is always accurate, we can conclude that Josephus chose not to include the holocaust in his account out of fear of reprisal from Herod or Rome. In Herod's culture of no mercy, perhaps Josephus would have been in peril by recording the slaughter of innocent infants by Herod under Rome's watch.

Above all else make sure Jesus is King in your life. Herod fostered a culture of fear and dread, surrounded by the limited Old Testament understanding in the Jewish mindset. We have never felt the kind of oppression that Herod created because we have only known a world under the New Covenant.

There is coming a day, when the wrath of God hits after the rapture of the church and after the battle of Armageddon, when the world will once again experience the removing of the grace and mercy, and touch of Jesus.

Don't miss your opportunity to know Jesus personally as your King and Savior. Jesus has promised to forgive and remit all your sins, and to fill you with His Spirit. It is at the point of being born of the water and the Spirit that He makes life worth living. You don't want to miss your chance to know Jesus in a real and genuine way! Please don't let the devil tell you that it's not possible because all things are possible with God and the truth is that He has made it very simple, just believe in His word and follow His promise.

Closing: When Adolph Hitler and the Nazi forces invaded and defeated France in 1940, they immediately began preparing to conquer all of Europe, and England was next on the list.

Instead of surrendering under the cloud of fear, Winston Churchill took to the radio waves to express hope into his dispirited and frightened people. They gathered to hear him thunder out such words of inspiration at these:

"I expect that the battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. The whole fury and might of the enemy must soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he must break us on this island or lose the war..." Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour!"

The British people believed the words of Winston Churchill. They made tremendous sacrifices. They refused to give up. They fought back and they kept Germany from successfully conquering Britain.

I know somebody greater than Winston Churchill, as good of a man and leader as he was. Let me tell you that there is absolutely nobody greater than Jesus Christ, and the good news is that all of us can have him living within us each and every day.

Jesus is calling many unto him, will your name be on that roll called up yonder?

There is only one way for that to happen: ye must be born again of the water and the Spirit!

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[\[1\]](#) The Holy Bible : King James Version. 1995 . Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA