

## The Christmas Character We Miss

*Matthew 2:1-19*

**2** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem **2** and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

**3** When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. **5** "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: **6** "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

**7** Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8** He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

**9** After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. **11** On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. **12** And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

**13** When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

**14** So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and left for Egypt, **15** where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

**16** When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. **17** Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

**18** "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

**19** After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt **20** and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

### A. King Herod – The Enemy Of Christ

1. He is one we would rather omit.
2. How often have you heard Herod's name at Christmas?
3. Sadly though, he has an important part to play in the Christmas story.
4. He tries to deceive the wise men in a plan to destroy Christ.

### B. Heaven's Focus Is Different To Man's

1. Cattle upstage the king & are remembered widely.
2. A stable gains world attention instead of the palace.
3. Actors at Christmas dress like lowly shepherds, but not like Herod.

### C. How Herod Became the Villain of Christmas

1. Who was King Herod? Known as Herod the Great.
2. Ruled as King of Judea from 37 to 4 B.C. over 30 years; effective, though ruthless.
3. Remembered as a builder of cities & the lavish repairer of the temple in Jerusalem.
4. However, he won little admiration due to rebuilding pagan temples.
5. His costly attempts to gain loyalty failed; his loyalty was only to himself.
6. Given title "king of the Jews" by Romans, but never accepted by Jewish people.
7. Partly Jewish, not from the Davidic line.
8. Cruel and paranoid, treating others with fear, suspicion, and jealousy.
9. Suspicions led to the murder of several of his children and his wife Mariamne.
10. Worried about losing his position, he planned to kill the new "king".
11. The murder of innocent children shows the tragic consequences of selfish actions.
12. Though claiming to be a God-worshiper, he engaged in pagan practices.
13. His life was self-destructive.

### D. Herod and His Troubled Heart (v. 3)

1. The wise men arrive at Herod's palace seeking the newborn King of the Jews.
2. Herod was troubled, fearing loss of control with Christ becoming king.
3. He pretends interest in worshiping Jesus but plans to eliminate the threat.

### E. Herod Brings Trouble to Others (vv. 3-18)

1. "All Jerusalem with him" – Herod's trouble affects others.
2. Rejection of Christ impacts others – no one lives or dies to themselves (Rom. 14:7).
3. Herod's upset affects the city; his reaction to being outwitted leads to horrific decree.
4. Slaughter of the children fulfills prophecy (Jer 31:15), turning glory to grief.
5. The angel's warning causes the family to move to Egypt.

### F. The Contrasting Figures: Herod and Jesus

1. Herod died in his sins, suffering continuously.
2. Marked contrast: Herod's power and fear vs. Jesus' humility and love;
3. What Herod missed: Christ came to save, cleanse, and give peace.
4. Herod's self-preservation vs. Jesus' self-sacrifice.
5. The broader spiritual battle between good and evil.
6. God's protection of Jesus through the angel's warning to Joseph.

### G. Lessons for Today

1. Be aware of the dangers of power and pride.
2. Herod misuse of power, show we should Trust in God's plan & timing.
3. The wise men followed God's leading, while Herod followed his path.
4. Superficial loyalty does not impress people or God.
5. Wise ones still seek and worship Jesus; rejecting Him never brings peace.
6. No one can prevent God's plans from being carried out.
7. Are you faithfully following God's plan?