



Opposing Christmas

Christ and His Cause

The Story of Herod

Matthew 2:1-12

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 All Scriptures are printed verbatim with translations noted. • Pastor Joe's email is Joe@SouthReno.com.

Herod's Story

- He is a very, very loathsomely repulsive person in biblical history.
- By the birth of Christ, he has already killed his own son, his wife, and others.
- He lied to the Magi.
- He killed the baby boys of Bethlehem.
- He tried to kill Jesus.

Prior to this story in Matthew 2

- By law, his name was "Herod the Great."
- He was known as a great builder (Temple, Caesarea, Masada, the Palace).
- Josephus called him "barbaric," "the malevolent maniac," "the great pervert" and "a malignant, devious, perfidious and degenerate ass."
- Caesar Augustus said, "It is safer to be Herod's sow than his son."
- The Bible concludes Herod's story in Matthew 2:19 ("When Herod died....").
- Josephus says that when Herod died, maggots had eaten away part of his body. For two years, he suffered. He died in agony—insane, tormented, and delirious.

Christmas Then

A. The Trickery in Jerusalem.

Matthew 2:7–8, NLT -⁷ Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸ Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"

B. The Escape to Egypt.

Matthew 2:13–15, NLT -¹³ After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." ¹⁴ That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, ¹⁵ and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my Son out of Egypt."

C. The Massacre in Bethlehem.

Matthew 2:16–18, NLT -¹⁶ Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance. ¹⁷ Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸ "A cry was heard in Ramah—weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted, for they are dead."

D. The Return to Israel.

Matthew 2:19–23, NLT -¹⁹ When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. ²⁰ "Get up!" the angel said. "Take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead."

Discovering Christmas Truths Now

1. Everybody in Matthew 2, had the same basic information about the Christ-child—but information alone, doesn't save anyone.

2. Six ways to "oppose" Christmas, Christ, and His cause:

- Ignorant Preoccupation** (Innkeeper)
- Jealous Fear** (Herod)
- Prideful Indifference** (Chief Priests and scribes)
- Religious Ritual** (People of Jerusalem)
- Serfish Idolatry** (Caesar Augustus)
- Over-familiarity** (People of Nazareth)

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER:

Father, conceive in us a greater faith. Let our hearts be a manger where You can birth something new in us. Give us eyes to see Jesus as He is—a King and Savior coming for us. Give us ears to hear the angels singing. Give us feet like the shepherds to go swiftly to Bethlehem. Give us hands like the Wise Men to offer our best to You. Give us faith, like Mary and Joseph, who say "yes" to Your activity in our lives. Give us lasting Christmas Joy as we remember "nothing is impossible with You!" Let us—like a bright star—forever proclaim the glorious news that "God is with us." In Your Holy Name, we pray! - Amen.