**PP The Shift**

**Part 3-*The King has Come: Jesus* Matthew 2:1-6 12/14-15/2024**

Around the world, people celebrate Christmas

**PP** (Pic) In Sweden, they build a Yule Goat 3.6 tons heavy and 43 feet tall, why I have no idea!

In Japan, families order KFC months in advance to celebrate Christmas

In Iceland, they celebrate, not 12 days of Christmas but 13, and they night before Christmas they

set out their by the windows, and in the morning, candy if they’ve been good, rotten

potatoes if bad

**PP** (Pic) In Austria, a devil-like creature called Krampus arrives December 6 and children make

a list of their good and bad deeds; bad kids worry what Krampus will bring them, while

good kids get sweets, apples and nuts

All over the world Christmas evokes a response from people and it was no different when Jesus

was born in Israel and today and next week, we will look at three different responses

**PP *“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold,***

***wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born***

***king of the Jews? For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.”***

**Matthew 2:1-2**

**Matthew 2:11** indicates that some time had passed since Jesus was born as they moved from a

manger to a ***‘house’***, and Jesus was no longer an infant but a ***‘child’***, translated from a

Greek for small child and not normally used for an infant or newborn

Joseph, Mary and Jesus were living in Bethlehem, 5 miles south of Jerusalem, and a mysterious

group of men made their way to their home

This group of men have been called the ***‘magi’***, making us think immediately of pagan sorcerers

But these were God-fearing scholars and scientists who studied portions of the Old Testament

as well as signs of creation

In early traditions, there were twelve of them that made this journey, now the tradition is that

there were three, simply because three gifts were given to the Christ-child

Legends grew and made them kings, and then grew more to give them the names Caspar,

Melchior and Balthasar, even describing their appearance and gifts

If you travel to Cologne, Germany, to its great cathedral, you can even see their supposed skulls

The truth is, very little is actually known about them and Matthew calls them ***‘wise men from the***

***east’*** the area of the Parthian Empire, 650 miles or so north and east of Jerusalem

The power of the Parthian Empire nearly rivaled that of the Roman Empire

It encompassed Babylon, Persia and Assyria, modern day Iraq and western Iran

They were called ***‘wise men’*** in the book of Daniel, who himself lived in captivity in Babylon,

and they were skilled in science, agriculture, mathematics and history

The entire world at that time was experiencing a growing anticipation that a great king, a great

deliverer was about to be born

The Roman historian Seutonius wrote, **PP** *“There had spread over all the Orient an old*

*and established belief that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judea to rule the world.”* Seutonius

Another historian at that time wrote **PP***“there was a firm persuasion that at this very time the*

*east was to grow powerful and rulers coming from Judea were to acquire a universal*

*empire.”* Tacitus

A bright star rose in the eastern night sky (possible alignment of Jupiter and Saturn) triggering

for these wise men, the advent of the birth of the King, the Savior of the world

In that day, appearances of bright stars, comets or meteors portended births of significant people

Many believe the wise men knew the prophecy in **PP Numbers 24:17, *“I see him, but***

***not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel”***

They set out on their long journey, a round trip of about1300 miles, to Jerusalem, showing us

three different responses to the birth of Jesus, the King of all kings

**PP 1-The *Animosity* of King Herod (2:3-8)**

**PP *“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and***

***assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the***

***Christ was to be born.”*** **Matthew 2:3-8**

Rome made Herod king of the Jews in 40 BC, but the Jews hated him

He was an Edomite, meaning he was descended from Esau

He was called Herod the Great, and in many ways he was a successful ruler, but he had a

terrible flaw in his character: *he was insanely suspicious of any rivals*

This grew worse as he grew older, earning him the description *‘a murderous old man’*

When he suspected someone of being a rival to his power, that person was eliminated

Like his wife’s brother, Aristobulus, the High Priest in Israel whom he had drowned

Then he had his favorite wife Mariamne killed, and when her mother complained, she was next

He had three of his own sons killed so that Emperor Augustus said of him, *‘it is safer to be*

*Herod’s pig than Herod’s son’*

Just before his death at 70, he ordered that when he died, the most honorable citizens of

Jerusalem should be gathered together and executed so there would be mourning in the

city, an order, thankfully, never carried out

So when he heard from the wise men that the king of the Jews was born, his jealous paranoia

reached its highest point: **PP** ***“he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him”* (2:3)**

The image of three gentle wise men on camels quietly entering Jerusalem is not the reality

These were powerful men carrying wealthy gifts, and they would have traveled with a contingent

of soldiers and a great many servants

Rome had made Herod king in Israel primarily to check the westward advance of the Parthians

into the Roman empire and he had already purged all Parthians from Israel

This group from Parthia arrive, and the whole city was stirred like drones flying over Philipsburg

*Is this group here on a mission of espionage, preparing to invade?*

For jealous Herod, their message was not **PP** ***‘good news of a great joy that will be for all the***

***people’* (Luke 2:10)**

Instead he saw this king-child as a threat to his power and right to rule the way he wanted

He understood something we do not: **PP** *The king has absolute right to rule his people*

This series called The Shift is all about surrendering our full allegiance to Jesus, the King Who

has come, and we are going to find ourselves uncomfortable at times in the weeks ahead

Have you truly surrendered to Jesus as your Savior *and* your Lord, your King?

Not just in salvation, but in all of life, gladly submitting to the rightful rule of Jesus the King?

How about as you steward the finances Jesus has provided for you…*But I earned it*, you say

Who gave you life and the ability to work and blessed you with your job?

He has stamped His name of ownership over your body, your calendar, your possessions

Who is on the throne of your heart?

If Jesus is, pervading through your life will be peace, joy, love, and so much more

If you are on that throne, dominating your heart will be anxiety, envy, anger, dissatisfaction and

more

**PP** *The one who sits on the throne of your life will bring about his or her kingdom!*

Herod understood this, refusing to bend the knee to Christ and instead ordered that all the male

children in Bethlehem killed, 2 years and younger, to eliminate the threat to his kingdom

**PP 2-The *Apathy* of the Religious Leaders (2:4-6)**

**PP** ***“assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the***

***Christ was to be born.”* Matthew 2:4**

There were three great offices of leaders in biblical Israel and all three were publicly anointed

Prophets, priests and kings and we see all of them gather together in this story

**PP** The ***‘chief priests’*** were powerful, wealthy and corrupt, mostly belong to the political party

called the Sadducees

They represented the people before God facilitating the sacrifices and holy festivals

They only adhered to five books of Moses, rejecting the prophets and the writings

They didn’t believe in the resurrection or supernatural; modern day liberal professors

**PP** The ***‘scribes’*** were almost all Pharisees, experts in the Hebrew scriptures and the pastors and

teachers of the Jewish people

The chief priests were political, influential to rulers, while the scribes were pastoral, influential

with the people and together they were the supposed wise men of Israel

Herod gathered them together to learn from them where the Christ, the Messiah was to be born

The Old Testament prophet Micah had prophesied of this, and the religious leaders knew the

answer and gave it to Herod

**PP** ***“They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: “And you, O***

***Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for***

***from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”’* Matthew 2:5-6**

**PP** ***‘Bethlehem’*** means ‘house of bread’

Bethlehem was where King David had grown up, where Ruth met and married Boaz, where

Jacob buried his beloved Rachel

The religious leaders saw the entourage of wise men, felt the stir of the whole city of Jerusalem,

had spent their lives studying the prophecy of Micah

Of all the people who should have been most tender, most receptive, most alert, most ready to

fall down before the King, it should have been the scribes and chief priests

But it seems they answered Herod’s question, left and they don’t appear in this story again

They went on, business as usual, engrossed in the busyness of life, apathetic, unfazed

Friends, can we identify with their response?

Are we apathetic as year after year of Christmas seasons come and go?

Are you right now highly motivated to seek Jesus, to surrender to His rule in your life?

It is not difficult, *I know this personally*, to be more excited by the background information I

shared today than the One of Whom it was about!

**PP** We can love the message of Christmas more than the Messiah of Christmas

The result will be a life unchanged, unshifted, a kingdom where we rule, where our focus and

allegiance is to ourselves and God is invited to neatly, quietly fit into our lives

Do you realize that the bulk of modern preaching shifts God to who we want Him to be, and not

shifts us to the God Who is?

Of the three groups in this story-the wise men, Herod and the religious leaders-only one group

got it, one group shifted, one group experienced salvation and life and joy

That group is who we’ll look closely at in our State Theater service this Saturday evening

**PP** Three suggestions for application:

**PP** 1-Be courageously honest and ask yourself which response captures your attitude toward

Jesus *right now in your life*: Herod (animosity); the religious leaders (apathy); the wise

men (adoration)

**PP** 2-Discuss with a Christian close to you why you gave the answer you did

**PP** 3-This week, take your answer to God in prayer and talk it through with Him