

Series: Christ The King Is Born #1863

Title: Matthew 2.1-3

Jesus Is King of kings

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. It is Christmas week here, as we continue to do what we have been doing for several years now: using the Bible, we discover who God Is! And we have declared the truth of Scripture: Christ The King is Born! This is the title of our series and our text is Matthew chapter 2, verses 1-3. I am reading in the Book of the Bible that opens the New Testament, The Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 2, verses 1-3, **“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.’ ³ When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”**

So that we can capture the truth of these verses, in the short amount of time we have had, I developed an alliterated outline that I trust has been helpful. We have talked about the coordinates, the contrasting kings, and the coming of the magi. This is a good way to remember what we have learned. And this week we return to the contrasting kings, because we want to put the spotlight on Jesus, the God King. We already talked about Herod the human king. But now, here is Jesus Christ the God King. Jesus is God. And Jesus is King! He is very different from Herod, who was a mere human. And while history gave him the title Herod the Great, I showed you why he was really Herod the Not So Great.

As we consider how Jesus *contrasts* with Herod, let me introduce this by pointing out something very interesting to me. During Christ’s earthly ministry Jesus never acknowledged this King Herod. Jesus ignored him. Oh yes, Jesus did make reference to Herod Antipas (but he was Herod the Great’s son). The Lord called him “that fox,” (Luke 13) and warned of the “leaven of Herod” (Mark 8). But both of these references were made to King Herod the Great’s son and not to the man himself. And yet, Jesus is living in the shadow of the rule of Herod the Great. As one author put it, “[Christ] lived as if Herod never existed. Jesus ignored the world of power and accomplishment that was brilliantly on display all around Him. [Jesus] chose to work on the margins of society, with unimportant people, giving particular attention to the weak, the disturbed, the powerless (*The Jesus Way* by Eugene H. Peterson, 204).”

What a contrast between the important and strong and powerful King Herod and King Jesus. And here is another contrast that comes flying off the page of Matthew 2, in just these three verses. Herod was made King. Jesus was born King. Let me say that again: Herod was made King, but Jesus was born King. Matthew writes of Herod the King. And we have already learned that he had to be made King of Judea by the Roman Senate back in Rome. It is not like Herod was born a prince, waiting for his father to die so he could be crowned king. Not so. He had to politic his way into it. He was a vassal king. He had to pay homage and allegiance to Rome, otherwise he would not have been King of Judea or King of the Jews.

But Jesus never politics His way forward for anything, or *anyone*. And Jesus was never Prince Jesus. Jesus was and always is King Jesus. He is the God King. He was *born* King of the Jews. That is how the magi, that we talked about last week, put it in their question. Verse 2 of Matthew 2, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” In human terms the very moment baby Jesus entered the world, down and out the birth canal of His mother, Mary, He was King. His earthly father was no king. His earthly mother was no queen. And yet Jesus is King because Jesus is God and Jesus comes from God. And God is King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

That is what Paul the Apostle calls God the Father in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 15. Listen to these awesome words in 1 Timothy 6, verses 15 and 16, **“He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him *be* honor and eternal dominion! Amen.”**

That was in 1 Timothy chapter 6 in reference to God the Father. And then in Revelation chapter 19 and verse 16, concerning Jesus Christ we have this description, **“And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’”** So this title applies to God the Father and to God the Son. Back in Revelation chapter 17 and verse 14 we read this regarding Jesus as the Lamb of God, **“These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”** (Revelation 17, verse 14.)

What high accolades the Bible gives to Jesus Christ the King! And the emphasis here is on One who has absolute dominion and authority over His realm, which is all of creation in the case of Christ. Herod is small potatoes. Herod is miniscule. Herod is a nothing and a no one, as compared to Christ. And, in a sense, Herod understands this. Listen for his reaction to Jesus being the King of the Jews. Verse 3 of Matthew 2, quote, “When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.” Herod heard the magi’s question and he freaked out! He became very troubled. He was disturbed and agitated. Why?

Of course his usual paranoia kicked into high gear with outsiders asking to see the King and by King they did not mean Herod! Herod’s thinking, “Oh! Was there some other king? And here? In my realm? Who is the one who will challenge my position and my authority?” Sitting Kings or Queens or Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Premiers for that matter, do not take well to the insinuation that there is one nearby who is the legitimate ruler over and against him (or in the other time periods of history, her). And yet here, Herod is faced with a challenger who troubles him greatly.

The pride of men and women is never greater than when it comes with a powerful position. And King Herod was sitting atop a power structure underneath which was a society that could at any moment trigger a shattering shift in that power. And this is, I think, the bigger reason why Herod was troubled. Remember, if you can, when I said this:

“When Herod was appointed prefect in Galilee he began to show his strong military muscle by quelling bands of Jews who mustered together to fight back against the foreign invaders, the Romans, as well as others. And then the Parthians invaded Palestine and Herod had to pick up and flee down to Egypt. Herod, not yet strong enough to defeat the Parthians. Eventually Herod makes his way from there to Rome, where he picks up the appointment as king of the Jews.

And then with the backing of the Romans, Herod unleashes his military might and strength and makes a move on the Parthians in Palestine. There is fierce fighting for several years, but eventually Herod drives out those pesky Parthians and establishes his own rule, with the backing of Rome, over Judea. Do keep in mind the Parthians, because they are deeply connected to the magi and Herod, we are told in Matthew 2, verse 3, is “troubled” when the magi make their visit to Jerusalem. There is an historic and military reason for why King Herod is so troubled by the arrival of the magi and I will make that connection on an upcoming episode of *God Is*.”

Well, today is that episode when I make this connection. The magi, as we also now know, were Parthians. And the Parthians meant something to Herod. As I just reminded you, he had to drive out the Parthian military before he could take over the rulership of Judea under the Roman government. So when Herod hears about magi from the east, magi who were Parthians, back in *his* Palestine, he has flashbacks to the military power that gave him such a strong and difficult challenge not that long ago. No wonder he was, in the words of Matthew, “troubled.”

I will say a little more about this tomorrow, but before I have to go, I want to solidify this contrast in your mind between Herod the human King and Jesus the God King. Herod was troubled by the magi and their question, and therefore he was unwelcoming of the magi. But Jesus (and His parents) were not troubled by the magi and their question, and were welcoming of them.

In fact, Mary and Joseph welcomed the magi to come right into the house where they were staying so the magi could worship Christ the King. Verse 11 of Matthew 2 says so. The contrasting kings. More tomorrow here because God Is.

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