

## **Response to the King Matthew 2:1-6**

### **Introduction**

When your dad comes home, what is your response? When your boss walks into the office, how do you react? Your reaction to the advent of some sort of authority demonstrates your view of that authority and demonstrates your faithfulness (or lack thereof) when that authority was not present. It is as though the coming of that person sheds light on what you had been doing previously. When the King of kings is revealed, when Jesus is made known, we see in Scripture a variety of responses to His advent.

### **Herod**

Herod and all Jerusalem are troubled at the announcement of a newborn King of Israel. The Magi see a star that they know is a sign that the King of the Jews has been born (cf. Num. 24:17). They seek out the current King of the Jews so they might know where to go to worship a King who is apparently greater than Herod.

Why was Herod troubled? He must have assumed that Jesus was come to supplant him as the King of the Jews. Was he right? Yes, and no. No, in that Jesus coming as King does not negate the rule of others on earth. But Yes, in that Jesus coming as King does threaten and eventually overturn the rule of those that seek to rule autonomously and in opposition to Him. Herod understood that he was threatened, but perhaps misunderstood the nature of the threat. He was threatened because he stood in opposition to the King of kings. He was a rebellious King of Israel that refused to kiss the Lord's Anointed (Ps. 2). We see this played out in the massacre of the young boys that Herod orders when he is unable to locate Jesus (Matt. 2:16-18).

It is worth noting another element to this story that ties it in to the narrative of Scripture. God had promised in the Garden that the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman would always be at enmity, and this shows up in odd detail time and again. Herod was by descent an Edomite, Jesus an Israelite. Jesus is a son of the supplanter, Jacob, and Herod of the profane man who despised his birthright, Esau (Heb. 12:16). Herod had been given a throne among God's people by the Lord (Rom. 13:1). He would not fear and worship the Lord who had given it to him, and so he was afraid of the One who had come to supplant him.

### **All Jerusalem**

Why was "all Jerusalem" troubled with Herod? The announcement of a new and rival King would have caused a stir among any people. Fears about political unrest and rebellion would spread. But we also know from later in Jesus' life that the leaders of Jerusalem, the chief priests and scribes and Pharisees, were themselves rebellious to the Lord and oppressed the people (Matt. 23:4, 13). Their rebellion culminates in the crucifixion of the Messiah and in their continued persecution of Him in His people (cf. Acts 9:4).

It turns out Herod's and Jerusalem's fears were right. Though Herod dies while Jesus is still very young (Matt. 2:19-20), it is the temple that Herod built in Jerusalem that Jesus

destroys (Matt. 24:1-2). The chief priests and scribes were rightly troubled as well, because Jesus was going to bring upon them the judgment for all the blood of the prophets and the faithful that they had shed (Matt. 23:33-36).

### **The Magi and the Shepherds**

Contrast Herod and the scribes with the shepherds. The same announcement is given to them all: The Lord and King, Savior and Messiah, is born in Bethlehem. The Magi hear and travel a long way to find this baby and worship and honor Him. The shepherds hear, go and find Him, and then spread the word, praising and glorifying God (Luke 2:15-20). For these, the announcement of the King, the announcement of God-With-Us, causes them to seek Him out and submit to Him, fills them with great joy, and impels them to worship Him. Herod hears, asks the wise men to report back, and then does his best to assassinate this young King. The leaders of Jerusalem hear and bear with Jesus for a time, and then do in fact assassinate Him. In the end, their assassination, though, is even less effective than Herod's attempt.

Scripture makes it clear that people are averse to God or in opposition to Him or apart from Him not because they don't know Him in an intellectual sense. People are separated from God because they do not worship Him as God nor thank Him (Rom. 1:20-21). People reject the Lord Jesus Christ because they love their sin. They reject God because they love their idols. They reject life because they actually love death. John Calvin puts it well:

*And so all ungodly persons find no difficulty in giving their assent to God on general principles; but when the truth of God begins to press them more closely, they throw out the venom of their rebellion...In a word, so long as wicked men think that it is taking nothing from themselves, they will yield to God and to Scripture some degree of reverence. But when Christ comes into close conflict with ambition, covetousness, pride, misplaced confidence, hypocrisy, and deceit, they immediately forget all modesty, and break out into rage. Let us therefore learn, that the chief cause of blindness in the enemies of truth is to be found in their wicked affections, which change light into darkness.*

### **Conclusion**

So, when King Jesus is revealed, when the light of the gospel shines in your life, what is your response? While we can and should consider every Lord's Day, and really every moment of every day, the Christmas season gives us a moment to reflect on this more particularly. Does Immanuel, God-with-us, bring you joy and excitement and peace and rest, or does He bring you angst and dismay and conflict and fear. If the latter, then the call to you is to repent. Turn from your idols. Allow the light of heaven to expose those sins that you keep in the dark. Flee from your lusts—sexual, emotional, material, financial. Turn instead to Christ. He came and took on the likeness of sinful flesh so that He could take all of your sins, all of that junk, and carry it to the cross and bury it in the grave. He took it all so that you could die with Him and be raised with Him to new life and then reign with Him. This is the kind of King Jesus is. Here He is revealed to you: how will you answer?