

The Monster, Magi, and the Messiah- Part 1: The Monster

Desert Light Christian Church (BIC), December 15, 2019



It is beyond my ability to grasp, HOW FAST the year has flown! I'm still trying to figure out how we are half way through December already. Another Christmas is coming and going. The year has added its blessings, taken its tolls, blessed us and flipped us around, yet here we are.

Every year we can look back and see how things change. Kids grow up a little more, babies are born, loved ones pass away, jobs change, we have crazy adventures or a boring year. But with all the things that change let Christmas remind us of things that will never change:

-God loves me

-I matter to him and to others

-He sent His Son, born of a woman to die for me

-As God loves me, I can love others with His love

-It truly is better to give than receive

-Family is such a great gift for our time on earth

-God's family, His church is an even greater gift for our time on earth and forever in heaven

-Joseph and Mary were temporarily homeless, made a difficult journey having to go uphill almost 3,000 feet, sacrificed their reputations (do you think their friends, family, and neighbors assumed the Holy Spirit put the baby in Mary's womb? NOT!), ran for their lives, lived in poverty, and yet what they did was for all of us to have the hope we have. We have hope in this life, Jesus as proof that God loves me and cares about my life. But greater hope that this life is just a short test and heaven, angels, and those who've passed through this world with their faith in the Lord await us for eternal life! The message today is about Herod, someone who tried to wreck Christmas who was worse than any Scrooge or Grinch we could ever imagine. God could have wiped him out then (he did later with a most painful exit) but instead used his evil plans and purposes to give more meaning to the story of Christmas. There will always be those in our path who want to destroy all that is good and from God so they can have things their way. But for the believer, we have peace on Earth from the Lord, knowing He is in control! Every year, every pastor has a choice to make. Christmas sermons. Do you dig up old ones you hope they forgot? Do you borrow another from someone else? Do you put the nose to the grindstone and try and come up with another one, fresh and new? The exciting part is, Jesus is inexhaustible. The amazing meaning of the incarnation (that means becoming flesh) of the Son of God is something one could never fully explore. But alas, it still begs some creative thinking, deeper digging, and listening around.

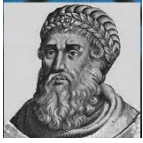


You pray that one more Christmas season, by the Holy Spirit, God's people once again marvel at, revere, and love the reality that God came, was an embryo, zygote, a fetus, unborn baby, infant, toddler, child, adolescent, and finally adult male. In my search for material this year I heard on the radio about a monster, magi, and a Messiah. Herod was flesh and blood satanic opposition to Jesus' coming. The Magi, disciples of the prophet Daniel confirmed that Jesus' coming wasn't a historical accident but a precisely planned and prophesied act of God in human history.

Christmas is summed up in one verse, Galatians 4:4-5, ***“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those that were under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons.”*** That did it. Part of God's fullness

of time included a monster and magi into the story of His Son. This week we'll cover the monster, next week, the magi. The Messiah makes for a merry Christmas. You and I simply have to **thank God, marvel, and believe!**

Thank God, marvel, and believe! The monster didn't succeed!



King Herod, wasn't called "the great" because of his goodness but because he was a genius in architectural planning. He was able to raise money from creative taxation that didn't put the nation in poverty. He even dropped taxes and convinced Rome to send aid during a famine.



He built the great harbor in Caesarea, Masada, his palace, and his most well-known building project, The Temple Mount in Jerusalem. His projects employed people so that taxes went back into the economy. He knew how to coo up to Rome and through military and Roman government presence, he brought money into the region.

He was really an Arab, but called himself a Jew. He married into the Jewish high priestly and royal family when he wed his 2nd wife, Mariamne. He convinced 1st Mark Antony and then Augustus to make him "King of the Jews." His stormy life had him marry 9 wives, one after another, the last 2 being his cousin and niece. Historians noted he had 14 known children but according to Josephus he had many others.



The Bible tells facts about Herod that other historical sources don't. One of those is Herod's slaughter of children under 2 in Bethlehem. When the Magi came to Israel, seeking for a newborn king, like a snake trying to appear harmless, saying he wanted to worship, the paranoid Herod prepared to strike for Jesus' early death.

Until this generation, historians accepted that it happened. In his 1998 book, *Herod and the Infants of Bethlehem* biblical historian Paul Maier wrote, "Most recent biographies of Herod the Great deny it altogether."

"Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men" (Matthew 2:16). When other sources and the Bible cover a historical event, the Bible is has always shown to be accurate while other sources aren't always so after time and more discovery. But this statement deserves a hearty AMEN! Instead of using other sources to verify the Bible, we should use the Bible to verify other sources of history and creation.



Kasher and Witzum profiled Herod in *Psychohistory and Psychobiography*. Nothing would stop him from such a deed. He killed a brother-in-law, the love of his life, his wife Mariamne, at least 3 sons, Alexander, Aristobulus, and Antipater, always in the paranoia that they may want to take his throne away. Since he followed the Jewish dietary laws, Augustus once quipped that it's be safer to be Herod's pig than his son. His final act, thankfully wasn't followed through. At his deathbed he ordered prominent and beloved people from across Israel to Jericho to be executed as soon as he died so that on the day of his death there would be mourning. Ken Spino said he was, "A madman who murdered his own family

and a great many rabbis.” So with all of Herod’s notorious killings, this one might have escaped notice by other historians other than Matthew. But it would be more unusual that if when he heard the King of the Jews was born, that he wouldn’t seek him out to kill the child!

But he not only fits the psycho profile but the spirit world profile. He was possessed to kill. Revelation 12:1-6 is a view from the spirit world about Herod’s attempt to kill baby Jesus.



“And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne.”

Though Herod wasn’t really Jewish, Jesus no longer recognizes Abraham’s blood in Jews who want murder. Jesus called the Pharisees in John 8:39, and 8:44 sons of Satan rather than sons of Abraham because they wanted to murder Jesus.

“They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did” (John 8:39), “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires, he was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). Herod wasn’t only a child of the Devil but was possessed to where he was the flesh and blood that the dragon used to try and kill the king.



“After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own

country by another way. Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son” (Matthew 2:9-15).



But the dreamers defeated the schemer. God sent the Magi home another way through angels in dreams. He gave Joseph a dream that had him take Jesus into Egypt. The monster couldn’t get to his victim. In fact, that very year the monster was invaded by monsters. He suffered kidney failure which caused gangrene of the bowels. Maggots lived in his intestines as he died in agony. The child, the Messiah, as Luke said, ***“Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).***



But Jesus also died in agony. If Herod’s agony wasn’t punishment from God, Jesus’ was. He took the punishment for our sins, provided we believe. His agony ended at the cross, but His mission didn’t. He rose from the dead and ascended

into heaven, fulfilling the vision of His escape from the dragon. Those who believe in Messiah who overcame the monster also fulfill the vision.

God could have sent Jesus to a wealthy family, to a time and place where no one would hate him, or at least sent those angels who visited the shepherds on a military mission to protect the newborn king with a heavenly bodyguard. Why did God do it the hard way? As sinners, we wouldn't get it otherwise!

Well, you and I need to know/ About the battle for the soul, /evil has a goal,/to keep you and I a /long way from the Messiah, /but though He's a king, /He didn't swim in bling, /he only came to bring, /to those seeking, /to know God deeply, /though sinful and weeping, /We're forgiven and free. /Merry Christmas because God became humanity, /man to die, yet God to save, /the greatest Christmas gift anyone ever gave!

Next week: Part 2: The magi and the Messiah.