

SERIES: 12 Voices of Christmas

VOICES: Herod - Voice of Deception
Magi - Voice of Adoration

SCRIPTURES:

Herod: Matthew 2:1-8

Magi: Matthew 2:9-12

WED. BLURB:

There are still two more voices of Christmas echoing in the air. Come hear King Herod's voice of deception as he fears the new kingdom that Jesus establishes. Yet he does not understand that Jesus is not an earthly king. His kingdom is not of this world. We also struggle to understand how Jesus is our king. The magi bring the voice of adoration, as they bow down to worship the new king. This is our response to Christmas. We come to worship Him, too.

HEROD: VOICE OF DECEPTION

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 2:1-8. Reader: Ian

PP#1: Matthew 2:1-8

[1] After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem [2] and asked, "Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

Reader: **Matthew 2:1-8.**

"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.'

PP#2: Matthew 2:1-8

[3] When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. [4] When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. [5] "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

[6] " 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'"

Reader: **"When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:**

"'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'"

PP#3: Matthew 2:1-8

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find Him, report to me, so that I may go and worship Him, too."

Reader: **"Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find Him, report to me, so that I may go and worship Him, too.'"**

PP#4: The Voices of Christmas

Herod: The Voice of Deception

"When Herod realized that the magi had fooled him, he grew very angry. He sent soldiers to kill all the children in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding territory who were two years old and younger, according to the time that he had learned from the magi." -Matthew 2:16

HEROD SPEAKS:*[Sitting, wearing a crown]*

(Coughing). Go away. Are you another one of those useless physicians? Leave me alone and let me die. What? You're not a doctor? You didn't come to plead for those I've had locked up in the Hippodrome, did you? Because you can save your breath. They shall not be released. When I die, they shall all be killed. That way, when I die, there will be mourning in this land.

PP#5: *Image of King Herod, older, convening royal court*

You want to hear about what? Magi? Bethlehem? Ha! Begone! I remember nothing about it. Oh. You mean those magicians from the East, Chaldeans. Agents of the Parthians, more likely. Yes, I saw them. It was a minor affair. They were chasing down some fabled star, looking for one born King of the Jews, they said. But I saw through them. Well, I am King of the Jews! Look no further. Any other talk is treason, and I will not abide treason! (Coughing).

Oh, I know why you're here. You're here to plead for Archelaus (ar-key-LAY-us). No. He shall not succeed me. My mind is made up. Antipas (AN-tih-pas) shall be king after me. I've seen to that. Do not argue for Archelaus (ar-key-LAY-us) or I'll have him killed like Antipater (an-TIP-uh-ter)! Antipater, my son. Well, he had it coming. He wanted to be king before his time. This is my reign and I'll share it with no rival. I am the king! I am the king!!.... [coughing]

Is that pity or contempt I read on your face? Spare me your condescension. You want to know about Bethlehem? Why? What is Bethlehem? A little village, a no place. Yes, I commanded that all the baby boys there be put to death. Only those below the age of two. What is the death of a few children? I had to secure the lineage of *my* line. I couldn't tolerate any supposed new king. How many could there have been? Don't let it bother you. A small village. No one cares.

PP#6: *King Herod dedicating the Temple, or a picture of him by/in the Temple.*

Actually, the people like me. Yes, I'm popular. Well-liked. Well, if I'm not, I should be. What about the temple? I built their temple, didn't I? The rabbis say, "If you haven't seen Herod's temple, you haven't seen beauty." You see? They should love me. But no. They have to behave like barbarians. They come at night and tear down Rome's eagle from the temple gate. Are they crazy? Who do they think rules this world? So you better leave his eagle in its place. It's rebellion, and I will not abide rebellion! I had them all burned alive. I'm still king in Jerusalem. I am the rightful king of the Jews. Let no one say otherwise. No one had better call me illegitimate. I am the only king!...[coughing].

So don't worry yourself about trivial events. Bethlehem was nothing. Mothers lose sons every day in the army. Why shouldn't a few mothers lose their sons for their king?

PP#7: *The magi with King Herod.*

Magi. They were funny. They walked right in and asked to see the baby born King of the Jews. How foolish! Did they know nothing of me? How dare they! Or was this cunning? Were they being clever? Nothing more secret than that which is too obvious, huh? Cunning...

I am the voice of deception, and I used deception on these Magi to accomplish my will. First, I called for the scribes and teachers. "What about it, men? Is there a prophecy about someone to be born king?" What did the Scriptures say? I had to know.

My scribe said there will be a king. The prophets wrote that He would be born in Bethlehem of Judea. They said the King born in Bethlehem was a new David, that mightiest of kings, come back for His throne. It said that his throne would be an everlasting throne and it will never lack one to sit on it. Whoever said that doesn't know Herod the Great! I am King of the Jews! My throne is the throne in Jerusalem!

And I fooled the wise. I told them, "Go ahead to Bethlehem. Find the infant king and then come back and lead me to Him, that I may worship Him too." As if I would bow my knee to anyone! I am the king. If there is any bowing to be done, it had better be done to me. I will not be bowing my knee to any baby born in Bethlehem. I made sure of that.

PP#8: *Image for the Killing of the Innocents in Bethlehem.*

But they lied. The wise men did not come back to Jerusalem. My soldiers chased the rumor of their travel to the borders of the kingdom. They returned to their own land without telling me. That was not wise. Did they really think they could protect any child in Bethlehem by running away? But I had learned of this prophesy, and I made sure it would not come true while I was king. Their scheme only brought death to many sons.

You are weak. I see it in your eyes. Perhaps you pity the mothers of Bethlehem. But their sons died for their country. Any mother of Bethlehem should be proud to have her son die so that the king should have his throne. The babies of Bethlehem died for a kingdom.

PP#9: *King Herod, looking menacing.*

Can't you see it? Are you so blind? Tell me--if you had a throne, would you so quickly surrender it? Would you bow to someone else and call Him Lord? Well, I don't give up my throne to anyone. Not to the Parthians. Not to Cleopatra, though she seduce a thousand Anthonys. And certainly not to a baby from Bethlehem.

Still... A new David, come back for his throne. An everlasting throne that will never lack one to sit on it. What a throne that would be! I near death, and my kingdom will be divided. What a King that would be! I die, and this David comes to life. A David. A throne. A kingdom. An ancient promise. They said, "And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, who are little among the clans of Judah, yet from you shall come forth One who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient of days." What a throne that would be. What a King that would be. [*Coughing*]

PP#10: *King Herod, old, sick, or perhaps on his death bead.*

Epilogue (Stand up, face the congregation and read):

Herod—called “the Great,” because of his vast building campaign throughout Israel—the voice of deception, died just five days after executing one of his sons, Antipater (an-TIP-uh-ter), whom he had accused of treason. Herod's son Antipas did not inherit his father's kingdom. The hostages in the Hippodrome were set free. And Herod, although he had killed many sons of Bethlehem, did not kill the Child born to the throne of David, for Joseph was told by an angel to escape with his family to Egypt until Herod had died.

HEROD: VOICE OF DECEPTION

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 2:1-8

Reader: Matthew 2:1-8

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

” ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.’”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find Him, report to me, so that I may go and worship Him, too.”

MAGI: VOICE OF ADORATION

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 2:9-12. Reader: James

PP#11: Matthew 2:9-12

[9] After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. [10] When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. [11] On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. [12] And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Reader: Matthew 2:9-12

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

PP#12: The Voices of Christmas

Magi: The Voice of Adoration

“On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him.” - Matthew 2:11a

THE MAGI SPEAK:

[With a gift box.]

We are from Babylon. I believe you call it the country of Iraq. We belong to a caste of men who occupy positions of the imperial court. We are the most learned men of our country. We have dedicated our lives to the study of all knowledge; astronomy is my particular area. We also have some experience with divination, magic and sorcery. Our understanding draws upon all sources of knowledge, including what you call science and superstition. Some call us astrologers because we study the heavenly constellations and try to understand how the heavens govern the affairs of earth. The stars can reveal much about what happens with people, and what will come to pass. And that’s precisely why we are one of the voices of Christmas.

PP#13: Wise men in the Babylonian royal court.

We are powerful and respected. We are sometimes sent from Babylon as ambassadors or as advisors to other kings and governors. So it was not that unusual that we should travel to a distant land to visit a king. Yet, when we came to Judea, it was no official political visit. We went on our own volition. We visited two kings. One, in a magnificent palace with a marble floor; the other, in

a poor house with a dirt floor. To one we paid our proper respects; to the other we gave our complete adoration.

There have been others like us in other kingdoms for centuries. The Hebrews have encountered our kind before. Moses contested with Pharaoh's wise men at the time of the Exodus. One of the great heroines of Israel, Esther, encountered men of our class in the Persian empire. Even the great Jewish prophets have spoken with us, men like Jeremiah and Ezekiel. We are well-known in this part of the world.

So it should not surprise you to see wise men raising their voices among the twelve voices of Christmas. What might surprise you is that we join our voices in adoration to the Jews' Messiah. We adore the Anointed One of Israel because He is the Savior of us all. We are not kings. We came to find the One who had been born King of the Jews. We came to worship Him. We, the final of the 12 Voices of Christmas, are the Voices of Adoration.

PP#14: *Wise men studying the scrolls and/or stars.*

You may wonder how we knew to expect a child who would be born King of the Jews. We first learned that a Messiah of the Jews was coming hundreds of years ago, during the days of Israel's captivity in Babylon. The wise men of Judah—Daniel, Hannaniah, and so forth—told us the Messiah would be sent by God to bring peace and freedom, joy and comfort, salvation to all people, in every nation. Their knowledge and learning was recorded in our books. We kept their scrolls. Yes, most forgot these writings, but a few of us kept them in our libraries.

But you may ask how did we know *when* to come? Well, the stars told us. In our continual observations of the stars, one season we noticed something very strange. In the spring, the planet Saturn and the planet Jupiter nearly touched one another in the night sky, as they were traveling through the constellation of Pisces [PIE-sees]. Together, they shone more brightly than any other star. At first we did not know what it meant. We searched our scrolls and libraries. Nothing.

Then I came across it. Pisces, you see, is the constellation attributed to the Hebrew people. So I began searching their prophets and teachings. Jupiter, to them, is the planet for their king. Saturn is their planet for the Messiah. So, when Jupiter and Saturn nearly touch while traveling through Pisces, it could mean that their promised messiah was born king of the Jews. We poured through the Hebrew scrolls. It was all foretold. A Messiah-King was promised, who would be born King of the Jews, but be the savior of all people. We were included in that prophesy. It was happening, and we did not want to miss the salvation He brought. We read the stars, and they told us that the God of Heaven was now fulfilling His promise of salvation to all people, including us!

PP#15: *The magi traveling en entourage*

So we set out on our journey to the land of the Jews. The planets separated again, and so we headed to the palaces of Jerusalem. Once in the capital city, we began to inquire where the One born King of the Jews might be. It was strange, because the Jews did not seem to know what we were talking about. We had come hundreds of miles to see the One born as Messiah-King. They didn't seem to know there was anyone born King. We wondered if perhaps we had come for nothing. You know, sometimes even wise men can be wrong.

PP#16: *The magi before King Herod*

The Jewish ruler, a man named Herod, called us to his palace at night. Perhaps his daytime schedule was too busy. Perhaps he had other reasons. The king seemed very interested in this Christ child. He told us that his experts said the prophets foretold that the child would be born in Bethlehem, a neighboring village. He asked when the star had appeared. He then sent us to find the child and told us that when we found Him, we should come back and tell him where to find the child so that he, too, could worship the Christ. I had my doubts about this Herod. Even in our brief visit, I could tell he was not loved by his people. He was served from fear. I recognized all the marks of a petty tyrant. They are the same in any land.

We set out for Bethlehem. And as we did, Jupiter and Saturn again came very close to each other, again making a very bright star. As we traveled south out of Jerusalem, the two planets traveled ahead of us, off to the south and slightly to the West. It hung low in the sky, right over Bethlehem. It seemed to lead us to a house where Mary, Joseph and the young boy were living. We knocked, and a peasant opened the door. "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?," we asked. He studied us for a moment. There we stood, strangers dressed in beautiful Babylonian gowns, asking to see the King of the Jews. I could see his wife in the room behind him, trying to see who was at the door. The man made up his mind. He stepped back and held the door open for us to enter. We stooped through the doorway and entered their cramped quarters. Our host went through the door at the back and spoke briefly with a man in another part of the house. I got the impression they were relatives.

PP#17: *The Magi bowing before Jesus in Bethlehem.*

The young woman sat with the boy in her lap. He might have been a year, a year and a half old. Not more than two. This was the Messiah-King for all the world. We approached Him solemnly and bowed with our faces to the dirt floor. In all my years of bowing to kings and governors, I had never really known what a bow was meant for. It was meant for Him, the One we read of in Daniel's scroll. This child was appointed to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, and to anoint the holy place of God. This child, so plain, so ordinary, sitting before us in His mother's lap. I trembled. We gave Him gifts: gold, fit for a king; incense, fit for a god; myrrh, fit for a sacrifice. We worshiped. We lifted our voices in adoration, chanting praises to the One True God, in the Babylonian tongue, surely unlike any that little village had ever heard.

We stayed and talked with them far into the night. We listened to them tell about angels, the birth of the child at the inn, and Joseph's dream. We told them that Herod had expressed an interest in the child. I could tell they were not pleased by that news. We left them and stayed at the inn.

That night the God of Heaven gave us dreams. We are experts in dreams, and when we discussed our dreams in the morning, it was clear to us that we should not go back to Herod. We circled around Jerusalem and left Judea by another way.

[Reflectively] We hid from one king, but sought out and found another. One king to be dreaded, another King to be adored. One king full of fear, another King full of peace. One king whose legacy was in buildings that soon toppled and fell, another King whose legacy of salvation still touches people. One king whose reign came to an end when he died, another King whose reign began at His death. One king described in history books, another King foretold by the prophets, testified by the heavens, and who received our voices raised in adoration.

So what about your voice? What will your voice be? What will you testify? What will you say about this Jesus?

Ours is the voice of adoration. It is the right response to Christmas. Will you not join ours?

MAGI: VOICE OF ADORATION

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 2:9-12

Reader: James

Reader: Matthew 2:9-12

After they had heard the king, the magi went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR JAN. 10, 2016

Christmas Series: “The Voices of Christmas”

Sermon #11 & 12: “Herod: The Voice of Deception”
“Magi: The Voice of Adoration”

Opening prayer

Introductions: Introduce yourself & share something you want to be different in your life a year from now.

Background: Read Matthew 1. What is going on in this chapter?

Read: Matthew 2:1-12

1. Verse 1. What from this verse tells you when the magi came from the East? How many of them? Are they kings? Did they ride camels?

2. Verse 2. Why did they come? What do you think the star might have been they mentioned?

3. Verse 2. Why would they come to worship Him, do you think?

4. Verse 3. Why was Herod troubled? Why all of Jerusalem?

5. Verse 4. Look up the prophesy they quoted from Micah 5:2. What does this verse mean in its original context? What might it be saying about the Messiah?

6. Verse 7. Why did Herod want to know when the star first appeared, do you think?

7. Verse 8. Do you believe what Herod said? Why or why not?

8. Verse 9-10. Notice they saw the star a second time. Why were they filled with joy?

9. Verse 11. What in this verse tells you that they did not arrive Christmas night?

10. Verse 11. Why did the magi bring these gifts? What did they represent? What happened to them?

11. Verse 12. By what route did they return home? Why?

12. Reflect on this story. What does this tell you about Christmas? What does it tell you about Jesus? What does it tell you about you?

12. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?