

Jesus is King: Threatening a king – Week 2

INTRO

Several of Matthew's biggest themes found in his genealogy of Jesus are continued in the story of Jesus' strange and miraculous birth.

1. **Jesus established a kingdom** – We are to see Jesus through the lens of David
2. **Jesus came to redeem anyone** – notably the Gentiles
3. **Jesus came to break the curse** – of sin and death
4. **Everything happened as God said it would** – constant use of O.T. prophecies
 - a. Matthew cites the O.T. 53x and alludes to it 76x = 129 O.T. references.

HOOK

Herod was the king of the Jews.

But make no mistake. There was no kingdom of Israel. The Jews were living under Roman oppression, and Rome had set up their own ruler over Judaea calling him king of the Jews.

Herod was born in 73BC to an Edomite father and Arab mother. His father, Antipater, was a man of wealth and influence in Rome, who converted to Judaism. And his mother was a noblewoman from Petra. Julius Caesar favored Antipater and honored his family with Roman citizenship and appointed him procurator of Judaea. Antipater used his political power to appoint Herod governor of Galilee. Herod was a talented leader and was later promoted to tetrarch of Galilee. Later, the Roman senate nominated him king of Judaea and gave him an army to support his rule. He would maintain this position for 32 years.

In an effort to pacify a feud with the Hasmoneans, a priestly family of Jewish leaders, he divorced his current wife and married the Hasmonean princess, Mariamne. Though it was a political strategy, he was also deeply in love with her.

With Caesar's death, there was conflict between Octavian & Mark Antony for the throne. Herod supported Antony who lost. When questioned by Octavian, Herod boldly announced having supported his rival. Octavian was so impressed with him, he confirmed Herod's kingship over Palestine as the one man who would rule it the way Rome wanted it ruled.

His talent for leadership brought him more and more recognition and power. He was given oversight of the Cyprus copper mines, had his territory expanded twice (ruling Palestine, parts of Jordan, southern Lebanon, and Syria), and even became president of the Olympic Games. During this time, he led many massive construction projects. He built several influential cities (one was the port city Caesarea Palaestinae which would become the capital of Roman Palestine), constructed huge fortresses and extravagant palaces, and embellished foreign cities with decoration and architecture. His crowning achievement was the stunning renovation of the temple at Jerusalem ([Lk.21:5](#)-Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations...) including giving it 35 acres of outer court.

But Herod was power hungry and with age became increasingly paranoid of losing it. This jealousy of his power made him suspicious of everyone and turned into vicious cruelty. When his evil sister made up lies about Mariamne, his favorite wife, being subversive, Herod killed her and ruthlessly had their two sons along with her brother (who was a high priest), mother, and grandfather put to death. He even had his firstborn son, Antipater – named after his father, disinherited and killed when he felt he was a threat to his throne. So, Matthew's story of his murdering the infants in Bethlehem in an attempt to kill this new "king of the Jews" was completely within character.

BOOK

Context: Matthew tells the incredible story of Jesus' birth from the perspective of Joseph. **Why is this critical to Matthew's purpose?**

Matt.1:18-25 – Matthew affirms repeatedly Mary's pregnancy was a miracle.

- The **author** says it, "...before they came together she was found with child from the Holy Spirit."
- The **angel** says it, "...that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."
- **Scripture** said it would happen, "the virgin shall conceive and bear a son."
- The **author** says it again in v.25, "[Joseph] took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth..."

For Jesus to inherit the legal heirship to David's throne by royal succession, Joseph had to accept and adopt Him. **What happened that Joseph would take Jesus as his son amidst the scandalous circumstances of Mary's pregnancy?** Rattled by the news, Joseph went to bed disturbed, wrestling with what to do. God sent an angel to comfort him, revealed how special this child was, and direct Joseph.

Matthew 1:20-23 - *...an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called His name Jesus.*

- The father is the name-giver and it's a sign of his adoption of Jesus.

- v.25 – Joseph obeyed – “And he called His name Jesus.”
 - This is significant that Joseph is accepting and adopting Him.
- His name (Jesus) and title (Immanuel) = purpose – God will save and be WITH His people.
 - Notice: It doesn’t say, “God will save His people from their sins,” but “HE – in reference to Jesus – will save ‘HIS’ people from their sins.”
 - Matthew is making a clear double-claim that Jesus IS YHWH GOD.
 - “Immanuel” is important to Matthew. He bookends his gospel with it!
 - 1:23 and 28:20 – “I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
 - Jesus is GOD with us.
- Addresses Joseph as “son of David.” Keeping the throne of David in the reader’s mind. Joseph is a direct heir.
 - **We are meant to see Jesus through the lens of David.**

LOOK

4 (out of 6) WAYS DAVID POINTS TO JESUS

Matthew 2:1-6 - *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, 2 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.” 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 ““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 used the genealogy and calling of Joseph to get the reader looking for **David-Jesus Easter eggs**. In every way that Jesus parallels David, it’s another proof that Jesus is the rightful king of David’s throne.

1) Hometown

Matthew 2:1-6 - *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, 2 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.” 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, “In*

Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 “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.”

- The chief priests and scribes quote Micah.

Micah 5:2 – *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*

- Why is this significant? Because Jesus’ tiny hometown is David’s hometown!

1) David’s hometown became an arrow pointing to a King greater than David, past David, to Jesus. (But... Herod is king.)

The Title “Shepherd”

Matthew 2:6 - *“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.”*

- **Who was the shepherd (the lowest occupation) who became a king?** David

Yet the man who was called the “shepherd king” used that same imagery for describing God.

Psalm 23:1-3a - *The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul.*

This theme of God as Shepherd is throughout the O.T. And it’s a title which Jesus boldly attached to Himself – subtly claiming to be the God of the O.T.

- **John 10:11** – *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*
- God has been working through history to use David as a flashing marquee to point to Jesus.

1) David’s hometown became an arrow pointing to a King greater than David, past David, to Jesus.

2) David’s title of being a shepherd-king points to Jesus, the greater Shepherd, the Good Shepherd.

2) Star

Matthew 2:1-6 - 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, 2 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.” 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 “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.””

- Creation itself is responding to this event! He is marked by a star.

The magi/wisemen were Persian/Babylonian astrologers, soothsayers, and magicians who operated as advisers to the royalty. The birth of a king would have required a customary state visit of dignitaries on behalf of their country.

They would have traveled around 800 miles and brought with them an entourage of attendants. They would have been quite the caravan. In short, their going to Jerusalem would have been noticed, and their visiting the small town of Bethlehem would have made waves.

They (Gentiles) are the first to announce Jesus as “King of the Jews.”

- **Why is this important?** Matthew is reminding us of the inclusion of Gentiles in Christ’s kingdom – just like adding the Gentile women to his genealogy.

They saw “His star” and came to worship Him.

Matthew 2:2b - For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.

Matthew 2:9-11a – 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. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.

- There is something unnatural about this star. It doesn’t sound like an alignment of planets, or a supernova, or a comet.
- It rose, it drew them West, then it led them South, and finally indicated a certain house in the town.

How did the magi connect this strange phenomenon with a king being born in Palestine who would be King of the Jews? Seems like a pretty specific celestial sign.

Foundational

Genesis 49:8-10 - *Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. 9 Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*

- Of the twelve tribes, when God's word comes to pass, which tribe will the founding king and dynasty come from? Judah
- What are the clues in the prophecy? The other tribes will bow to him, victory over enemies, scepter, ruler's staff, obedience of the peoples (Gentile nations included).

400 year later....

Numbers 24:15-17 - *The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, 16 the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: 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; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.*

- **In the short term, who did these prophecies predict? David**
 - Every Jew saw these prophecies as neon signs pointing to the reign of King David.
 - But neither of them were fully fulfilled by David. David didn't have the obedience of all other nations or have an unending dynasty. He wasn't marked with a star. **They look beyond him.**
- The magi were familiar with a 1,400-year-old prophecy from the ancient writings of Israel.
 - **Who was a Hebrew royal adviser to a Persian king?** Daniel! There's a good chance that it was Daniel that introduced the Torah into the Persian library.
 - So they came following this strange star.

- 1) David's hometown became an arrow pointing to a King greater than David, past David, to Jesus.
- 2) David's title of being a shepherd-king points to Jesus, the greater Shepherd, the Good Shepherd.
- 3) The star is the culmination of prophecies which point to King David and beyond him to Jesus.

3) Displacing a king

Matthew 2:1-6 - 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, 2 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." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 "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 2:7-8 - Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.

- Herod's secret meeting leading to the death of the infants is foreshadowing Jesus' secret trial at night which will end with His crucifixion.

Matthew 2:12-13 - And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. 13 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.

Matthew 2:16-18 - 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. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation,

Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

- Herod, "king of the Jews" rejects Christ; the magi worship him. Gentiles are welcomed and often accept while the Jews reject the kingdom.
- Why is Herod SO threatened that he would stoop to such brutality?

Remember, Herod is an Edomite (Idumean) by birth!

Numbers 24:17b-18 - *...a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.*

18 Edom shall be dispossessed; Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed.

- **What's going to happen when this star comes on the scene?** Edom will be evicted.
- Herod goes on a rampage to squash the prophecy. He knows he's not the rightful heir to the throne of David and certainly not the one in the prophecy.

Herod died in Jericho in 4BC not long after this incident, and he died a slow and agonizing death. He was grotesquely obese, suffered from chronic kidney disease, and his genitals were swollen with gangrene and infested with maggots eating his flesh. It's reported that he suffered from intense itching, crippling abdominal pain, convulsions in every limb, and breathlessness. One modern doctor looking at his symptoms called him a, "walking encyclopedia of diseases."

His maladies took months to kill him, perhaps even as long as a couple of years. His suffering was so acute, he tried to commit suicide by stabbing himself, but was stopped by his cousin.

Yet, even as his death approached, his ruthless and evil character lashed out again. He knew he was loathed by those under his dominion, and no one would grieve his passing. So he gave his sister an order. Upon his death, she was to arrange a meeting of the influential leaders in the nation and gather them into a single arena. They were then to be executed. This way there would be nationwide mourning surrounding his death. Luckily, his sister and son didn't follow through with his orders.

- If his death warrant for the infants, two and under, reflected **when** the magi told him the star first appeared, it would seem his diseases took hold of him after it first came onto the scene. Maybe it's a coincidence.
- No matter the timing, the star marked the birth of Jesus and the soon death of the king.

1) David's hometown became an arrow pointing to a King greater than David, past David, to Jesus.

2) David's title of being a shepherd-king points to Jesus, the greater Shepherd, the Good Shepherd.

3) The star is the culmination of prophecies which point to King David and beyond him to Jesus.

4) Matthew sees David's displacing Saul as foreshadowing of Jesus' displacing Herod.

Look at Matthew's parallels!

- **David**, born in Bethlehem, shepherd, displaced Saul, established/ruled the kingdom of Israel.
- **Jesus**, born in Bethlehem, Shepherd, displaced Herod, established the Kingdom of heaven.
 - And “King of the Jews” will be posted over His head upon death.

Foreign Dignitaries

Queen of Sheba – a foreign dignitary traveling to bring gold and spices to Solomon, son of David.

Matthew 2:11 – Foreign dignitaries traveling to bring gifts to the “son of David” bringing gold and spices.

Branch of David

Matt. 2:23 – “called a Nazarene” – found nowhere in the O.T. or even apocryphal books.

- One explanation is Matthew sees in His being from Nazareth the fulfillment of the suffering servant being despised.
- The more likely explanation is Matthew is using wordplay to make a significant connection. The Greek word for “Nazareth” (Nazara) sounds similar to the Hebrew word for “Branch” (Neser).

Isaiah 11:1-2 – *There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots shall bear fruit. 2 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*

- It's most likely, the O.T. reference Matthew is making is to David (again!) where the coming Messiah would be called the “Branch.”
- This theme of the Messiah being called the Branch is found in other places, though by a different Hebrew word (e.g. **Jeremiah 23:5**)
 - ... “it might be fulfilled, that He would be called a Branch.”

Bonus: Parallel to Moses (prophet, priest, judge, king)

Slaughter of the innocents, out of Egypt, baptism/Red Sea, 40 days in the wilderness, gives the new law on the Mount, transfiguration.

FURTHER INQUIRY

What is the significance of magi giving gifts?

TOOK

Scar from Lion King – He had no right to rule Pride Rock. It was taken through treason. In fact, his selfishness and pride ruined the land and sent his people into

starvation. But when the rightful king returned (Simba), everything is restored and brought back into balance at the end.

- **Who sits as king on the throne of your heart?**

Do you grip the handles of your throne tighter anytime that position of power is threatened? Do you flinch when I say that salvation is making Jesus the master over your entire life?

- Perhaps, you may look inward and see an imposter on the throne of your heart, and they look just like you. Are you the captain of your ship, the master of your fate?
 - If so, He is not your Lord, your Savior, or your King. **You will only ruin your life - in this life and the next - and starve your spirits.**

We are NOT Simba. No. Jesus is the Lion of Judah who must come and dispossess the imposter from the throne of our lives.

- He has created your heart to be His throne, your body to be His temple, and we have rebelled against Him and denied Him Lordship of our lives.
- The pretender must crumble from his/her self-appointed chair. We want to kick and claw to maintain power, but the rightful King is here and demands authority over us.

What is it you are holding on to? What area of your life will you not surrender?

To **unbelievers:** **Is it your life?** Repent and be saved.

To **believers:** **Is it your sin? Is it your future?** Run to your King and allow Him to sanctify you, to replace the stony heart with His.

“EVERY knee will bow and EVERY tongue confess that He is Lord (Master)” (Phil.2:10-11)

The insurgent WILL come down from the throne. It will either happen in this life through our repentance and surrender or in the next life through God’s righteous judgment of treason.

RECAP

- Matthew is constantly looking at Jesus through the lens of David.
- Every parallel is confirmation that Jesus is the rightful king, and every parallel shows King Jesus superseding the reign of King David as King over all.
- In this story we see at least four references to Jesus.

- The royal star, the birthplace of Bethlehem, the title of Shepherd, and the displacing of a king.
- Jesus challenges the imposter on the throne of our hearts.
- That rebel will come down in this life through our surrender or in the next life through God's judgment. "Every knee will bow."

Challenge 1: Look inward. What are you allowing to sit in the place of King Jesus? What are your idols? Begin praying for the Lord to break them down every morning.

Challenge 2: Begin to feed your spirit and starve your flesh.

~ *Soli DEO Gloria*