

Herod and the Wise Men

26th November 2017

Matthew 2:1-18,

In today's text, we can find that the wise men from the east saw the star rising in the sky inquired where the King of the Jews has been born. Of all the people in Matthew 2, these Gentile wise men from the east were the only ones seeking out and coming to worship the newborn king. The Jewish religious leaders basically responded to Herod's questions of prophecies of the coming Messiah with indifference (verse 4). Three groups of people and three different responses to Jesus' birth are present in the first six verses of Matthew 2. Herod was troubled. The Jewish chief priests and scribes were indifferent. But the Gentile wise men were ready to worship. It is not hard to see the same three responses of people today when it comes to celebrating the birth of Jesus: some are troubled, others are indifferent, and there also are people ready to worship.

When Herod was told what the prophecies said about the birth of the coming Christ from Micah 5:2, his plan was for the magi to lead him to the home of this young threat of his throne. However, later King Herod was getting anxious at the delay from these wise men who were supposed to return with good news of Jesus' whereabouts. In fact, he *"gave orders to kill all the boys who were two years old and under in Bethlehem"* (vs. 16).

Here we see that Herod is jealous of his people's affection and does not so much love his people as he is consumed by a passionate need to be loved by them. God, on the other hand, first loves his people, and seeks thereby to prime our pumps to return his love. Herod's passion is centred on himself and his own desires and needs whereas God's passion is centred on his beloved and on our eternal welfare. At Christmastime, we are never far from the love of God. The birth of the Christ child, together with his inevitable violent death and glorious resurrection, has the power to free us from the deadly deception that is Herod's love, and free us for the living truth that is holy love.