

“THE TWO KINGS”

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EPIPHANY

TEXT: MATTHEW 2:1-12

GOD’S WORD: ISAIAH 60:1-3

I – LEADERSHIP:

As I rose through the various ranks in my police career I was privileged to attend numerous classes on management and leadership. I still use some of the lessons I learned in leading the church. I’ve studied Maslow’s theory of hierarchy. I learned all about theory X and theory Y. I was taught how to handle Baby Boomers, Baby Busters, and Generation X. All of this was great and I learned a lot, but what I discovered from actually working for and with others and being in a position of leadership myself, was that it all boils down to the fact there are really only two kinds of leaders...THOSE YOU WANT TO WORK FOR AND THOSE YOU HATE TO WORK FOR. I’ve worked for both kinds.

I’ve also noticed there are some major differences between the two:

GOOD LEADER

- EARN RESPECT
- OBEY OUT OF RESPECT
- THERE TO GIVE
- CARES FOR THE PEOPLE
- WORRIES ABOUT OTHERS
- PEOPLE SERVE WILLINGLY
- PEOPLE WORK WITH
- SECURE IN THEIR POSITION
- EMPOWERS OTHERS
- RESPECTED / LOVED

BAD LEADER

- DEMANDS RESPECT
- OBEY OUT OF FEAR
- THERE TO TAKE
- CARES ONLY FOR SELF
- WORRIES ABOUT SELF
- FORCED TO SERVE
- WORK AGAINST
- PARANOID
- TAKES ALL THE POWER
- DESPISED / HATED

So...If you had your choice, which one would you serve? Which one would you follow? Who would be your leader?

II – THREE KINGS:

It's this very question of leadership in your life I see addressed in the end of the Christmas story. Mary and Joseph have traveled to Bethlehem and Jesus has been born in the stable. The holy family found a place to stay for a while and we find next the familiar story of the Kings / Magi bringing their gifts to the baby who's star they have followed to find him.

But if you read the story a little closer...if you really examine it, you'll find some discrepancies in what you grew up thinking. You'll find out it wasn't about three kings and their gifts, it was about two kings and their leadership. It's all about which leader is the good leader and which one is the bad leader. It's about making a choice as to which leader those travelers chose to follow, and which one mankind has chosen to follow since. Let's look at the story again together.

III – TEXT:

Matthew 2:1-12 (NLT)

Visitors from the East

¹ Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ²“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.” ³ King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. ⁴ He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?” ⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote:

⁶ ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,
are not least among the ruling cities of Judah,
for a ruler will come from you
who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’”

⁷ Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸ Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

⁹ After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! ¹¹ They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened

their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

So we all remember that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in Judea. This was the city of David and sits about 6 miles SW of Jerusalem. It is considered to be a royal city since David came from there and was the greatest king of Israel. David is also the one who God promised would have an heir on the throne forever. Jesus being born here will fulfill that promise of God. This is where the star was leading these wise men who were following the prophecies about the birth of the Messiah. They stop and ask the Jewish king Herod about where they can find this baby.

It's in this question that I see the second King of the story. The question they asked Herod was where they could find the "newborn king of the Jews." This troubled Herod greatly because he thought he was the king of the Jews. He knew of the prophecies as well as the wise men and if this new King had been born it would be a threat to his throne, to his power. All of Jerusalem knew what kind of a king he was and knew what he was capable of. They were upset because they knew he would take some kind of action and they and others would be hurt by it. Herod had already killed his favorite wife and his sons due to his paranoia. What would he do now!

His advisors, and the Jewish elite were called and told him what the prophet Micah had said about the Messiah being born in Bethlehem. He sent for the wise men and told them what he knew and sent them on their way telling them to come back and tell him where they found the child so he could go and worship him too. Only worship he had in mind involved death to the child.

The wise men followed the star, found the holy family, and fell down and worshipped Jesus as they presented him with the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. When they left they followed a different path, away from Herod as God had told them to do.

We know that Joseph was also told in a dream to take his family and flee, which resulted in Herod killing all the male children two years old and younger. His subjects obviously had reason to be disturbed and worried.

IV – THE TWO KINGS:

So there you have it. There are two kings, each representing the Jewish people, but each very different from the other:

HEROD

- Appointed "King of the Jews" by the Romans

- Was a blood thirsty tyrant – killed favorite wife, three sons, mother in law, and innocent children to stay in power
- Feared by people...hated
- Forced his rule on people – no options
- Kingdom only here on earth in region of Judea. Died when he died.

JESUS

- Appointed “King of the Jews” by God
- Is a loving, kind, forgiving ruler.
- Only blood he ever shed was his own
- Loved by his subjects
- No one forced to serve him – we have options
- When he died his kingdom became reality and his dominion is over everything in heaven and earth

Two kings and they both want control of your life. Herod represents man and promises you power and pleasure if you serve him...the world, as your king. Trouble is when this life is over, the kingdom dies.

Or Jesus, who wants to be your King and lead you in what’s right. Not only today but for all of eternity. So.....

V – WHICH KING WILL YOU FOLLOW?

The earthly kings or the heavenly King? Will you choose instant gratification or eternal gratification? Will you choose glory that ends in this life, or glory that can surround you forever? The choice is yours. But it’s a choice everyone must make. There is no sitting on the fence. There is no doubt in my mind which King is most beneficial to your life...but you must choose to follow him.

The kings of this world can only offer you trinkets like gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The King of the universe offers you Salvation and eternal life. Which one would you choose if you were truly a wise man or woman?

The angels sang about him.

The shepherds found him.

Wise men still seek him today.

Amen