

HEROD – THE VILLAIN OF CHRISTMAS

--MATTHEW 2:1-23--

INTRODUCTION:

For many a Christmas tradition is to watch Christmas movies and most of those movies have a villain of some type who is trying to destroy Christmas or at least make it unpleasant for everyone.

The true Christmas event that took place more than 2000 years ago, the birth of Jesus Christ, has its own villain. This villain is a cruel and wicked man. Herod is a legitimate villain, but for the most part he gets no more than a passing over in the history of the first Christmas, he is not someone we even want to consider. But the truth is Herod figures very prominently in the first Christmas. To ignore this man is to ignore the world into which the Lord Jesus Christ was born, and you also miss an important thread in God's ultimate plan of redemption. Underneath the joy and awe of our Christmases is a dark thread of violence, if we look closely enough, we will see the signs of a cosmic war against all that is good.

I. IT ALL BEGAN IN THE GARDEN (Genesis 3:15)

- a. If we are to fully understand what is happening in this passage of Matthew, we must _____ the city of Jerusalem, we must leave the quiet village of Bethlehem and _____ back thousands of years in history and hundreds of pages in our Bibles. (Ephesians 6:12)
- b. We must understand that at the very heart of the incarnation, the very heart of God leaving heaven to become flesh, is the cosmic _____ between God and Satan.
- c. The incarnation, the first Christmas does not start in 5 BC or in one of the Gospels, but millennia before this, all the way back to the garden of _____.
- d. This first _____ by Satan did not catch God off guard. (Genesis 3:14-15)

II. HEROD THE GREAT (Matthew 2:1-23)

- a. What do we know about _____ and about who he is?

- b. Knowing this about Herod, we can understand why he was _____ when a noisy caravan arrives from the east asking everyone in Jerusalem to point them to the new king of the Jews.
- c. So, he gathered all the religious leaders, the scribes and the priests who _____ the Old Testament scriptures and knew them forward and backward. (Micah 5:1)

III. THE TRUE KING OF ISRAEL (Matthew 2:1-23)

- a. So, Herod had a plan to get rid of this infant king of the Jews, just as he had _____ threats in the past, he would take care of this one as well.
- b. This is what Matthew's Gospel is about, this is what the first Christmas is about. God has determined to set upon His holy mountain His _____, Jesus Christ.

IV. INTIMIDATED BY A CHILD (Matthew 2:1-23)

- a. Herod did not believe he was _____ against God, he believed it was this infant child who he saw as the threat to his power, who he saw as a threat to his throne.
- b. Stop and think for just a moment how much _____ this brought into the sleepy village of Bethlehem.
- c. The child born and laid in a manger was a sign of _____.
- d. This judgment leads us to another sign, a sign of _____, the hope that is seen in the birth of this child signals that something new is on the way.
- e. The heir to David's throne has come. That long cosmic battle between the offspring of the serpent and the _____ of the woman has culminated in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Isaiah 9:7)

CONCLUSION:

Matthew's narrative of the first Christmas offers us hope. Hope is something we desperately need in this broken world in which we live. The hope of the first advent is that there will be a second advent and at the second advent God will install His King on the holy mountain, on Mount Zion. This is what we hope for as we celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Until that day there are going to be many more evil

tyrants like Herod who have a lust for power and will do anything to attain that power and then retain it. But we must remember that evil tyrants like Herod do not live forever. Matthew makes this clear when he writes in verse 19, “*But when Herod died...*” (Matthew 2:19a, NASB95) This paranoid and powerful king died, and his kingdom was divided up by Rome, his sons sharing some of the power. And not too long after that, several decades later the Herodian dynasty ended and there were no more Herods on the throne of Israel. But that infant that Herod the Great tried to kill, He still lives and will live forever having defeated sin, death, and the grave. The infant King outlasted the illegitimate king and will outlast all the evil tyrants of this world. God’s promise in Genesis 3:15 was fulfilled when the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, rose from the dead crushing the head of Satan. The hope of Christ’s second advent and His everlasting Kingdom is what we celebrate when we remember our Savior’s first advent, that God became flesh and dwelt among us.