

VOICES OF VILLAINS

learning good lessons
from bad examples

Herod's Fury / Matthew 2

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 too may go and worship him." **MATTHEW 2:1-8**

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

MATTHEW 2:16-17

"But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short." **REVELATION 12:12b**

"Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel!"
GENESIS 49:7a

"Herod's Fury"

Herod "the great" is the first and the father of a family of Jewish rulers we encounter in the New Testament, all of whose lives are intertwined with Jesus and His disciples (sons – Herod Philip, Archelaus and Herod Antipas [Mt 14:3, Mt 2:22, Mk 6:14-29, Lk 23:6-12], grandson Agrippa I [Acts 12:1-23], and great grandson Agrippa II [Acts 25-26]). The "greatness" of this first Herod lay in his ambition, ruthlessness, paranoia, and murderous rage. His megalomania and furious protection of his own privilege and place led him to murder many of his own family, as well as the innocent children of Bethlehem reported in Matthew 2. In terms of villainy, murdering children in their cradles has to rank in the first order of cruelty, callousness, and pure evil. The good lessons to be learned from a horrific villain like Herod have to do with how we handle our own anger, ambition, and need for security. In contrast to Herod, we need to follow Jesus and:

1. seek greatness through giving not taking
2. use power to lift up not hold on/hold down
3. channel anger into change not destruction

NEXT WEEKEND: The Voices of Villains – "Judas' Betrayal"