

# The Grinch King - Herod the Great

## Mat. 2:16-28

Well this morning I'm going to tell you about the original Christmas Grinch - his name, **"Herod the Great"**.

He was the personification of the darkness into which the light had shown.

- If I had to give the entire OT a title I would call it - In Search of a King.
- If I gave the NT a title I would call it - Kingdom Come

You see the story begins in the Kingdom of Eden. King Adam is given dominion over the entire planet, but rather than provide godly leadership to his wife and soon to be progeny he becomes a wicked ruler and enters into cooperation with Satan. God judges Adam, Eve, the Serpent... but he promises a coming King, the Seed of the woman who will set right all that went wrong in Eden.

- With every son born, they must have wondered, "Could this be the Seed?"

But one after another, they fell short... none could defeat Satan, overcome death, and regain the authority, dominion and kingdom lost by Adam.

- Able looked promising... but he was killed by Cain.
- Then Seth,
- Then Noah - It really looked like it could be Noah! He built the Ark, he trusted God... but then did you see what he did when he got off the ark? I'll tell you this - it isn't in your kid's storybook bible.
- Then Father Abraham - the father of the faithful! But did you hear how he lied about his wife and shared her with another man?
- Then came Moses - surely this is the Lord's anointed King! But he murdered a man, and he became angry striking the rock twice. Which doesn't seem like a big deal until you realize that the rock was a type of Christ! The string typified the crucifixion - and Christ died ONCE for our sins, not twice. Moses failed.
- Then came David - the man after God's own heart, the Giant killer! But he who slew Goliath was slain by his own lust when he saw the wife of Uriah bathing.

BUT THEN CAME A SON LIKE NO OTHER... THE SEED OF WOMAN, but THE SON OF GOD. ALL THE EARTH FELL SILENT UNTIL THAT SILENCE WAS BROKEN BY A BABY'S CRY. Christmas - the first Advent. The birth of the King.

### **TEXT: Matthew 2:1-3 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> 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, <sup>2</sup> 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.”<sup>3</sup> When **Herod the king heard this, he was troubled**, and all Jerusalem with him:

You know the story - the wise men go and worship, but they return to Persia by a different route. Then God tells Joseph to take the child and his mother and flee.

### **Matthew 2:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> 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.

A team of soldiers road into the little town of Bethlehem and murdered all of the male children under the age of two. Bethlehem was a small town, there were probably no more than **20 or 30 children** murdered that night. But to their families, they were everything. And what Herod was attempting was even worse than what he accomplished. He was attempting to murder the Savior, the Messiah, God’s Anointed.

## **The Grinch King Refused to Relinquish the Throne**

**Do you remember the question the wise men asked? “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?”**

Do you see the implications of that statement - Herod was appointed King of the Jews, but Jesus was their King by virtue of His royal lineage. Where is the one born, the rightful King?

Herod had no right to sit on the throne, he was a pretender for three reasons.

### **A. He was Appointed by Rome:**

- Israel Began as a Theocracy - Governed by Judges who enforced the law of God. Yet they rejected God as their king and demanded a human King like the other nations had. They wanted to transition from Theocracy to Monarchy.
- They were given King Saul, then David, then Solomon, then Solomon’s son Rehoboam.
- Under the rule of Rehoboam the Nation was divided in **2 kingdoms** and ultimately conquered by a succession of warring nations.
  - The **Northern Kingdom** had been overrun by the **Assyrians** in 721 BC.
  - The **Southern Kingdom** was conquered by **Babylon** in 586 BC.
  - 538 Babylon is conquered by Cyrus “the Great” of **Persia**



- **THIS ENDS YOUR OLD TESTAMENT and begins what is called the intertestamental period. Some this history written about in the Apocrypha.**
- 332 BC **Alexander the Great** from Greece defeats the Persians (Darius III). Greece rules over Israel for a couple hundred years. At this time Greek became the predominant language, that is why your New Testament was written in Greek.
- Around 175 BC Greek ruler **Antiochus Epiphanies** did everything he could to destroy the Jewish religion which lead to an overwhelming Jewish revolt.
- 164 the Jews gain their independence and establish the Hasmonean Dynasty under the leadership of **Judas Maccabaeus**. That Dynasty lasted for 103 years.
- 63 BC Jerusalem was captured by **Rome** under roman general **Pompey**.
  - While a civil war was brewing in Rome, Caesar appointed **Antipater** a Roman sympathizer as regent ruler in Israel.
  - Antipater appointed his 16 year old son **Herod** as Governor of Galilee.
  - On March 15, 44 BC Caesar was murdered, his great nephew **Octavian** (Augustus) became the first Roman Emperor.
  - After Julius Caesar's assassination was avenged, Octavian appointed **Herod** Tetrarch of Galilee.
- Immediately Herod's Rule was challenged when war broke out between Rome and the Par-thians. Herod had to flee to Rome. He was later sent back to Jerusalem with 2 legions of soldiers from Rome and given the highest possible title **Basileus**.

So Herod wasn't voted in, No prophet came to anoint Herod as King - He was a perpetual reminder of Roman Sovereignty over Israel.

*Not only because he was appointed by Rome, but notice letter "B"*

## **B. Because he was an Edomite:**

**Edomites** - the physical descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob (Israel).

Remember, **Isaac** had two sons, twins - **Jacob** and **Esau**. Before they were ever born God told Rebecca that the Older (Esau) would serve the Younger (Jacob).

**Edom was Esau's nickname.** The Name Edom means RED. He liked red things, and he was probably red in his hair color.

The EDOMITES were the descendants of Esau. Herod was an Edomite.

Throughout history Israel and Edom had been at odds.

NOW - in Israel an un-annointed, Roman appointed, Edomite King Herod the Great. It would be like if Iran took over Israel and appointed a Palestinian King.

### **c. His Relationships were in Chaos -**

#### **In Rome things were unsettled:**

- Herod had a very independent nature so there was always conflict between Herod and Rome.
- Rome itself was always unsettled:
- He settled things with Julius Caesar, then Marc Antony took over.
- He settled things with Marc Antony, then Augustus took over.

#### **In Israel he was not accepted:**

- He was not fully a Jew
- He did not live a godly life.
- Herod began extensive **building programs** including a new wall for Jerusalem, a new fortress called Antonias, a new port called Caesarea, new currency, a new market, new amphitheater, royal palace and finally a new temple.
  - This all sounds wonderful, but keep in mind with government expansion comes increased taxes which further agitated the Jews.

#### **He had family difficulties:**

- He was married 10 times. 10 marriages didn't work out... at some point you'd think he would wonder, "Maybe, it was me?", he was the common denominator in every marriage.
- Herod executed wives, a brother in law, mother in law, claimants of other kingly dynasties, ultimately he executes his own sons when he views them as potential threats.
- **Octavian (Augustus)** said about Herod: *"I would rather be Herod's pig than Herod's son."* Why as a Jewish Ruler Herod wouldn't eat pork, he would kill swine, but a son, daughter or wife - no problem killing those.
- As he neared **death** - Herod imprisoned all the notables of Judea, ordering that they be executed on the day of his death so the country would mourn, because he knew they would not mourn his death.

## Herod was at odds with GOD so he was at odds with everyone else.

Christmas for others was a beautiful time, but not for Herod.

- There as no star shining in his heart.
- There were no angels singing.

Christmas was marked by sin, shame, darkness and guilt, he was flooded with anger and murderous jealousy.

**What about you this Christmas season?** Have you made Christ the center of your life? Does he rule on the throne of you heart?

### James 4:1–3 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

## The War without is because of the war within

**ILLUSTRATION:** I heard a little boy who was Christmas shopping with his mother and his mother was angry about the prices, frustrated with the crowds, gripping and complaining... they went through the line at Walmart and somehow the cashier offended the mother...when they got out of the store the mother looked at the little boy and said, “Did you see the look that cashier gave me!?” The little boy said, “***She didn’t give you that look mamma, you’ve had it all month!***”

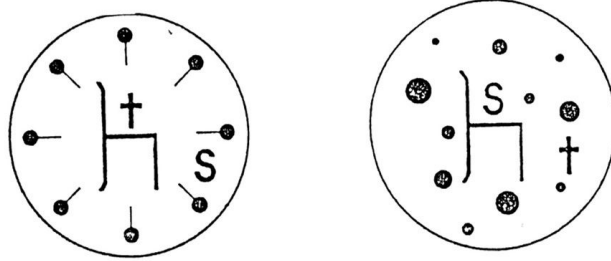
Every family has at least one person who has the ability to ruin the joy of Christmas... If you can’t think of who that person is your family...guess what!? It’s you!

Could it be that some people are dreading Christmas get togethers because they know you are coming? I don’t want to be that person. I don’t want to be the monster in the manger.

But I’ve learned this - I can’t fix you. I can’t fix my family. All I can fix is me. But when I’m at peace, it is strange how all my relationships are peaceful as well.

**Tim Keller said it well.** “We have to have democracy because human beings are so sinful that none of us really are fit to rule. But we need a king. We were built for a king.” The reason for the old myths, the reason for the new myths (all the superhero myths are new myths about kings), the reason we adore kings and create them is because there is a **memory trace** in the human race, in you and me, of a great King, an ancient King, one who did rule with such power and wisdom and compassion and justice and glory so his power and wisdom and compassion and glory were like the sun shining in full strength. We know we were built to submit to that King, to stand before and adore and serve and know that King.

Your life will only make sense when you are rightly related to that King.



**ILLUSTRATION:** *So what are we to do?*

## **VIDEO - Who sits on the throne?**

**Campus Crusade for Christ used this picture for years to describe how life was designed to work: Who is on the throne you or Christ?**

**ILLUSTRATION: Gift card versus check book.**

But keep in mind the temptation is to give Jesus a gift card at Christmas. A gift card says, "go this far and no further". Jesus wants the signed blank check that says I'm entrusting all to you. Then and only then is Jesus Lord. Then and only then is Christmas what it should be.