

Title: “Two Kings. Two Reactions”

Chris Ryan	Matt. 2:1-12	1/4/2025
<p>Service Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6, Eph 3:1-12, Matt. 2:1-12 <i>The revelation of Jesus does not leave people neutral. It exposes fear and false gods. But it also creates joy and worship. .</i></p>		

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

2 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, ² 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.” ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea,...”

A rising star announced the descending Christ. A king had been born. And this was no ordinary king for he was bringing with him a kingdom, *his kingdom*, and it would do what no earthly one could – it would bring true freedom to all the earth. And word was spreading about this king. The shepherds had already been told and had already sought him out to worship. And now the wise men were seeking, for they saw the sign from the heavens. And they, too wanted to worship. And so they traveled, following the star. And the news continued to spread: from these Magi to King Herod and all Jerusalem. But when *they* heard, their response was different. Instead of joy they were troubled.

One newborn king. Two reactions. One announcement. Two responses. And here is where this message cuts to the heart: those who were attached to him were the Gentiles! *They* were the ones that sought him out to worship! They were the ones who desired to welcome this new king into the world. God’s chosen people, the Jews? It was *they* who were *repelled* by the announcement! The very ones who should have understood best what had just happened, who should have been the most excited about this news, were the ones who became afraid and troubled. Why? **What was it about this newborn king that so troubled God’s people?**

For King Herod, he felt threatened. He feared losing control of the power he thought he possessed. He feared losing his authority. There is a great deal of *comfort* in thinking that you are in control of your life – and a great deal of *discomfort* when that control is threatened. The same can be said of the Jewish leaders.

Can the same be said of you?

Your initial reaction to this question is the same as mine, I’m sure. It is a resounding “NO!” I don’t feel threatened by the coming king. I am like the Gentiles who welcomed him. Indeed, I’m here, right now, *worshiping* him! No, the same *cannot* be said about me. And I’m sure you feel the same way. But what if that reaction is only surface-deep? What if we were to dig just a bit deeper? What if we were to spend time thinking about what it means to really welcome him, to seek him out in our own lives? Would we still have the same resounding response?

I can't look into your heart but I can look into mine. And after my initial reaction, I think about all the times in my life, even now, when my sinful heart reacts defensively to Christ's kingship. Sometimes it is by fearfully clinging to control my own life. I am comfortable with the life I live, comfortable with my own personal kingdom. In it I am king and that allows me to make decisions to keep me on my own throne.

But Jesus didn't come to co-rule my life. He didn't come to be a king alongside me. He came to be my king – the *only* king in my life. He came to rule over my life. And even more than that, he came to free me from my sinful inclinations to keep him as co-ruler. *This* is why he came. He came because he knows that what I really need, even if I don't believe it or even if I would prefer to reject it, is his kingship. I *need* him as my king – my *only* king. I *need* him to be in control of my life. I *need* him for all things, even if I don't want to admit it. Even if I continue to fight against it. My sinful flesh continues to react to his coming the same way that Jerusalem did: with fear and hesitation.

But even in these times, even with this reaction, he still comes to me. He came in the form of a human to take every sinful thought, every sinful deed, every sinful action of mine. He came to gather them all up and accept the wrath of the father in my place. He came to free me from everything, so that I could be free – free to welcome him as my king, my Lord.

And he didn't even stop there! He didn't just carry my sin to the cross. He gave me proof that he set me free when he rose from death – when he continued to live! In that moment he gave a message to me and the world that he is a king, *the king*, who is above all other kings – even the one in myself. And he is a king who I can place *my life* in *his* hands and know with full confidence that the kingdom he welcomes me in, and the freedom that comes with that kingdom is unmeasurably greater than anything I could ever achieve on my own.

And welcome he does. First by sending the Holy Spirit to me to spark in me a faith that believes. Then through baptism where I enter the front gates and become a citizen in his kingdom. And in there he continues to feed me with his own body and blood, continues to remind me who I am, and offer to me forgiveness when I forget. And he never stops. Our king reigns. Our king sustains. Our king forgives. And our king gives us the power of the Holy Spirit to know and understand who he is and what he does.

This is my king. Jesus is my king. And I fall to my knees when I contemplate all this. And I worship him because he is my king.

And so I ask again, can the same be said of you?

Please pray with me.

All glory, honor, and praise be to You, Lord Jesus Christ, true king and light of the nations. You have revealed yourself to the lowly and drawn us to rejoice in your mercy. Keep us steadfast in faith, joyful in worship, and bold in confession, until we see you face to face in your eternal kingdom; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.