

# CHAPTER 1

## King Herod's Attack Against the Christ Child

In the days when Jesus Christ was born, who was the king over the land (Matthew 2:1)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Our history books refer to this King as Herod the Great, and that is exactly what he was. He was great in wickedness, great in cruelty and great in his love for power. You can see his jealousy and love for power in Matthew 2:2-3. History tells us that he murdered some of his closest family members, without showing any mercy, including one of his many wives and her two brothers. Herod the Great was a monster of a man. Even the Emperor Augustus (the man who was the King over all the empire) once said, "It's better to be Herod's hog (pig) than to be his son."

In the last months of Herod's life there a baby was born in Bethlehem who was the K\_\_\_\_\_ of the J\_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 2:2) and who was also called the K\_\_\_\_\_ of K\_\_\_\_\_ (Revelation 19:16). Herod did not want any *RIVAL KING* to challenge his position on the throne. He was the King, and he considered himself the only King. He did not want anyone else to be King.

Sometimes we act just like Herod in that we do not want the Lord to be the King of our life. Instead we want to be our own King. We want *SELF* to be on the throne of our heart and no one else. "Don't tell me what to do, Lord. I'll do whatever I want to do! I'm my own King!" It is so important to let the Lord Jesus be the King of our life, and to submit to His authority and to His Word.

Herod asked the wise men two important questions:

<b><i>WHERE was this King born?</i></b>	<b><i>Matthew 2:4-6</i></b>
<b><i>WHEN was this King born?</i></b>	<b><i>Matthew 2:7; compare Matthew 2:16</i></b>

Thus he wanted to know *where* the child was and *how old* the child was. Why did the wise men want to see the Christ child (Matthew 2:2)? \_\_\_\_\_ Why

did Herod want to see the Christ child (according to his own words in Matthew 2:8)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Was Herod hiding his true intentions?  
Did he really want to worship Christ or did he want to destroy Christ?

Even though Herod was a wicked man, there was another person who was using King Herod to carry out his evil plans. Who was this person that was using Herod, and who was far more monstrous and murderous than even Herod himself (John 8:44)?

\_\_\_\_\_ According to John 8:44, who was Herod's spiritual father?  
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The Bible tells us that the DRAGON (see Revelation 12:9 to discover who the dragon is) wanted "to devour" the Christ child as soon as He was \_\_\_\_\_ (Revelation 12:4), and the Dragon used Herod the monster to try to accomplish this purpose.

Not only was Satan working, but God was working also. What is one thing God did to protect the Christ child (Matthew 2:12)?

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When Herod saw that the wise men never returned, he was burning with anger. What did he tell his servants to do (Matthew 2:16)?

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Why did Satan want to destroy Jesus? According to Luke 8:12, the devil does not want people to B \_\_\_\_\_ and be S \_\_\_\_\_. Can a person be saved if there is no Saviour? \_\_\_\_\_

Suppose you were God. How would you have stopped the devil's attack upon the Christ child? What would you have done? Would you have somehow tried to get rid of Herod? Would you have sent 5,000 angels to guard the city of Bethlehem from the men who would come to murder innocent babies? Would you have sent wild lions to devour Herod's soldiers?

What did God do (Matthew 2:13-14)?

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Compare also Matthew 2:19-21.

The Christ child was spared, but we must not forget that **innocent** children from two years old and under were slaughtered according to the King's command (Matthew 2:16). [We call them "innocent children." These children were born as sinners (Psalm 51:5) and inherited a sinful nature from Adam (compare Genesis 5:3), yet they had never done anything worthy of being killed by Herod's men. Herod's deed was despicable.] Why did God allow these infant deaths? Why did God allow One to flee and others to remain and face a terrible death?

This terrible slaughter should teach us something about the sinfulness of man. What does the passage in Romans 3:15-16 teach us about the sinfulness of man? From this passage do we learn anything about Satan, that greatest of all sinners and that prince of murderers (1 John 3:8; John 8:44)?

Is God able to correct and make right the wrongs of this life? Is God pleased when the innocent are put to death without mercy (Proverbs 6:16-17)? Is God concerned about babies and young children (Luke 18:15-16)? Is God more concerned about them than we are (Matthew 18:14)? \_\_\_\_\_ Does God always do what is right (Genesis 18:25)? \_\_\_\_\_

We have seen that God's plan and purpose always succeeds. Satan may think he is winning, but in the end he loses and God is the winner! Does God have a plan for your life (1 Timothy 2:4)? Is it a good plan? Does Satan want this plan to be carried out? **Do you** want this plan to be carried out?

Does Satan have a plan today? His greatest enemy is God Himself and all those who belong to God. Who does Satan work through (Ephesians 2:2)? Who are his children who carry out his work and do his will (1 John 3:10; John 8:44)? Satan uses unsaved people to carry out his purposes. Sometimes even saved people can be tricked into being used by the devil (see Matt. 16:21-23; Acts 5:3).

When the Lord Jesus walked on this earth, He was the number one object of the devil's attack, even from the day He was born (Revelation 12:4). Today Jesus is no longer on this earth (see John 16:10) and the devil can no longer attack Him directly. Therefore, who do you think the devil attacks today? What is the nearest thing to Christ on this earth (compare Colossians 1:27-- "Christ I \_\_\_ Y \_\_\_")? Who is the devil attacking today (Ephesians 6:12,13,16)?

\_\_\_\_\_ When Christ was born the dragon was ready to devour Him (Revelation 12:4). Who does Satan the lion seek to devour today (1 Peter 5:8)?

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As we think about Satan, our powerful foe, what should we always realize (1 John 4:4)?

\_\_\_\_\_ How can we defeat the devil according to James 4:7-8? \_\_\_\_\_ How can we defeat the devil according to 1 Peter 5:6-11?

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*THE SAME GOD WHO TOOK CARE OF THE CHRIST CHILD TAKES CARE OF YOU!*

*GOD CAN (AND WILL) TAKE CARE OF THE DEVIL!*

*YOU BE CAREFUL TO ALWAYS LET GOD BE KING OF YOUR LIFE!*

*LET THE LIVING GOD TAKE CARE OF YOU!*

Here are some notes for the teacher or for the parent:

### **How Old Was the Christ Child in Matthew 2?**

Herod asked **when** the star first appeared (Matthew 2:7), and he must have assumed that the star first appeared when the child was born. The answer of the wise men is *not* recorded. Did they say they had seen the star one month before? Two months before? Six months before? One year before? Two years before? We are not told.

In Matthew 2:16 we find a clue as to what the wise men said. Herod knew that if all infants two years old or younger were slaughtered, this would include the Christ child. Herod the monster would want to make sure that the Christ child was caught in the slaughter, and thus it seems reasonable that Herod would leave an ample margin (he would make his net wide enough). In other words, if he knew the child was four months old, he might say, "kill all the children from two and under to make sure we get Him." If he knew the child was two years old, he probably would have had all children three years old and under killed, just to make sure. Apparently the wise men began their journey when they saw the star (Matthew 2:2), and it probably would not have taken them any longer than a few months to reach Jerusalem from the East. Matthew 2:1 seems to imply that the wise men visited Jerusalem not too long after the birth of Christ.

Therefore, it seems best to conclude that Christ was a few months old at this time (though there is no way to know exactly how old He was). It is certainly wrong to hold to the traditional concept that the wise men were present at the birth of Christ along with the shepherds. The wise men did not find a babe lying in a manger; they found a young child who was in a house in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:11).

## How Many Babies Were Slaughtered?

We can only guess at the answer to this question. The town of Bethlehem was a very small, insignificant shepherding village (Micah 5:2). The population of Bethlehem and its surrounding territory was not great. Also it is probably safe to say that only male children were slaughtered (the expression "all the children" in Matthew 2:16 is masculine). Herod was not afraid of a girl baby growing up to be king because in those days rulers were usually male.

Probably less than 100 children were slaughtered. A. T. Robertson supposes that the number was between 15 and 20. If it were a very large slaughter it would seem that Josephus the historian would have mentioned it (along with all the other horrible things about Herod which he does mention), but Josephus says nothing about the slaughter of the innocent children of Bethlehem. It seems that a very large slaughter would have made the "headlines." The bad news is that Herod did such a horrible deed. The good news is that the number of those who died was probably small. Even one baby slaughtered is a terrible thing, but we are thankful that this did not happen to a huge number of babies.

## Time of Gladness

