

Thus, saith the Lord: In Bethlehem and in righteousness you will be established. For no weapon forged against you will prevail or prosper; for I will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me, declares the Lord.

The most meaningful aspect of the Bible to me is how our God decided to put it together, from one cover to the other. He inspired 40 different individuals, over a period of 2500 years, from three different continents, to write 66 individual books in three different languages. When he tapped each one on the shoulder and told them to put pen to paper, there was an intricate method our God used to inspire them. It was this: in every major story of the Bible, there always seems to be a protagonist and an antagonist present in some form or fashion. That's why you can relate to the individuals involved in the story. Adam and Eve had to deal with the Serpent. Jacob had to deal with Esau. Moses had to deal with Pharaoh. David had to deal with Saul. Esther had to deal with Haman. Job had to deal with his wife. Abigail had to deal with her husband. And the disciples had to deal with Judas Iscariot. Similarly, the Christmas stories we grew up with and still cherish today always seem to have a protagonist and antagonist present in some form or fashion as well. For every Tiny Tim, there's an Ebenezer Scrooge. For every Ralphie, there's a Scut Farkas. For every Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, there's an Abominable Snowman. For every George Bailey, there is a Henry F. Potter. And for every Happy Who, there's a Grinch that tried to steal Christmas.

The second scene from Bethlehem in Matthew's Christmas story follows the same divine script. It has a protagonist and an antagonist. The protagonist is the child born in the manger. Our Immanuel, God with us. The antagonist isn't the Grinch who tried to steal Christmas. It's the king who tried to kill Christmas. His name was Herod. But church I want to tell you this morning, that whether you know it or not, there is a reason the Christmas story in Matthew's Gospel stands out and stands as tall as the story of Jesus' resurrection in your heart and mine. And it's not just because it has a protagonist and antagonist. It is this: most of the people, ideas, and images in the story are what biblical scholars call typologies. Typologies are real people and real things in the story that represent real things we face and that we can see. And the typology that is Herod, the king who tried to kill Christmas, is such an example. So church, here is why you should listen intently this morning: when we dissect the second scene from Matthew's story, we will not only have a greater understanding and appreciation of the first Christmas story. We will also have a greater understanding of how the real people and the real things in the first Christmas story — the typologies — manifest themselves in our world, in our church, and in our lives right now. So today, in addition to shining light on the real people and the real things in the second scene of Matthew's Christmas story, I'm going to also show you what those real people and real things typify and what they symbolize. To do that, please turn with me to Matthew 2:3-8, 11.

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.⁴When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶"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 shepherd my people Israel."⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Three Christmas Killers and How They Manifest:

1. Herod: The Hostility of the World

- **The Nazi's Rewriting of Silent Night:** (1) You know and love the song. I do too. *Silent night. Holy night. All is calm all is bright. Round young virgin, mother and child. Holy infant so tender and mild. Sleep in heavenly peace. Sleep in heavenly peace.* (2) The Nazi's hated the Jews and they hated the concept of a Jew as the Messiah of both Jew and Gentile. (3) So Hitler rewrote the song and demanded Germans to sing it: *Silent night. Holy night. All is calm. All is bright. Only the Chancellor stays on guard. Germany's future to watch and to ward. Guiding our nation a right. Guiding our nation a right.*
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Herod responded to the news of Christ's birth not with joy to the world. But with hostility and evil intentions. The same hostility Jesus received from Herod is the same hostility we can expect to experience from those in the world threatened by the message of the Messiah's birth.
- **About Herod:** (1) In 40 BC, the Roman Senate named him "King of the Jews." The problem was he wasn't Jewish. (2) Herod was also a murderer. (3) At the age of 44, he murdered his wife because he thought she was a threat to the throne. This murder drove him mad for 26 years because he lived to be 70. (4) He murdered his brother-in-law and his mother-in-law during that time for the same reasons. (5) But the worst event happened when he was an old man. He got word that his sons were planning to overthrow him. So, he ordered them both to be strangled. (6) So great was Herod's evil, that the Jews called him the malevolent maniac. (7) And here, late in his life, he's making grand plans for the murder of Jesus
- **He Was Disturbed and All of Jerusalem with Him (v3):** (1) It means to shake violently. It has two connotations: (a) Herod was terminally ill and (b) Herod was raging inside, even though terminally ill, because he was ready to subdue one more perceived enemy: Jesus.
- **The Typology and Symbolism in Herod:** The world is terminally ill. It's decaying. It's getting worse. It's on it's deathbed. But yet it still rages as the news of the Messiah. And it rages at his messengers.

2. The Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law: The Indifference of God's People

- **The "Xmas" Nomenclature:** (1) I got on Facebook Saturday of last week hoping to see people's pictures from the Christmas Parade. (2) I found them, alright. (3) But I also found something from God's people that made my blood boil: the nomenclature "Xmas Parade." (4) I can understand it from non-believers. But for the life of me, I can't understand that usage for Christians. (5) It's a title of indifference to the message we are supposed to treasure and hold dear.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Herod's hostility led to the indifference of the very people who should not have been indifferent to the message of the Messiah's birth: the chief priests and teachers of the Law. Consequently, the chief priests and the teachers of the law is a typology for how the hostility of the world to the Messiah's birth can influence the people of God.
- **About the Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law:** (1) The Chief Priests had a privileged position among all Jews. They were from the Tribe of Levi; the same tribe that brought forth Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and Ezekiel. They were the go-betweens, the mediators of the OT between the God of Israel and His people. (2) The Teachers of the Law had the second most privileged position among all the Jews. They were entrusted by God and His people with the study, reading, and teaching of the Word of God. They had access to the Bible at a time when others did not. (3) Both knew a Messiah was coming and should have shouted "hasten the day" from the roof tops. But they didn't.
- **Matter of Fact Indifference and the Casting of Pearls in the Quotation (v5-7):** (1) When Herod asks them information about the Messiah, these people entrusted with the guarding of precious and privileged information cast their proverbial pearls among the swine that is Herod. (2) It's done without any wisdom, appreciate, or discernment. It's strictly matter of fact: (a) He's to be born in Bethlehem; (b) And then they quote from the prophet Micah about the coming of the Messiah in a way that's completely detached and indifferent to the message.
- **The Typology and Symbolism in the Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law:** Both are pictures of what the world does to God's people. It makes them indifferent to the message they are entrusted to proclaim. As a result, they cast pearls to the swine and lack the ability to influence the world or change it.

3. The Secret Deceit: The Love of Darkness more than Light

- **The Chain Reaction Principle:** (1) You can learn a lot about the impact of actions and reactions by looking at a simple chain, made of individual links. (2) When you shake the link you hold in your hand while the chain is suspended in the air, the link on the end moves as well. (3) Actions and reactions work the same way in life. (4) And action on the front impacts the other end of the chain. (5) It also does here: Herod's hostility led to the Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law indifference, which led to the pattern of secret deceit and the love of darkness more than light.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Herod's hostility and the chief priests/teachers of the law's indifference was brought on by the love of darkness more than light. Consequently, it produced the fruit of deceit. The same is true today.
- **Deceiving and Being Deceived (7-8):** (1) What's important here is how Herod's deception took root; (2) He limits his conversation with the chief priests/teachers of the law who, though indifferent to the message, would have been familiar with Herod's penchant for committing evil under the guise of sincerity. (2) As a result, he goes straight toward the Magi, who were foreigners not as familiar with Herod's bloodthirst, and peddles a deception that sounds believable on the surface of it. (3) It corresponds with the Serpent's pattern of deceit with Adam and Eve: "has God really said? For God knows..."
- **The Typology and Symbolism in the Secret Pattern of Deceit:** When God is up to something great in the world. You can be sure that the Great Deceiver is equally at work. But you can also be sure that he will not prevail nor foil the plans of God.

One Christmas Saver and How It Manifests

4. The Gifts of the Magi: Worship

- **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:** (1) Had every reason to buy into the Christmas killers in the story. (2) His wife, Fannie, died tragically after her dress caught on fire, leaving him a widower and father of 6 siblings. He had severe burns himself from trying to put the fire out. (3) It left him a broken and burned widower and the father of 6 children. (4) Two years later, unbeknownst to Henry, his oldest son Charles boarded a train to fight in the Civil War. Several months later he was shot in the face at the Battle of Mine Run and left paralyzed. (5) Upon receiving the news on Friday, December 25, 1863, he sat down and wrote a poem that was later turned into a song familiar to you: I heard the bells on Christmas Day. Their old, familiar carols play, and wild and sweet the words repeat – of peace on earth, good-will to men. (6) Worship overcomes every antagonist that threaten to put out the flame of the star pointing to our Immanuel.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The Magi responded to the news of the birth of Messiah by worshiping him and bringing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Magi's response to Jesus is our response: worship. And the gifts are why we worship.
- **The Typology and Symbolism in the Magi:** (1) Foreigners traveling to a foreign land to worship Immanuel, God with us; (2) The one they worshipped was worth more than the expense of the gold and the hardship of travel. They brought the sacrifice of praise to Jesus.
- **The Typology and Symbolism in the Magi's Gift:** (1) Gold – the precious metal of a king. It symbolized his reign as King. (2) Frankincense – burned by priests in the Holy of Holies during sacrifices. It symbolized his sacrifice as a priest. (3) Myrrh – used in embalming. It symbolized Jesus's death, resurrection, and role as mediator between God and man (both Jew and Gentile, like the Magi from Babylon).
- **App:** In the first Christmas story ever told, no weapon formed against Immanuel prospered. None formed against us, His Bride, will either.