

Responding to the King of Kings (Jeremiah 23:1-8 & Matthew 2:1-18) 31-Dec-17¹

Hi Everyone!

We're looking at Jeremiah chapter 23 briefly - then Matthew chapter 2

There are Bibles in front of you and there's an outline in the bulletin to make some notes if you wish

Let me ask for God's guidance first...

Intro/Promise of a King (Jeremiah 23:1-8)

Most of us will have heard the saying: *"If you want a job doing properly, do it yourself"*

That's basically what God decides in our OT passage from Jeremiah chapter 23

If you'd like to turn to Jeremiah 23 briefly...

From Jeremiah 23 - we see God pass judgement on the shepherds of Israel

Not shepherds of sheep

But the religious shepherds of the people - who weren't doing their job of looking after the people spiritually

See v2 - the religious shepherds of Jeremiah's time had caused their flock, the people, to be scattered - basically the people were lost from God because of the neglect of the religious shepherds - and the flock had not been spiritually cared for

So still in v2 - God promises punishment for these shepherds for not looking after His people

[PowerPoint 1-Jer 23:5-6]

Then in verses 5 and 6 - God makes a promise

⁵ "The days are coming," declares the LORD,

"when **I will** raise up for **David a righteous Branch,**
a King who will reign wisely

and do what is just and right in the land.

⁶ In his days Judah will be saved

and Israel will live in safety.

This is the name by which he will be called:

The LORD Our Righteous Saviour.

So God promises that He Himself will raise up someone righteous from King David's family

And He will be a KING

And He will be known as THE LORD - Our Righteous Saviour

That's none other than our Lord Jesus whose birth we celebrated on Christmas Day

He is a KING - He is God - He is a Saviour - He is God's Son

He's been sent by God, the Father, to do things properly - and to replace the religious shepherds - and to be THE Good Shepherd - who finds His sheep (people) lost from God - and save them from punishment for their sin and rebellion against God and bring them back into a loving relationship with God, the Father

So as we reflect on that first Christmas - when King Jesus was born

We're going to look at the response to King Jesus' birth....

And there are a few responses in our passage from Matthew chapter 2...

So please turn to Matthew chapter 2 in your Bibles...

Response of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-13)

First there is the response from the magi or wise men in verses 1 to 13

[PowerPoint 2-Magi]

- These wise men were from the East - in modern day Iran or Iraq
- They were not kings as tradition might suggest - they were actually astrologers who studied the stars
- In the ancient world - many people believed in astrology and studied the stars
- The steady course of heavenly bodies represented the settled order of the universe
- So if people noticed some new astronomical happening - they figured God was breaking into His ordered universe to bring some news {e.g. new star appeared at Julius Caesar's funeral in 44BC}
- Around about the time of Jesus' birth - there were strong rumours that a new world ruler would come from the Judea region (as per Jewish historian, Josephus and Roman historian, Suetonius)
- So it was a time of expectation for the coming of a new king
- So in studying the stars these wise men noticed a particular star and were led to believe that this star belonged to a new King to be born

- So they followed that star to Jerusalem - to King Herod's palace
- The wise men identified the baby to be born as "the King of the Jews"
- They had travelled a long distance to find Jesus and they had come to worship him
- They made enquiries to King Herod - to find out where the baby might be born
- And they were informed that the Scriptures prophesy (Micah 5:2) the Messiah's birth place to be in Bethlehem
- So they followed the star to Bethlehem and found Jesus in a house - not a manger - so Jesus is no longer a newborn baby by the time the wise men came on the scene
- The star stopped over the place where Jesus was (hence the idea of halos!)
- Their reaction: they are overjoyed when the star leads them to where Jesus lived
- And they bowed down and worshipped this baby King
- And they also brought treasures for Jesus - gifts fit for a king - Gold, frankincense and myrrh
- Traditionally - **gold** for a King - in fact the King of Kings
- **Frankincense** used in temple sacrifice by the High Priest - pointing to Jesus' ultimate sacrifice on the cross and Jesus being our Great High Priest
- And **myrrh** - perfume used to embalm a dead body - pointing to Jesus' burial after His sacrificial death on the cross

- Tradition or not - the most important thing is that these gifts are fit for a king - and no doubt they would be very useful for Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph who are very poor
- The wise men did not go back to Herod after they worshipped Jesus - they were warned by an angel - and obeyed the angel's warning and went back to their homeland a different way

Response from King Herod (Matthew 2:1-8, 16-18)

Contrast the wise men's response with the response of King Herod in verses 1 to 8 and verses 16 to 18

- Herod the *Great* was a nasty piece of work...
- He was wealthy, politically gifted, intensely loyal, an excellent administrator, and clever enough to remain in the good books of successive Roman emperors. His famine relief was superb and his building projects (including the temple in Jerusalem, which began in 20BC) were admired even by his enemies. But Herod loved power, inflicted incredibly heavy taxes on the people, and resented the fact that many Jews considered him a usurper (taking rule by force). In his last years, he suffered an illness that compounded his paranoia, he turned to cruelty and in fits of rage and jealousy killed close associates (including his wife and 3 sons) (Carson)
- The Roman Emperor, Augustus, had said, bitterly, about Herod "that it was safer to be Herod's pig than Herod's son" (Barclay)
- Herod is not unlike the North Korean leader of today - Kim Jong Un

- The reign of King Herod also gives us a chronological marking point. Jesus was born before the death of Herod, which is probably around about 4BC
- So when the paranoid Herod heard from the wise men (magi) that a new king had been born and that this new king is King of the Jews
- Herod's paranoia reached epidemic proportions
- V3 says Herod was *disturbed and so was all of Jerusalem*
- Why wouldn't they be - the last thing they needed was a raving paranoid lunatic going around in a fit of rage and jealousy
- Herod called in the Jewish chief priests and teachers of God's law - they would know where the Promised Messiah was supposed to be born
- And sure enough they did know - they looked up Micah 5:2 - and came up with the town of Bethlehem
- Just to show how devious Herod was - he secretly called the wise men in to ask when they first saw this star they followed
- Why would he do that
- So that he could pinpoint a date of when baby Jesus was born
- Then Herod sent the wise men to Bethlehem - telling them to report back to him - where they found Jesus - so he too could go and worship Jesus
- Yeah right!
- Herod didn't want to worship Jesus
- He had a wicked plan - he knew from the wise men - roughly when Jesus was born

- So Herod planned to kill all the boys in the Bethlehem area - two years and under - to make sure he wiped out this new King of the Jews
- Matthew, says this wicked plan was a fulfillment of a prophecy from Jeremiah - and Matthew quotes from Jeremiah 31:5
- Jeremiah originally wrote this prophecy before the Jews of Judah were exiled to Babylon in 586BC. As the people were carried away into captivity there was great mourning for their children who were killed during this captivity. So Rachel (wife of Jacob (Israel) and mother of Benjamin and Joseph) is pictured as weeping on behalf of all the children killed as the people are led past her grave in Ramah (about 8km north of Ramah) on the way to Babylon. Rachel is pictured as weeping from a grave
- But Matthew's using this prophecy from Jeremiah as being fulfilled again as the mothers of Bethlehem weep for their boys killed by Herod
- So here Rachel is picture representing all the weeping mothers of Bethlehem
- Contrast King Herod with Jesus the King of Kings
 - King Herod - a selfish, murderous, cruel and paranoid King
 - Compared to King Jesus - a selfless and sinless King, the Prince of Peace - who came to give life not take it away - and to give life to the full - leading to eternal life

Response of the Joseph (Matthew 2:13-15)

Then there's the response of Jesus' earthly father, Joseph in verses 13 to 15

- Joseph's response was one of immediate obedience to preserve the safety of his precious son
- Joseph obeyed the warning of the angel - and left in the middle of the night with Mary and the baby - and escaped to Egypt
- They remained in Egypt until Herod died - then they returned to Nazareth
- Which led Matthew to mention another prophecy that was fulfilled - from the prophet Hosea - chapter 11:1 - [out of Egypt I called my son](#)
- What Matthew is making clear here is that in the same way that God brought the nation of Israel successfully out of exile in Egypt - so too Jesus the Son of God - will be brought out of exile in Egypt

Response of the Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law (Matthew 2:4-6)

Then there's the response of the religious teachers and leaders of the people in verses 4 to 6

- They knew where the Messiah was to be born - they looked it up in their Scriptures
- But they didn't lift a sandal to go and check out if the Messiah has been born
- For the chief priests and teachers of the law - It's all about head knowledge - God's Word is in their heads - and not in their hearts
- So their response was to DO NOTHING!

Responses today?

When we think about it

The responses in this passage are not much different to today

1. Firstly there's **The Herod Response** - A complete rejection of God's Messiah, Jesus Christ, as Lord and Saviour. Some people today reject Jesus and don't want Jesus in their lives - it's like either He doesn't exist or He's dead or He's dead to them at least
2. Secondly there's **The Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law Response** - Complete indifference - a couldn't care less attitude - Yes I know Jesus came and lived on this Earth 2000 or so years ago - but so what - what difference does it make to me - I'm happy in my own little corner (just like the teachers of the law were happy in their own little corner of the temple) The attitude is - I'm more important - it's all about me - and my three favourite people are - me, myself and I - and I have no need nor room for Jesus in my life
3. Then thirdly, there's **The Wise and Obedient Response** - The wise men - travelled far, at great personal cost, time was not an issue for them, they sincerely set out to find Jesus - and then came and bowed down and worshipped Him as a King (not someone who would be king - but as a baby who was born as a King and still is King of Kings) - they came to give something to Jesus - not take something - they gave treasures.
Also the wise men and Joseph immediately obeyed God's messenger - the angel - when they were warned - they did not ask questions - it was

immediate obedient faith - believing that God knew best. This must be our response today! Can we learn from the wise men and Joseph?

- a. To seek Jesus out and not give up - even when it's a hard road and even when it costs us something? When it costs us our time, our devotion, our loyalty?
- b. Can we sincerely - bow down and worship King Jesus - the King of Kings?
- c. Can we give King Jesus our treasures - our very best in all things - the very best of our time, the very best of our prayers, the very best our study of His word, the very best of our love and service to Him and the very best of our love and service to others?
- d. Will we tell others about King Jesus - or keep it to ourselves and be unaffected and indifferent - like the chief priests?
- e. It's time for us as a church, as a community and as a nation to respond to King Jesus - As Jeremiah says He is the Lord, Our Righteous Saviour - He is the only one who makes us right with God - who replaces our sin with forgiveness - and the only one who replaces our brokenness leading to death - with the promise of eternal life

Conclusion/Challenges

My challenge for us all today is:

1. To Seek Jesus more diligently and more often

2. To be inventive of how we can give King Jesus our treasures by giving Jesus our best - write down what you will give King Jesus in the year ahead
3. And write down who you will share King Jesus with

Wise men and women still seek Jesus!

Let's pray...