"Some Worshipped; Some Warred"

(Two Different Reactions to the Birth of Christ)

Matthew 2:1-23

HRM – 12-17-2022

INTRODUCTION:

***What is your attitude toward Jesus Christ?**

Are you for Him or against Him?

Note the two different reactions to the birth of the King of Kings.

I. The King is <u>WORSHIPPED</u> by Wise Men (v. 1 - 11)
(Reaction #1 - The <u>Worship</u> of the Wise Men)
He who is wise <u>worships</u> Jesus!

II. The King is <u>OPPOSED</u> by Wicked Herod (v. 12 - 23)
(Reaction #2 - The <u>Wrath</u> of King Herod)
He who is wicked is at <u>war</u> with Jesus!

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I. The King is _____ by Wise Men (v. 1 - 11)
(Reaction #1 - The Worship of the Wise Men)
He who is wise worships Jesus!

II. The King is _____ by Wicked Herod (v. 12 - 23)
(Reaction #2 - The Wrath of King Herod)
He who is wicked is at war with Jesus!

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INTRODUCTION:

They say that there are 2 things that you don't talk about because of the emotional nature of the subjects: politics and religion.

When I say, "Ronald Reagan" - what comes to your mind?

(If you are liberal, negative thoughts. If conservative, generally positive thoughts.)

When I say, "New York Yankees" - what comes to your mind?

(If you are a Red Sox fan, you can't stand them. If a loyal Yankee fan, they can do no wrong.)

When I say, "Abortion" - what comes to your mind?

(If you love God, the Bible, and human life, you abhor the thought. However, if you disregard God, live for your own selfish pursuits, and buy the Women's Lib line, "Women have a right to their own body" - you think favorably of abortion.)

The point is: On certain subjects, neutrality if impossible! You are either for it or against it!

Above all subjects or persons that could be named, there is no neutrality about Jesus Christ in the minds of men. On the inside, deep in the hearts of men, an attitude toward Jesus Christ exits. Isaiah made this statement regarding the Servant-Messiah:
"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." (Isaiah 53:3)

There are many in this world who love Him. They came to realize who He is (God who came to earth), and they came to realize and believe what He did (He died as a substitute to pay for their sins). To those who are recipients of His eternal life, appreciation swells up in their hearts at the thought of such grace. The name of Jesus is not a curse word to them, but they love His name. Everything about Jesus is wonderful. Those who are for Him gladly serve Him, commune with Him, sing to Him, and worship Him.

On the other hand, there are multitudes (an actual majority of humanity) who have a totally different opinion of Jesus Christ. Though they may express it in different ways and to different degrees, they are actually opposed to Jesus. To express such hostility, some use His name as a curse word.

ILLUS: of the Hasidic Jew in Israel who mocked Jesus Christ, hated His name, and would not so much as utter the name of Jesus, referring to Him as "What's His Face"

Others flee whenever a conversation about Him starts up. Others refer in a demeaning way to Him as a first century radical or revolutionary. Still multitudes of others blasphemously deny His deity and put Him in the rank of a mere prophet, thus ignoring or blatantly contradicting Christ's own testimony about Himself.

*Observe the two different attitudes toward Jesus Christ in Matthew 2 -

The attitude of the Wise Men, kings of the east ... those who worship Him
The attitude of a wicked man, the king of Judaea, Herod ... he who is at war with Him

Matthew, in validating Christ as the King of the Jews, shows the two reactions that are always true of an heir to a royal throne. If Christ was not actually King, the wise men were foolish men, and Herod should not have been so upset.

Jesus said: "He that is not with me is against me" (Mt. 12:30; cp. Lk. 11:23).

He again said: "He that is not against us is on our part" (Mk. 9:40).

Today, you are either <u>for</u> Jesus Christ or you are <u>against</u> Him! (perhaps against Him by default, but you are against Him unless you love Him, serve Him, uphold His cause, hold dearly His word, and submit to His will. There is NO neutrality regarding Christ. If you think you are neutral, you are really against Him. If enough pressure was put on you, you would deny Him in a second!

You either <u>worship</u> Him or you are at <u>war</u> with Him!

***What is your attitude toward Jesus Christ?**

Are you for Him or against Him?

Note the two different reactions (polar opposite reactions; extreme reactions) to the birth of the King of Kings.

On one end of the spectrum…

I. The King is <u>WORSHIPPED</u> by wise men (v. 1 - 11)
(Reaction #1 - The <u>Worship</u> of the Wise Men)
He who is wise <u>worships</u> Jesus!

What a happy occasion the birth of a child is! The parents and family all want a chance to hold the baby, hug the baby, and kiss the baby. Family and friends many times celebrate the birth by bringing gifts, balloons and cards.

The birth of one baby stands out as unique. This Baby is the One whose incarnation much of the world remembers each year on December 25. This Baby, no doubt, received all of the affection and hugs that other children in His day received.

However, this Child received something no other child has ever received. This Child received <u>worship from angels</u>! (Heb. 1:6 - "And again, when He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.").

Not only did an angel <u>foretell</u> His birth (Mt. 1:20-24), <u>announce</u> His birth (Lk. 2:10-12), and <u>sing praises</u> at His birth (Lk. 2:13-14), but the Bible teaches that the angels <u>worshipped</u> Him at His birth (Heb. 1:6).

The Baby Jesus was honored and adored beyond that of any other child. He was <u>glorified</u> by shepherds (Lk. 2:16-20) and extolled by Simeon & Anna (Lk. 2:25-38).

However, the most astounding honor the Baby Jesus received was the fact that—both as an infant (by the Angels and Shepherds) and now as a toddler --He was <u>worshipped</u>!

SEE: Matthew 2:11

***Jesus was, is, and always will be worthy of worship!**

Jesus, as a young child, was worthy of worship: **Because the Baby Was <u>KING</u>!**

Matthew 2:1-12

v.1 – "Bethlehem" ("house of bread") – Isn't it interesting that the bread of life was born in the "house of bread"

"wise men" – How many wise men? Most people assume three, because of the 3 gifts of Gold, Frankincense and myrrh which they brought. There were perhaps at least three, but could have been many more.

"from the east" – from the region of ancient Persia (Modern day Muslim countries)

v.2 – "King of the Jews" – Why are Gentiles seeking a Jew's King? They are believers in the True God of Scripture.

Jesus is King who was predicted to come!

Jeremiah 23:5 -"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."

Zechariah 9:9 -"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation: lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

Jesus would fulfill those prophecies!

John 1:49 - "Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."

Luke 19:38 -"Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."

Luke 23:38 -"And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS"

Matthew 27:11 -And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest."

Jesus is King of Kings, yet His kingdom was not of this world or age!

John 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

v.2 – "we have seen His star" – They had been looking to the stars for the arrival of the Jewish Messiah. Why? Because Isaiah made this prediction: Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. (Isaiah 60:1-3).

Interesting note: Just as a peculiar unique occurrence signaled Messiah's first coming so the constellations will signal His second coming for judgment in the Day of the Lord. But instead of a bright shining star, there will be the dimming of the sun and the discoloration of the moon along with the stars falling from the Heavens. (Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20; Mt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12-17).

v.3 – Herod …was troubled" – He thought his "job was on the line." As a typical politician Herod was troubled that someone might upset His comfortable kingdom. He assumed that he was in jeopardy of having his kingdom stripped away from him. He didn't want to lose his summer and winter palaces etc. that he had built for himself.

As a typical, worried politician, Herod feared that his dynasty would soon end if this child of Bethlehem were truly the King of the Jews.

NOTE: the contrast between v. 2 & 3. Verse 2 speaks of submissive <u>worship</u> to the King; whereas v. 3 speaks of rebellious <u>worry</u> because of the King. The same King Jesus produced 2 totally different responses.

"Herod was an Edomite, not a Jew, and had no legitimate claim to be the Jews' king. He therefore feared and hated even the suggestion of a rival claimant" (MacArthur, p. 24).

v.4 – The religious Jews knew where the Messiah would be born and still rejected Jesus.

v.6 – The prophetic Scriptures not only predicted <u>WHERE</u> the Messiah would be born (Micah 5:2), but also foretold <u>WHEN</u> (Dan. 9:25) and <u>HOW</u> (Is. 7:14; 9:6).

v.7 – Why a secret inquiry by Herod? He had evil intentions and didn't want them known. Why such diligent questioning? Herod wanted to know about how old Jesus would be so he would know who to target in the "massacre of the innocents".

V. 8
Herod's intention was anything but worship. He wanted blood! Infanticide!

v.9 – The star (like the bright North Star) provided the direction from Jerusalem. They would head south as the supernaturally produced temporary light hovered over Bethlehem (from their perspective).

v.10 – Evidently the star had temporarily dimmed and was now re-illuminated and re-directed for their benefit. These Gentile kings follow a star to the Star!
Numbers 24:17 – "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel…"

v. 11 - "When they were come into the house" - the wise men arrived at "the house" (v.11) (Not the Inn) where they found "the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him…" This verse makes it clear that Jesus was no longer an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger (feeding trough), but a toddler perhaps just under 2 years old (cp. v.16) living in a house by the time the wise men arrived.

v. 11 – THEY…FELL DOWN, AND WORSHIPPED HIM.

NOTE: "They <u>worshipped Him</u> (not "Mary His mother")

They presented unto <u>Him</u> <u>gifts</u>" - Gifts fit for a King, Priest, and Prophet.

The ancient church also understood the gifts to symbolize aspects of Christ's life and ministry, the work He would do. They had symbolic value.
We cannot help but wonder, "Why these particular gifts?"

The following thoughts are condensed from "Gold and Frankincense and Myrrh" by Henry M. Morris and Kathleen Bruce. Published by Institute for Creation Research. Santee, CA

GOLD (an appropriate gift for a King)
The gift of gold obviously was appropriate for both honoring a king and worshipping God. It has always been symbolic of wealth and of royalty. The essential symbol identifying a king was a golden crown on his head. But God is the ultimate Sovereign and His Son is the King of kings (Revelation 17:14). Therefore gold is most fittingly appropriate.

As God was structuring the nation of Israel in the wilderness under Moses, He told them to build a tabernacle in which He could "dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). As He gave the pattern that they were to follow in building the tabernacle and its furnishings, it is noteworthy how often gold was to be used. The word was used well over 100 times as they received and carried out these instructions. Everything was either made of gold or overlaid with gold.
The same was true on an even larger scale in the temple, which King Solomon later built in Jerusalem to replace the tabernacle. Again there was gold everywhere (1 Kings 6:21-22). But the tabernacle and the temple, as beautiful and meaningful as they were, were only types of God's future home with all His people. The heavenly city, New Jerusalem, will be made of gold everywhere (Revelation 21:18, 21). A gift of gold was indeed a wonderfully appropriate gift for the Magi to offer the Lord Jesus as they worshipped Him.

FRANKINCENSE (an appropriate gift for a Priest)
But what about frankincense and myrrh? Both were highly valued in Israel and other nations of that time, used especially for medicines, incense, and perfumes. Interestingly, they are both encountered for the first time in the Bible in God's instructions for the services of the tabernacle (Exodus 30:23, 34). The use of frankincense was commanded, both as a chief ingredient of the incense which was to be kept burning in the tabernacle and also in connection with the meal offering.
David prayed: "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense" (Psalm 141:2). As the smoke of the burning offering ascended up from the altar, so the people believed their prayers would go up to God with it, and it would be a sweet savor to Him. The typological meaning of burning incense as prayer rising up to God is seen even in the prophecies of Revelation. John saw "golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints" (Revelation 5:8). This surely gives us a clue as to the real significance of burning incense (especially its chief ingredient, frankincense) rising up to God's

throne. We pray, on the basis of the sin cleansing sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and they rise up to the throne of God via the indwelling Spirit of God.

In the Old Testament figure, the High Priest had to serve as the intermediary, but now the relationship is different: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5; see also Hebrews 7:1-8:6).

Now we can see how wonderfully meaningful was this gift of frankincense to the little child in Bethlehem. Not only is He destined to be the great King, but also our eternal High Priest. The incense confesses that He alone can convey our prayers, and indeed our very souls to God.

MYRRH (an appropriate gift for a Prophet)
The third gift was myrrh. Its first use in the Bible would suggest that its definitive Biblical use was in the holy anointing oil. The priests were to be "anointed" with a divinely designed oil, the main ingredient of which was myrrh. This type of special ritualistic anointing was also applicable to kings and prophets. For example, Samuel anointed Saul and later David to be king over Israel (1 Samuel 10:1; 16:13; Psalm 89:20). God told Elijah: "Elisha...shalt thou anoint to be prophet" (1 Kings 19:16).
Myrrh is used in a striking way in Psalm 45, which eulogizes the Messiah ("the Anointed One"). Jesus is pictured in this psalm as about to leave the palaces of heaven for a mission to Earth with a "tongue" like the "pen of a ready writer" and with grace "poured into thy lips" (Psalm 45:1-2). He has beautiful words from God (Hebrews 1:1-2); in fact He is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14)!

PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING
The Magi had surely read Moses' promise of the coming Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15), as well as David's promise of the coming Priest (Psalm 110:4), and Daniel's promise of the coming King (Daniel 9:24-27), and when they saw Him, they fell down and worshipped Him, presenting Him with the three most fitting gifts of worship which the world contained.

Note: The gold, and frankincense, and myrrh not only had symbolic value, but would be very practical gifts and most needed as Joseph, Mary and the Christ Child would have to flee to Egypt and perhaps with little or no money to sustain them for the journey and during their stay in Egypt. God sovereignly brought them resources with enough monetary value to sustain them until their return to Nazareth. Like them, we today, we must never forget that God brings what we need, when we need it!

NOTE: the repeated key phrase in v. 1-11 -"worship Him" (v. 2)
"worship Him" (v. 8)
"worshipped Him" (v. 11)

Jesus receives worship:

Ps. 2:8, 12 -"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. . . Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Mt. 8:2 -"And behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

9:18 -"While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live."

14:33 -Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

15:25 - "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me."

28:9, 17 -"And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and help him by the feet, and worshipped him. . . . And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted."

John 9:35, 38 -"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? . . . And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."

20:28-29 -"And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Luke 24:51-52 -"And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven, And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

Jesus must be God to be worshipped. The Law of Moses forbade the worship of anyone or anything other than Yahweh.
"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Mt. 4:10; cp. Dt. 6:13 & 10:20).

Do you worship Jesus?

It has been said that "behind every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction" (Newton's third law of physics)

II. The King is <u>OPPOSED</u> by Wicked Herod (v. 12 - 23)
(Reaction #2 - The <u>Wrath</u> of King Herod)
He who is wicked is at <u>war</u> with Jesus!

V. 18
The prophecy found in Jer. 31:15 originally referred to Rachel (Jacob's favored wife) weeping [symbolically] over her children who were exiled to Babylon.

"That calamity and Herod's new atrocity are viewed as part of the same broad picture" (Ryrie note).

Pharaoh in similar fashion tried to exterminate the Jewish baby boys in the days of Moses' birth (Exodus 1).

V. 19
Herod died very soon after the slaughter of the infants. He reigned 40 - 4 B.C.

V. 20
"They are dead" - More people than Herod wanted to kill the Christ child (perhaps other Jewish leaders).

Ever since Lucifer's rebellion (is. 14), he has always been attempting to destroy God's work.

Satan tried to resist:
*Israel, and King David in particular (I Chron. 21:1 - "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel")

*Joshua the high priest (Zech. 3:1-2 - "And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?")

*Jesus from going to the cross (Mt. 16:21-23)

*Sergius Paulus from getting saved (Acts 13:4-12 *v. 10)

Satan either works independently or he uses people.

See Rev. 12:1-5 for Satan's attempt to destroy the Son of God.

"A woman" = Israel.
Israel is often depicted as a woman in the Bible (Is. 54:5; Ezek. 16:32; Hos. 2:16) - both as the "wife" of the Lord (Jer. 31:32; Hosea), and as the "mother" of the Jewish nation (Gal. 4:26).
****SEE Gen. 37:9-11 - for the same imagery depicting Israel.**

V. 2
In Isaiah 26, Israel cries out for deliverance awaiting the arrival of the Messiah, and exclaims: *"Like as a woman with child that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD."*

V. 3
NOTE: ***"Another wonder"*** (sign). This sign is not "great" as was the first.
This sign involves a description of Satan, who is not great in terms of virtue (goodness), but is "great" in terms of power and wickedness (v. 9).
"Great red dragon" = none other than Satan himself (SEE v. 9; cp. 20:2).
"Red" = fiery red. The word literally means the "color of fire" - it is interesting that Satan, who is destined for fire [Rev. 20:10} has the appearance of it.

"Seven heads . . . seven crowns" = indicative of the completeness of Satan's authority (cp. Satan's authority in the world - Lk. 4:6; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; I Jn. 2:15).

Why ***"10 horns"***? - a horn represents "power" or "control"
Satan has 10 horns because he will be the world ruler of the "10-horned beast" (a world government system comprising 10 kings - 17:12-13) that will reign in the Tribulation (Rev. 13:1).

V. 4

"The stars of Heaven" = angels who rebelled with Lucifer (Satan).

Angels are referred to as "stars" elsewhere in the Bible (Job 38:7; Rev. 1:20; 9:1; Dan. 8:10).

"Cast them to the earth" - SEE v. 9 - "he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

[NOTE: Some demons are presently in hell in chains of darkness, reserved unto judgment (Jude 6; II Pet. 2:4), while other demons are free to work with Satan.]

The gruesome picture is that of a hungry cannibalistic dragon waiting in front of a pregnant woman to eat up her child as soon as it is born.

** When Christ was born, Herod the king heard about it, and being inspired by Satan sought to destroy the child (2:1-8; **16**).

V. 5

"She brought forth a man (male) child" = Christ

It is Christ who will (future) "rule all nations with a rod of iron" -

Rev. 2:27 - *"And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."* SEE Psalm 2:9, Rev. 19:15.

"Caught up unto God" = The ascension of Christ.

Christ's ascension shows the failure of Satan's efforts to destroy Him.

"...And to his throne" = The exaltation of Christ at the Father's right hand)

The reason why such antagonism exists over Christ and true Christianity is because it is real! it is true!

No one gets angry over nothing! (Example: of Bill Murray's testimony about his mother's [Madelaine Murray O'Hare] antagonism toward prayer, the Bible, Christianity, etc. He said the fact that his mom was so much against Christ actually proved His existence. No one gives their life to fight against something that doesn't exist.)

CONCLUSION:

Men throughout history have tried to oppose God and His work, yet God's plan has not been frustrated or thrown off course. Everything He has determined beforehand will be fulfilled as He has decreed.

In the midst of Herod's vain attempt to destroy the Christ child, the sovereignty of God's plan is seen, and His Word is being fulfilled.

God's sovereign fulfillment of prophecy:

Bethlehem - the place of Christ's birth (2:6) -- to fulfill Micah 5:2
"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Egypt - the place of Christ's childhood (2:15) -- to fulfill Hosea 11:1
"I…called my son out of Egypt"

Nazareth - the place of Christ's youth (2:23) -- This citation is an inference to Is. 53:2, Ps. 22:6, since Nazareth was an insignificant and despised town with a negative reputation (Jn. 1:46; 7:52). Also the word: "Nazareth" is a derivative of the Hebrew word "Natzar" which means "a branch." Christ would be the "branch" an offshoot of Jesse and King David.

> **Messiah, the Branch** *(natzar)* **will Rule with the Holy Spirit's Power & Integrity** (Isaiah 11:1-5, 10)
>
> **"Branch" (Isaiah 11:1)-**
>
> The word *natzar* refers to a new green shoot which grows out of a tree (again, the Davidic family tree).
>
> The terminology in Isaiah 11:1 points to a key descendent, a particularly vitally important descendent of the Davidic lineage.

Two proofs that "Nazareth" is related to the word *natzar*:

1) The obvious phonetic correspondence

2) The humble, lowliness motif of Isaiah 11:1
(Gundry)

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (Jn. 1:46)

For the past 2 millennium, many have been so much for Jesus Christ that they were willing to die for Him, and multitudes of others were so much against Him that they have tried to obliterate anything associated with Him.

I ask you:

Are you for Jesus . . . or against Him?

Do you love Him? Or are you still "hiding from Him?"

1 Cor. 16:22 - If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.
Isaiah 53:3 - He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.