

Christmas Fear
Matthew 2:1-3

*****Show “Linus Christmas speech”**

- The birth of a baby is normally “good news”
- Nevertheless, we read in vs 3, “When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”
- The word “troubled” also carries the meaning of “frightened” (NRSV)
- Note that “fear not” was constantly on the lips of the messengers of the first Christmas – Mary – Joseph - Shepherds

I. Christmas is a Source of Fear for Some People

1. The modern day celebration of Christmas is far removed from the biblical reality that it is supposed to celebrate
2. George Barna says that the majority of people are more apt to connect April the 15th with taxes than to connect Christmas with the birth of Jesus
3. A recent Fox News “man on the street” interview of random people reveals how little people in general know about Christmas

*****Show clip “Christmas Quiz”**

4. The so-called “war on Christmas” may be a good thing – at least it keeps Christmas before the public – and some may actually be motivated to search deeper into the meaning of the celebration
5. Christmas today is basically celebrated as a secular holiday
6. When the real meaning of Christmas is proclaimed, there are always those who react negatively to the central idea of Christmas – the Incarnation - the birth of a babe who is the Savior of the world
 - a. The idea of Jesus as the One and Only Savior is just too narrow – too limited in scope – there must be other ways – other means of being saved
 - b. But listen – the message of the Bible is narrow – and therein is the rub for many people
 - 1) The Bible doesn’t tell us that God has *many* beloved Sons that He sent into the world
 - 2) The Scripture says, “*There is God, one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim 2:5)
 - 3) John 3:16 says, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Son*”

- 4) “*In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law*” (Gal 4:4)
- 5) God has sent only one Redeemer – one Savior – one Sovereign Ruler over the world

c. The world rejects God’s plan of salvation

- 1) Ps 2:1-3 (ESV)

¹ *Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?*
² *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,* ³ *“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”*

- 2) Ps 2:3 in the NLT says – “*Let us break their chains and free ourselves from slavery to God*”

- 3) Sadly, this is the state of the world today – God seeks to save, but the world thinks of salvation as slavery!

d. Christmas for many is an intimidating time

II. Christmas was a Source of Fear for Herod

1. What was it that troubled Herod so much about the birth of the Christ Child?
2. It is not too hard to figure out why Herod was “troubled” or afraid
 - a. Herod rubbed shoulders with the greatest people of his day – Mark Anthony – Cleopatra – Octavian (who became Caesar Augustus)
 - b. Herod was appointed by the Roman Senate to the position of King of Judea
 - c. A heaven-sent King, whose birth was announced by the stars of heaven and sought out by wise men from the east was a clear challenge to Herod’s throne
3. For Jesus to reign, Herod would have to be deposed
 - a. Herod had no intention of giving up his throne
 - 1) Herod dealt harshly with “pretenders” to the throne
 - 2) Killed his favorite wife and other family members
 - b. Notice that the scripture says “*and all of Jerusalem with him*”
 - 1) Jerusalem was fearful of what Herod might do
 - 2) Their fear was warranted

- 3) In response to the birth of the Christ Child, he slaughtered the children of Bethlehem!
- 4) This act was an ultimate act of desperation and rejection

III. People Still React to Christmas Out of Fear

1. Most people will not oppose Jesus with the same degree of violence as King Herod –
2. But they still oppose Him for the same reason
 - a. People are not particularly troubled by baby in a manger
 - b. What bothers them is the grown-up Jesus who makes demands upon their lives
 - c. People recognize that if Jesus is King, *they cannot be*
 - d. If Jesus is given His rightful place, you cannot rule your own life
 - e. Self has to be deposed
3. It's one thing to singing "Silent Night" - but "I Surrender All" is altogether different
 - a. The child of Christmas becomes the Christ who challenges
 - b. He says things like - *"if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"* (Matthew 16:24)
4. For King Herod, the message of Christmas was intimidating – frightening – disturbing – agitating - because of the challenge Jesus represented

IV. He Still Challenges Us Today

1. Herod knew that a new king had been born
2. He took the message of the Magi seriously
3. Don't be mistaken after these years into believing that Jesus is anything less than what He was born to be
4. He is King of kings and Lord of lords
5. He is Emanuel – God with us – and God for us – Savior – Almighty God – Prince of Peace
6. The challenge of Christmas is Christ –
7. What will **you** do with Him?