

East Cooper Baptist Church

Buster Brown, December 17, 2017

Responses to the Coming of Christ: Worship, Indifference, or Hostility

"When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel..." After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh... Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more." Matthew 2:3-6, 9-11, 16-18

In this passage, we encounter three responses to the advent of Jesus Christ.

	Attitude	Response
*Wise Men (limited knowledge)	Searched diligently, rejoiced with great joy	Worship and gifts
*Chief Priests and Scribes (biblically informed Re: Messiah)	Scholarly, indifference	Non-compelling, no urgency (bland religious interest)
*Herod (begrudgingly aware)	Duplicity and murderous plans	Open hostility and slaughter of infant boys in Bethlehem

"Some religious answer will surely be forthcoming...It is a constitutive part of man's consciousness: the cognitive search for the pattern of the 'general order' of existence; the affective need to establish rituals and to make such conceptions sacred; the primordial need for relatedness to some others, or set of meanings which will establish a transcendent response to the self; and the existential need to confront the finalities of suffering and death."
Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism (1976), Daniel Bell

"The Bible is God's Word, the revealed counsel of God. It is possible for us to develop a certain kind of familiarity with the Bible so that we fail to appreciate the marvel of God's favour and mercy and wisdom in giving it to us. We need to stop and consider what hopeless darkness, misery, and confusion would be ours if we did not possess the Bible. We would be without God and without hope in the world, endlessly stumbling over our own vain imaginings with respect to God, with respect to his will for us and with respect to our own nature, origin, and destiny. The Bible is the infallible revelation to us of the truth regarding God himself,

regarding the world in which we live, and regarding ourselves. It reveals God's mind and will for us; it declares the way of salvation; it discloses the knowledge that is eternal life...If we truly appreciate the mystery of God's grace and wisdom, we shall study the Bible as one who has found great spoil. The very nature and content of the Bible as God's Word will compel our most earnest application to it." **Collected Writings, John Murray**

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men." **John 1:1-4**

Application:

1. Sing "Joy to the World" 5X for every singing of "Away in a Manger" or "Silent Night."
2. To understand the reality of Christ leads to "exceeding great joy" and compels an individual to joyful obedience.

How to celebrate Christmas?

1. Advent observance.
2. Give to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for World Missions.
3. Communicate the saving reality of Christ to a friend, co-worker, or neighbor.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Differentiate among the following: historical faith, familial faith, cultural faith, and saving faith.
2. What is a "Herod-like" response to Christ today? What is threatening about the coming of Christ?
3. "For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness." Hebrews 12:10; what compels us to joyful obedience?
4. The harmonizing of what two truths brings diligence, passion, and resolve to the life of a disciple of Christ?

Biblical verses to meditate on and memorize for the month of December.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. **Hebrews 12:1-2**

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. **James 1:2-4**