



Christmas Live 1st Person Narrative Sunday, December 16, 2018
Pastor Don Denyes

The story of Christmas is compelling in so many different ways. One of the key ways that it is compelling is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. In the first three chapters of the book of Matthew, there are six direct quotations of Old Testament passages that find their fulfillment in Christ and the circumstances surrounding His birth and ministry. Even these pale in comparison to the allusions in Matthew's genealogy to the great and glorious purposes of God in His promises to Abraham and David and how those promises found their fulfillment through all the twists and turns in the history of God's people.

Another compelling aspect to the Christmas story is the story of the Magi, most likely Persian astrologers, who came to worship the baby in Bethlehem. They serve as a faint foreshadowing of the authority over all nations which is given to Jesus (cf. Matt. 28:18).

Perhaps the most compelling aspect to the story is the story of Herod the king. He is very intentionally called "Herod the king" twice to demonstrate his role in the story. Herod was called "king," but he was not the shepherd of Israel that had been prophesied. He was an imposter, someone who did not fear God.

Herod's response to the birth of Jesus is very telling not just for Herod himself, but for all of us as human beings. We have set ourselves up as little "kings" and "queens" of our own domains. We pretend that we have the authority to live our lives the way we choose. And at first, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, we do whatever it takes to maintain that control.

The beauty of the Christmas story is that Jesus came to save us from that. He came to save us from our sins. And in saving us from our sins, He not only saved us from the penalty of sin, He saved us from our rebellion and enabled us to submit to Him as our rightful king.

Read Matthew 2:1-12, 16-18

Discuss

- 1) How would you describe the difference between Herod's response to Jesus and the response of the Magi?
- 2) Why are people threatened by Jesus' claim to authority?
- 3) How do you know Jesus is exercising His authority as a "ruler" in your life (v. 6)?
- 4) How have you experienced Jesus caring for you as a "shepherd" (v. 6)?
- 5) The Magi "rejoiced exceedingly with great joy" to know that Jesus had been born and came to pay tribute to Him (v. 10-11). Would you say your life is characterized by joy in God?