

TRoubLED HEROD MEANS TROUBLE

Out of the blue (so to speak), right on God's time schedule, wise men from the East came seeking the One born who is "King of the Jews".

Matthew 2:3 (NKJV)

3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

What got Herod's attention was the phrase "***King of the Jews***". This was his title, and he was paranoid about anyone else trying to assume his position. There was much Messianic expectation in the land, and so any talk like this was considered by Herod to be a threat.

A contrast is being drawn between Herod the usurper, the one whom the Romans declared to be "king of the Jews", and the true Messiah who is rightfully the "King of the Jews." And behind the scenes is the reality of spiritual warfare. Herod was a descendant of Esau and what is represented in the age-old struggle between Jacob and Esau which began in the womb even before the boys were born (cf. Gen. 25:19-34). Herod of Esau represents the age-old hostility that is opposed to the chosen line of Jacob of which Christ is the ultimate representative.

This theme of Jesus being the "***King of the Jews***" begins with His birth and runs right through the entire gospel culminating in Pilate putting a placard over the cross that read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Mt. 27:37). But as we will note, as King of the Jews, this Messiah also has a place for Gentiles in His plan.

The Jews knew well that when Herod was "troubled," it meant trouble for everyone around him. Any perceived threat would be met with murder and mayhem. Any talk about a rival "King of the Jews" would be met with a murderous purge. Thus, the whole of Jerusalem was troubled!

Matthew 2:4 (NKJV)

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

These were the top religious Jewish leaders in the land. The chief priests consisted of the current high priest and others who had previously occupied this position. This position of high priest had been politicized, where, contrary to the law of God, Herod oversaw who served as high priest, and to keep things in check, he occasionally made changes. The priests were

mostly Sadducees who didn't believe in the resurrection, and they ran the temple.

The Scribes were professional "teachers of the law" and therefore experts on the OT and the oral traditions. They were also called "lawyers" (cf. Lk. 10:25). Most of the scribes were Pharisees who prided themselves on "knowing the Book". They intellectually had a good grasp of the contents of what the Scriptures said, even though most of them didn't really know God.

Herod, claiming to be a convert to Judaism, connected the idea of "King of the Jews" with Him being "the Christ," which is to say the Messiah. But clearly, he was an unbeliever, thinking he could wipe out the Messiah, which he was plotting to try and do.

Yet, it is fascinating that he is looking to these religious scholars for Messianic insight from their "**holy book**". How inconsistent was this? That is the way a mind darkened by sin operates. It doesn't make sense. If the holy Scriptures could accurately tell him WHERE the Messiah was to be born, perhaps you shouldn't mess with that kind of sovereignty! But alas, he was spiritually blind and forged ahead accordingly!