

## Searching for a King<sup>1</sup>

Outline:

- I. **Obama Joke by John Steward**
  - a. “After a quick meet-and-greet with King Abdullah, Obama was off to Israel, where he made a quick stop at the manger in Bethlehem where he was born”
  - b. Americans keep looking for a leader who will rescue them.
    - i. Bush
    - ii. Clinton
    - iii. Bush
    - iv. Reagan?
  - c. Continually disappointed
- II. **People in Bible times looking for a King**
  - a. Not unlike how people were 2000 years ago.
  - b. Romans were looking for a God-man ruler. Believed they had found him. Yet over the next few decades his descendants and inheritors of his “divinity” would become more and more dark, corrupt and despotic.
  - c. Jews were looking for a different king. They hated Caesar and his vicegerent Herod.

---

<sup>1</sup> The outline, major ideas and even some wording of this sermon are largely taken from a sermon by Ronald Clouset entitled “In Search of a King.”

- d. They missed old king, Antoginus who had been executed by Herod many years before.
- e. In the east there were others looking for a king. There was a belief that out of Judea would proceed those who would rule the world. Some, like the King of India, were fearful of such a king. But there were others who were looking with longing and even Joy.

### III. **The King-Makers**

- a. To them, others came.
- b. They were the King-makers. They chose the kings who would rule the second-greatest empire of the known world. The Parthian empire. They were the Megistanes.<sup>2</sup> The Magi. They were the ancient ruler/priests of the Median and now Parthian empires. In our day they would be the Senate, Electoral College and Cabinet rolled up into one.
- c. And yet, now they were looking for a King of different empire. One that they believed would rule theirs. Shouldn't they be afraid? They might lose their power to him! Shouldn't they try to prevent his reign? Yet they came searching. They left their thrones in search of Him. They left their thrones to worship Him.
- d. Who knows how long they had been searching for Him. It may have been years. But one night they witnessed an amazing display of light that filled the western sky.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.orldutheran.com/html/magifaq.html>

- e. Then the light faded, but a small star remained. It was a strange star. It was not a planet or a normal star. What was it?
- f. They consulted other wise men and ancient scrolls. They read the prophecy of Balaam who had been one of their own. "A star shall come forth from Jacob, <sup>(A)</sup>A scepter shall rise from Israel" Numbers 24:17
- g. Then they turned to the Hebrew scriptures. There they learned of a Saviour King who would come from David. Then, in dreams they were told to go in search of the young prince. So, after gathering together the richest presents the land could afford, they set off to find the prince.

#### **IV. A Long Trip**

- a. Their trip was a long one.
- b. Over 600 miles they traveled. They could travel only as slowly as the slowest animal. This would have taken them anywhere from two weeks to a month. And they must travel at night to keep the star in view. But they spent the long hours reciting the sayings and prophecies about the one they longed for.
- c. Their journey takes them along the Euphrates river and then off along a tributary and then across a wide desert to the mountains that follow the coastline. From there they travel south along the ancient trade routes that so many armies had traveled in their wars of conquest. As they journeyed they must have thought of Abraham who

likely traveled these same dusty roads. Perhaps they even stopped to worship at some of the same places he had so many years before. By faith Abraham had left their land at God's command. And by faith they were doing so too.

- d. The pilgrimage takes them past Lake Galilee and down beside the Jordan river until they finally climb the steep road that winds its way up to the Holy City. Finally, they rejoice as they look down at Jerusalem from the mount of Olives. Eagerly they watch as the star settles directly over the temple and then fades.
- e. And now they are urging their animals on as they head down into the Kidron valley and up to the city gates.
- f. What a sight they must have made. These were no ordinary strangers. They were Magi! Rulers of a distant land. A land that had very recently ruled Judea. Had they come back to stake their claim? And how bold. To march right into Roman territory. They must have trusted the uneasy peace that Caesar had declared.
- g. But the Jews were not the only ones surprised. The Magi had expected festivities and pomp and other royal visitors.
- h. Instead, what a disappointment. People went about their daily lives as if nothing had happened. No one seemed to know anything about a newborn king!

**V. Herod's Troubled House**

- a. Herod's house was troubled.

- b. Started back when he executed his young wife Marriamne.
- c. Then, years later he executed his own sons.
- d. Now he was suspecting another son and would soon put him to death.
- e. Caesar made a little pun about Herod. "It is safer to be Herod's Ous than his Huios. Which translated means It is safer to be Herod's pig than his son.
- f. Herod had spent his entire life fighting to keep his throne.
- g. And now these Magi had come with rumors of a newborn king. And he was worried.
- h. He had good reason to be! Early in his reign he had been kicked out by armies from whence the Magi came! In fact, these very magi may have had a hand in choosing the man who replaced him- Antigonus. And he may have ruled through their authority!
- i. They were king-makers! Had they come to make another Jew King instead of him?
- j. Herod worried that priests were secretly plotting with the Magi to overthrow him. And why wouldn't they? They had LOVED it when the Parthians had ruled. They constantly looked back to those days with fond memories. Why wouldn't they want old masters back?
- k. But the wise-men were not plotting a revolt. Nor did they intend to make someone else king. In times past, their nation—and perhaps they-- had set up a puppet king in Judea. But this time they

had come to worship a real king. And they were willing to leave their thrones to do it.

- I. Angrily Herod called together the leaders of the Jewish nation. He demanded that they tell him where this king was prophesied to be born.
  - m. The scribes and priests knew they had better behave. "In Bethlehem" came the answer.
  - n. After dismissing the scribes Herod schedules a secret meeting with the Magi
  - o. Carefully masking his fear and rage Herod he plays the part of the worshiper seeking his lord. The wise men fall for his guise and tell him everything he asks. They tell him the whole story of the star and when they first saw it. They promise to alert Herod when they find the King.
  - p. The wise-men might have noticed something. If Herod had been so keen on worshiping this new king, why didn't he come with them to find him?
  - q. Sadly the wise men left Jerusalem alone.
  - r. Alone in their quest to find the king of the very people they were visiting. Herod didn't go with them. Nor did the scribes and priests. They left Bethlehem much less confident than they were before. *How sad it is when God's own people are the largest obstacle in the way of strangers finding Jesus!*

**VI. The Main Question:**

- a. But the question remains: Why didn't Herod or the Jews go in search of the king?
- b. Why weren't they as eager to find him as the pagan wise men?
- c. Why didn't they long to find Him and worship him?

**VII. Herod**

- a. Let's start with Herod. Why didn't he go in search of the new king?
- b. Was it fear? Perhaps. He had good reason to believe that the Jews were plotting to overthrow him. He was a hated and despised monarch. And he had plenty of family members who were as ruthless as he. He always had to watch his back.
- c. But really, what could a humble child do to him now? If this child had power to hurt him in Bethlehem he had as much to do so in Jerusalem. Besides, what did he have to lose? He was old and didn't have that much time left to reign anyway.
- d. The answer was that he wasn't willing. He knew the prophecies. He knew of a coming King. He may have even known that his time was near. But He also knew that there couldn't be two kings in the land. To worship this newborn would mean to acknowledge his true claim to the throne. Herod was illegitimate. He would be obliged to abdicate his throne for himself and his posterity. Herod wouldn't seek him because he was not willing to leave his throne.

**VIII. The Jewish Leaders**

- a. So what about the Jewish leaders? Why didn't they go and seek him?
- b. Was it because they preferred Herod as King? Baaah. Certainly not. Was it because they were not expecting a Messiah and King? Oh no. They were certainly expecting a deliverer to come and free them from Rome and Herod.
- c. Was it because they didn't know when He would come? No again. Many knew the prophecies of Daniel and knew that his time was near.
- d. So why didn't they go to Bethlehem and see? It was just a short walk away! I mean, it was just five miles people!
- e. Why? Because, like Herod, they were not willing to go. You see, they weren't as ignorant as they seemed. In fact, they had heard the stories that the shepherds told. They knew of this child. They could have sought him long before the Magi came.
- f. But they wouldn't. Why? Because God had bypassed them for unclean shepherds. And now he had done the same for Gentile kings. If the boy truly was the Messiah it would show that they were wrong. That they weren't the true expositors of God's will. What an embarrassment. No. They would not seek this King. Not if it meant admitting their true standing before God.
- g. They too wouldn't seek Him because they wouldn't leave their thrones. Their thrones of self-righteousness. Their thrones of religious authority.

**IX. Leaving our Thrones for the King**

- a. And so the question rings down to us today.
  - b. How can we find the King? By being willing to leave our thrones.
  - c. Yes. (And this is my main point) In order to find the King, we must give up our thrones.
  - d. If we want to find our ruler, we must give up our rule.
  - e. If we want to find our King, we must give up our thrones.
- X. So what's your throne?
- a. Is it a seat of selfishness? A palace of pride? A scepter of sin?
  - b. Or is it a Crown of cunning, Regalia of Religiosity or a Banner of Bitterness?
  - c. You know, we all have our thrones. For some it's their career, for others its their relationships, and others it's our reputation. What's your throne? I can think of a few of mine.
  - d. The question is. Are we willing to leave these thrones behind in search of the king?
  - e. Are we willing to step off our pedestal and seek Him first?
- XI. **The Journey to Bethlehem**
- a. Well, now they are a bit discouraged, but they won't let that stop them. They have come this far. Now it's on to Bethlehem!
  - b. As evening falls they notice that the star has appeared once again. Praise be to God. With renewed energy they follow its path.
  - c. As they travel, the clear night reveals the land sloping suddenly to the left toward the dead sea. To their right a rolling

plain is overshadowed by the Judean hills.

- d. In front of them the path winds down into a ravine then up along the edge of the plain toward Bethlehem. Soon they find themselves heading into the gates of the city.
- e. Passing down the silent streets they watch the star as it settles over a small house.
- f. With hearts pounding they dismount from their camels. Should they seek entrance at such a late hour? And yet a light burns inside.
- g. Then the door slowly opens. This certainly had not been a stealth mission. The noisy camels made sure of that.
- h. Standing in the doorway is the form of a short and stocky man backlit by candles.

## **XII. The Meeting**

- a. What a strange meeting this is. The tongue-tied peasant looking into the noble yet eager faces of the princes. How strangely they were dressed. With their pantaloons and pointed caps. How poorly he was dressed. Finally, one of the Magi speaks.
- b. "Ahem. Pardon me sir for interrupting your evening. We are looking for a young child who was born here short while ago. Do you happen to know of such a one?"
- c. Joseph finds his tongue. "Why yes. Actually, my wife and I have a baby who

was recently born. How may I help you  
uh your highnesses.”

- d. Well, sir. We believe your son is the promised king that your scriptures speak of. They pause, perhaps a bit self-conscious at how ridiculous their words may sound.
- e. Joseph’s eyes grow wide. Quietly he searches their faces. How strange that these Gentiles would know.
- f. Then with emotion. “Yes, we believe He is too.”
- g. The Magi can hardly contain themselves. “Oh please! We have come to worship the child. May we see him!

### **XIII. The Child**

- a. “Come in.”
- b. Unconcerned with their crude surroundings, these rulers of a superpower follow Joseph to a dark corner of the hovel.
- c. His candle lights up the face of a young baby cradled lovingly in a borrowed manger.
- d. Tears of joy stream down each face as the wise men fall to their knees and then their faces to worship.
- e. After some time they quietly arise and send their servants out to gather their gifts and find lodging. As they wait, they swap tales angel messengers, baby dreams, shepherds and the angel choir.
- f. The Magi are thrilled yet not surprised when they discover that their star appeared on the same night that the Child was born. They have most certainly found Him!

- g. Looking again into his peaceful face that can't help but see divinity shining through the face of the humble child.

**XIV. The Joy of Leaving Your Throne**

- a. Oh the joy of leaving your throne for the King!
- b. Herod and the scribes hear of Him. But the Magi SAW Him!
- c. Herod and the Jews kept their knowledge and power to themselves.
- d. But these left their thrones to give gifts to their greatest treasure!
- e. What joy there is when you leave your dearest for God's dearest.
- f. What peace when you leave behind what's mastered you. For surely our thrones are our dungeons. When we leave them we are no longer the master of our own misery!
- g. And, you no longer go back the way you came.

**XV. The Journey Home**

- a. Their journey back was a lot shorter. Thanks largely to a dream from God and the wily Herod. But oh how much joy must have been in that short journey!
- b. The camels have a spring in their step
- c. They are going back changed men
- d. Their thrones gave way to the only one worthy to sit on YOUR throne!
- e. Yes yours.
- f. When world events allow for the coming of the Kings from the east, we will shine like stars! We will be like Him.

- g. We will not rule our own affairs. He will!
- h. We will cast our crowns at His feet.
- i. Yes. What joy there is when we leave our thrones to find the King.

**XVI. Giving up our Thrones**

- a. This Christmas day some of us need to  
  
give up our thrones of self, wealth,  
power and ease
- b. Recognize that another king was born to rule and it ain't us.
- c. Look up in the sky and see a king who left His throne for us.
- d. Won't you leave your throne to find your King?