

1. Herod's Horror--Matthew 2:1-18 (We are back in Matthew and his account of the Christmas story--it includes the horrific participation in the story--how he heard of the birth of Jesus through the Magi--got the priests to consult the prophets to discover where it was to happen while trying to manipulate the Magi to help him do his dirty deeds. When he could not do that he resorted to murder--killing all boys two and under in and around Bethlehem! At first blush this seems like a terrible overreaction. How could anyone do something so unimaginable as slaughtering innocent children? But it really was not out of character for this King--the first of the line of Herods that ruled over parts of Palestine (five of which are mentioned in the NT). He was called Herod the Great--and just to get the throne he had to kill, murder, and scheme. Once recognized by the Roman senate as "King of the Jews" he consolidated power to tyrannically rule over Israel as the puppet king of Rome. When Matthew mentions that all Jerusalem was disturbed with him, it was likely because they feared his reaction. At the core of it was the threat another "king of the Jews" posed to Herod. He was an Edomite (descendant of Esau) and therefore not fully Jewish--married into the royal Hasmonean family--and not considered legitimate by many Jews. This along with the whims of whatever Rome decided made him paranoid--so he acted in character upon hearing of birth of Christ--eradicate the competition/the threat by any means possible--even something as horrible as murdering children. So here he is in the story creating horror--unfortunately fulfilling prophecy and demonstrating that)
2. The Enemy will Always be With us--1 Peter 5:8 (From Herod to the images of the dragon in Revelation 12--the NT reveals how our enemy, Satan, will use everything at his disposal to stop the will of God from being accomplished. Truly as Peter teaches--he is a roaring lion looking to devour any and all who follow God--and he worked through Herod in a horrific way to prove it. This is why Peter also tells us to "be self-controlled and alert to the danger he poses. Just by looking at Herod we can learn how he works)
  - a. He is a liar--John 8:44. 2 Corinthians 11:14 (and the "father of all lies" according to Jesus. Everything Satan presents is an untruth--nothing with him is as it seems. While he devours like a roaring lion, he can appear as an angel of light"--which again is why we should be alert to his ways--the ways Herod demonstrates)
  - b. He is a master manipulator--Revelation 12:9 (the "deceiver of the whole world." Think about how he manipulated Eve by twisting words. Think how Herod deceived the Magi. We can never trust Satan or anything he offers--temptations may seem sweet but end up sour. He is a loser who uses **accusations** to manipulate and harm)
  - c. He is about destruction--John 10:10 (he comes to kill and destroy; to steal joy and blessings; death is his partner--so what Herod did was just an extension of Satan's design--death and destruction; suffering and horror--ultimately for all who fall into his snare But just like with the Magi--if we listen to God, we will avoid that snare for while Satan is about destruction, Christ is about life and life abundantly as the rest of John 10:10 teaches. The contrast could not be any greater and that is why we are here celebrating the Savior's birth, and resurrection. That is why we plead with all who do not know him--no future exists outside of God)
3. (So I leave with you with this verse) Deuteronomy 31:6 (Satan's agent Herod could not stop Jesus then--and he cannot stop him now. **Greater is Jesus in us than Satan in the world--1 John 4:4**--so be strong and courageous, do not be afraid to leave boldly for God and see Satan for the loser he is)