

"BORN KING OF THE JEWS"

– MATTHEW 2:1-12. – FEBRUARY 4. –

"Look unto Me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else." – Isaiah 45:22.

TODAY'S STUDY relates to the Wise Men of the East and their seeing of a wonderful star which, as astrologers, they recognized to import a great event – the birth of a great King. At the time Palestine was a province of the Roman Empire, and its King, Herod, was not a Jew of the House of Jacob, but a representative of the house of Esau. Herod sought to perpetuate his dynasty, and hence the announcement of the shepherds that a great King of the Jews had just been born suggested the overthrow of the Herodian dynasty and the establishment on Israel's throne of a king in the line of David and Solomon.

Herod's disquietude is easily understood, but the fact that the people of Jerusalem in general should be disturbed by the annunciation of a king of their own awakens thought. Evidently they were in a very self-satisfied condition; under the Romans they were experiencing great prosperity. Herod, the Edomite, had built them a temple the grandeur of which outshone that of Solomon. The people were feeling so satisfied with their attainments that they had ceased to specially long for and pray for the coming of the Messiah, the long-promised King of the line of David. They were disturbed lest any change should be for the worse – lest it should mean internal strife as between Herod and another and lest it should mean strife with the Roman Empire, which at the time was treating the Jews quite generously.

A very similar condition of things may be expected in conjunction with the second advent of Christ. The powers that be today are styled Christ's Kingdom, "Christendom," but they are really "kingdoms of this world." Any announcement today that Messiah's Kingdom is nigh – that He will soon take unto Himself His great power and reign (Rev.

11:17) – meets with resentment. If in surprise we ask why this indifference respecting the fulfilment of our prayer, "Thy Kingdom come," the answer is, "Let well enough alone; do not agitate that subject; it may bring in strife and contention, because many are prospering so well under the reign of the 'Prince of this world' that they could not look upon a change as likely to bring any improvement in their condition – indeed some of them have reason to fear that Messiah's Kingdom would seriously disturb their entrenched privileges and monopolistic control of the wonderful blessings of our day."

PRIESTLY INDIFFERENCE ON THE SUBJECT

Although King Herod called the priests and teachers of his day to inquire particularly respecting the prophecies of Messiah's birth, and although they answered him correctly, nevertheless, the records show no joy, no enthusiasm, on the part of the religious teachers in respect to the prophetic fulfilment which they had professed to trust in and to long for. They were indifferent; none of them followed to Bethlehem to find the new born King of the Jews. They had become Higher Critics and no longer believed the prophecies; they had less faith in them than had Herod.

And do we not find an antitype in this day? Are not the chief priests and religious leaders generally so out of harmony with the Divine promises and so faithless as respects the glorious Messianic Kingdom of which the Bible tells, that they are ashamed to identify themselves in any degree with those who seek the Lord and wait for His Kingdom? Alas! even the Mohammedans and Brahmins of the East are waiting for Messiah and the Golden Age and disposed to seek the evidences – but amongst the most prominent ministers of "Christendom" there is apparent unbelief, Higher Criticism, Evolution and general opposition to Messiah and His Kingdom. Let the civil government fight down if it chooses everything associated with **[R4956 : page 30]** the New Dispensation. These are quite indifferent; they have plans and schemes of their own by which they

are hoping to accomplish the work predicted for Messiah; they are anxious to raise money and to convert the world without disturbing the present order of things. Alas for them! how clearly they are mistaken! how terrible will be their disappointment when their cherished plans will all fail in a time of trouble which, while it will greatly disappoint them, will prove to be the forerunner of the reign of righteousness for the blessing of all the families of the earth – for the ushering in of "the times of restitution."

WAS THERE A MISTAKE?

Nearly nineteen centuries have passed since the events of this lesson. Israel, instead of being exalted as Messiah's Kingdom, has been wrecked. Was it by mistake that Jesus was announced King of the Jews at His birth, or did God change His plan because the Jews refused Jesus and crucified Him?

Neither suggestion is correct. Jesus is yet to be the King of the Jews and the King of the world. The "mystery" is cleared when we understand that there are two classes of Jews, two classes of Israelites – a heavenly and also an earthly class. Thus there are the two "Seeds of Abraham," one of which is to be as the stars of heaven and the other as the sands of the seashore. The heavenly, the spiritual, must be developed first and be associated with Messiah in glory, honor and immortality, far above angels.

It has required all of this Gospel Age for the selecting of this Spiritual Seed. With its completion a New Age will be inaugurated. Then the earthly blessings promised will be fulfilled to the natural seed of Abraham. "They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit thereof"; "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall fill the whole earth"; to Him "every knee will bow and every tongue confess," for all who refuse shall be destroyed in the Second Death. (Isa. 65:21; Hab. 2:14; Rom. 14:11.) Messiah is already recognized as Lord by all Spiritual Israelites. During the next Age He will be crowned Lord of all by natural Israel, and all other nationalities

will enjoy the privilege of becoming proselyte children of Abraham in the flesh. Messiah will reign in His Mediatorial Kingdom for the very purpose of bringing these blessings to natural Israel and through her to all nations.

The relationship of Messiah to Spiritual Israel, the elect Church, is quite different from what it will be toward the world. He is our Lord and prospective Bridegroom; we are His betrothed and prospective Bride, and joint-heirs of His glory, and are to be associated in His glorious Messianic work. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." – Gal. 3:29.

It will require the entire thousand years of the reign of Christ and His Bride to accomplish that promise – the **[R4957 : page 30]** blessing of all the families of the earth with full light and knowledge and opportunity for complete return to harmony with God and for the recovery of all that was lost in Adam and redeemed at Calvary. We by faith hail Him as King, even before the establishment of His Kingdom, and loyally and gladly submit ourselves to Him, pledging our lives in the service of His Cause of righteousness and truth. We, when praying, "Thy Kingdom come," are expressing our sympathy with the righteousness which Messiah's Kingdom shall establish and our faith in His promise that we shall sit with Him in His Throne. And when we pray that God's will shall be done on earth as in heaven we are expressing our confidence that the Messianic reign will be glorious and successful to the last degree – overthrowing all evil and adverse conditions and establishing righteousness amongst men on the same permanent foundation that prevails in heaven.

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