

Ready for Christmas 4 - Responses to Christ on the First Christmas¹

The second chapter of Matthew and the second chapter of Luke tell us of the birth of Jesus. These two chapters give us six different responses to Christ on the first Christmas. However, The responses are summed up in the first chapter of John. Please turn to John 1:11-12.

John 1:11-12 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:

J. Vernon McGee said, "He came into His own universe but His own people did not receive Him...But as many as received Him, to them gave he the authority to become the sons of God."²Most of His own people did not receive Him. But those who did receive Him became "the sons of God" (John 1:12). We see those two groups very clearly in the nativity accounts, given by Matthew and Luke.

1. First, those who did not receive Christ.

There were four different responses of those who rejected Christ at His birth. They responded in four different ways – but the result was the same. In each case they "received him not" (John 1:11). And these responses are pictures of how people reject Christ today.

First, King Herod tried to kill the

¹Based on a message by R.L. Hymers,

https://www.rlhymersjr.com/Online_Sermons/2011/122411PM_ResponsesToChrist.html

²J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible, Vol 4*, notes on John 1:11,12

baby Jesus. The angel of the Lord said to Joseph,

Matthew 2:13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

We don't generally think about people wanting to "destroy" Jesus, but there are many people who actually do. The ACLU does their best to destroy Him. The professors in liberal seminaries do their best to destroy Him. They call it "demythologizing," but they really mean to destroy Jesus. All of those who attend secular colleges have heard liberal professors that are like Herod, who seek to destroy Jesus. They say He never did miracles. They say He never rose from the dead. They say His death on the Cross did not atone for sin. Politicians can be more or less blatant about this, but they often act to nullify Christ. There are plenty of average people who stop their ears and want to keep Christ out. There have always been people like King Herod who seek "to destroy him" to one degree or another.

Second, there were the people of Jerusalem. The Bible says that Herod "was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (Matthew 2:3). The residents of Jerusalem were disturbed when they heard about Jesus. Being "troubled" means "to stir or agitate." Why would news of Jesus' birth agitate, disturb and trouble them? I think it is just human nature. The prophet Isaiah said of Jesus,

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised,

and we esteemed him not.

We have often seen relatives become irritated and even furious with family for becoming true Christians. Also, if you have a strong belief in Jesus, it still troubles many people today.

Then there was the Innkeeper. We don't even know his name. It isn't recorded in the Bible. We are simply told that Mary laid the baby Jesus "in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). A manger is a feeding trough for animals. An ancient tradition said He was born in a cave where cows and donkeys and horses were kept. We do not know much about the innkeeper except that he turned away Joseph and Mary. We believe that the inn was full because so many people had come to Bethlehem to be registered and taxed. But we also wonder why the owner of the inn didn't make a little room for a woman about to give birth. Whoever the innkeeper was he has never been thought of as a kind or thoughtful person. Dr. Gill said, "Had they been rich...they would have been regarded, and room made for them...it was brutish of them to turn them into a stable, when such was her case."³

The "brutish" innkeeper was like so many today who have no room in their lives for Jesus. Their work, their own personal prosperity, their careers, seem so important to them that they have no time for Jesus or church. How about you? Our church marquee reads, "Each of us is an innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus."

No room, no room for Jesus,
O give Him welcome free,
Lest you should hear at heaven's gate,
"There is no room for thee."⁴

³John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament* vol. 1

⁴"No Room in the Inn" by A. L. Skilton

Finally, there were the scribes. The scribes were students of the Old Testament Scriptures. They were Bible scholars. King Herod demanded of them,

Matthew 2:4-6 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

6And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

These Bible students knew exactly where Christ would be born. They quoted Micah 5:2. They knew the Bible, but they lacked the faith to go with the wise men and come to Jesus. They knew where He was. Bethlehem was about twenty minutes away by foot. But they did not come to Jesus. This is very important. It shows that you can study the Bible, and believe it – and still be a lost sinner, just like those scribes. It is not enough to know the Bible and believe it! You must actually come to Jesus Christ Himself! You could read and study the Bible for the rest of your life and still go to Hell if you don't come to Jesus Christ! That is the lesson we learn from those scribes!

Those are the ones who did not receive Christ. Which one is like you? Are you like King Herod – trying to stamp Christ out of your life? Are you like the people of Jerusalem – merely troubled by Christ? Are you like the Innkeeper – having no room in your life for Christ? Or are you like the scribes – coming to church, studying the Bible, but refusing to come to Jesus Christ Himself?

Most people fall into one of those categories. But there was another group.

2. Those who did receive Christ.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:

Among those who received Jesus, there were the shepherds, and the Wise Men from the East.

The shepherds were watching their flock of sheep that night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and said,

Luke 2:11-14 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

The shepherds wasted no time. They came to Jesus immediately and quickly. The Bible says "they came with haste" (Luke 2:16). They hurried to Jesus. It is a matter of curiosity that there are those who come to Christ quickly as opposed to others who present themselves with skepticism. This should actually be a matter of course. There is nothing so mysterious or complicated about this. The Gospel is so simple. They heard the Gospel preached and "they came with haste" to Jesus.

But that is not the way some people come. Some people come to Jesus like John Bunyan, our Baptist forefather, did – through struggle and turmoil of soul. The Wise Men from the East came to Jesus like that, with great difficulty. The

commitment to come to Christ is easy, but getting what's needed to know to be able to make the commitment often comes along a long journey and enquiry. They didn't just walk a few blocks, and come instantly to Jesus, like the shepherds. Oh, no! It took them much longer to get to Him. They had to travel a long distance and go through many trials, striving to enter in to Christ. They came to Jesus through a struggle, like "Christian" in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Jesus said,

Luke 13:24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

The Greek word translated "strive" is from "agonizomai." Our English word "agony" comes from it. It means to "struggle" your way to Christ. Will you struggle to enter in to Christ? Will you go through agony to get to Him? The Wise Men from the East did. They traveled a long distance. They went through many hardships. They didn't shrink back from the task to get to Him.

Matthew 2:11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Will you come to Jesus, even if you have to struggle to get to Him?

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