

The background of the slide is a textured, aged parchment paper. In the upper right corner, there is a clear glass inkwell with a stopper. A fountain pen with a gold-colored barrel and a black nib lies diagonally across the lower right portion of the page. Faint, dark pencil sketches of human faces are visible on the parchment, particularly in the center and left areas.

*The Grinch Who Tried
To Steal Christmas*

Matthew 2:1-18

Christmas
According to Matthew

*“The rulers of this world are seldom friendly
to the cause of God.”*

~J.C. Ryle

Herod couldn't destroy Jesus then, and this part of the Christmas story is meant to remind us that no ruler, no force, no circumstance can stop the cause that God has birthed in us today!

Christmas
According to Matthew

Matthew 2:1-2

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, “*Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.*”

Bethlehem

- A nondescript village 6 miles south of Jerusalem.
- The name Bethlehem meant, “*House of Bread*”.
- The burial place of Rachel; home of Ruth; birthplace of David.
- Prophetically identified as the birthplace of the Messiah.

Micah 5:2 & Matthew 2:6

“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”



Bethlehem

- What is impressive about Bethlehem is that God chose not an impressive palace but an unimpressive place to introduce the world's most impressive person, his Son, as the Savior-King.
- What is instructive is that in unimpressive Bethlehem, where God chose to do his most impressive work, Satan unleashed his most intense effort to destroy what God had birthed.

Bethlehem or Bedlam

“There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.”

~C.S. Lewis

Christmas
According to Matthew

Matthew 2:3-5

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ *"In Bethlehem in Judea,"* they replied, *"for this is what the prophet has written..."*

King Herod

- He was half Jew and half Idumaen—from Edom.
- He was made governor of Palestine in 47 BC; king in 40 BC; he ruled as monarch for 36 years.
- He was known as “*Herod the Great*”.
- He led an impressive restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem, often referred to as “*Herod’s Temple*”.

King Herod

- He was insanely suspicious; paranoia only grew worse with age until he became a murderous old man.
- He executed his wife, Miramne, her mother Alexandra, his sons Antipater, Alexander and Aristobulus, and at his own death, had many of Jerusalem's nobility killed to guarantee mourning on that day.
- *"It's safer to be Herod's pig than Herod's son!"* ~Augustus

Matthew 2:16-18

¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.



¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ¹⁸ *“A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”*

Slaughter of the Innocents

- Paradoxically, the children of Bethlehem died in Jesus' place when Jesus came to die in our place.
- Jesus escaped a first time, but he would not escape a second time, so that we would escape for all time.

Matthew 2:7-12

⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “*Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.*”

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

The Response To God's Plan

1. Herod reacted to Jesus' birth with hostility.

There are those today who would gladly destroy Christ because they fear giving up their throne—which the very acknowledgment of Jesus demands.

The Response To God's Plan

- 2. The chief priest and the scribes reacted to Jesus' birth with indifference.**

There are those today who study the Word and know all the right Scriptures and go through the right spiritual motions, but they are indifferent to the life of God.

The Response To God's Plan

3. The Magi responded to Jesus' birth with sacrifice.

- **Gold**—a kingly gift for One who rules over human hearts by faith and not by force.
- **Frankincense**—a priestly gift for One who bridges sinful people back to God.
- **Myrrh**—a fragrant gift for One who was born to die as the only effectual sacrifice for the sin of the world.