

CHRISTMAS CHARACTERS

King Herod & The Religious Leaders

Matthew 2:1-8 & 16-18

Three groupings of the people in the Christmas account reflect three responses to the birth of Jesus.

1. King Herod & The Religious Leaders ... Reject Jesus
2. The Wise Men & The Shepherds ... Pursue Jesus
3. Joseph & Mary ... Serve Jesus

KING HEROD & THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Reject Jesus

Could King Herod's rejection be an
I DON'T WANT HIM rejection?

(I don't want to submit to him, serve him, follow him)

Could the Religious Leaders rejection be an
I DON'T NEED HIM rejection?

(I am good enough, I can make it on my own)

King Herod was . . .

- a Roman client king of Judea
- an amazing builder (temple, aqueducts, theatres, Masada etc.)
- was raised as a Jew, descendant of Esau
- personal body guard of some 2,000 soldiers
- tried to appease both Jews and pagans
- over taxed the people
- jealous of throne murdering family members to secure it
- "evil genius of the Judean nation"

The Religious Leaders were . . .

- Pharisees - defined righteousness as observing every detail of the traditional rules designed as a "hedge" or "fence" around the commandments – small in number but significant influence
- Sadducees – rejected the traditional rules and followed the Torah (laws) directly – Jesus has few conflicts with them
- High Priests – appointed by Herod, closely aligned with Roman interests, financially well off, powerful figures
- Scribes/Lawyers – a class of professional exponents or teachers of the law who might belong to either Pharisees (primarily) or Sadducees parties

WHY DO PEOPLE REJECT JESUS?

The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-23

The Sower – Jesus

The Seed – The Gospel

The Soil – People's hearts

There are four different soils which represent four different kinds of hearts.

**The results of the sowing of the seed
always depends on the condition of the heart.**

FOUR SOILS / HEARTS

ONE – HARD SOIL, PATH

Matthew 13:3-4 & 19

Hard hearts do not understand the message –
the evil one snatches it away

TWO – ROCKY SOIL

Matthew 13:5-6 & 20-21

Hear and receive but do not allow it to go deep into their lives and
when trouble comes it fails to mature and dies

THREE – THORNY SOIL

Matthew 13:7 & 22

Hears the word but worries and deceitfulness of life chokes out the
life of the seed in their hearts

FOUR – GOOD SOIL

Matthew 13:8 & 23

Hears, understands, receives the message and produces fruit in
keeping with the planted seed

**Above all else guard your heart,
for it affects everything you do.**