

**THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK**

“In the days of King Herod magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem seeking the newborn king of the Jews.  
We saw his star at its rising and we have come to do him homage.”

Matthew 2: 1

King Herod is known as King Herod the Great. He was a complex, multi-talented, arrogant, driven, ruthless person. Paranoid. Murderous. It is this Herod who will order the deaths of all the infant boys two years old and younger who live in and around Bethlehem in an effort eliminate the “newborn king of the Jews.” Sometimes I think that we think, from the vantage point of two thousand years later, that this description and account is probably exaggerated. However, I don’t think so. The portrayal of Herod accords with a paranoid leader. From other historical records we know that this King Herod (not the same as the King Herod to whom Pontius Pilate sends Jesus, that is this Herod’s son, Herod Antipas), had many children and a number of wives. He killed several of his wives and several of his children. He really was ruthless. And thinking that there is a threat to his kingdom would lead him to believe that such a person was eminently expendable.

The magi are innocent seekers. The truth is their goal. Herod’s is staying in power. The magi are encouraged to report back to Herod so he may go and offer his own homage to this newborn king. “I don’t think so Ned.” This Herod is filled with duplicity and at first the magi are taken in. But then they learn, again in a dream, that Herod is murderous. They are warned not to return to him. He will kill the newborn. Listen to that again: He will kill the newborn. From the very beginning Jesus’ life was in danger. You cannot be the Holy One of God, come to this world to witness to and restore the power of goodness, truth, beauty and love and expect just to sail right through. There are way too many vested interests who thrive on the vulnerability of others and take advantage to secure their own power or their own wealth or their own security. King Herod was such a man. But the Lord warns those who live in truth. And the Lord offers his protection for those who live this way. Let us resolve to follow the example of Christ and seek to recognize that in each new life the savior is born anew. Can we believe this? The question of the week.