

## INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to Matthew chapter 2. Matthew 2. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to Matthew 2.

## INTRODUCTION: COMPLICATED

CHRISTMAS IS COMPLICATED. I think we want Christmas to be the most wonderful time of the year...but often it's really the most complicated time of the year. Right?

I mean, first of all. **Christmas is long.**

- Man, it's long!
- And it keeps getting longer!
- You realize it used to be 12 days? Right?
  - Drummers drumming,
  - and pipers piping,
  - and a whole bunch of birds doing stuff...
- but after day 12 it was over!

Now this thing is a season!

That's what we call it: the Christmas Season! It's an entire season! Like a quarter of our year is dedicated to this thing!

Also, **Christmas is messy**. Right?

- I mean with family,
- and get-togethers,
- and planning.
  - And “oh no, these two don’t get along,
  - so, let’s not sit them next to each other...
  - they’re going to be going on about Trump this,
    - and Biden that...
  - and masks this...
    - and constitutional-rights that...
  - and he wants to save whales,
    - and he hates whales.”

Man, Christmas is messy.

Also, **Christmas is expensive**. Can I get an ‘amen’?

- Cause you’re buying decorations...
- and you’re buying food...
- and you’re buying gifts...
- And even the gifts you buy for people aren’t the right ones,
- cause she wanted the Care Bear that was yellow,
  - not pink...
- and he wanted the Baby Yoda that moves...
  - not the plush one...

- and she wanted the brown boots,
  - not the black ones...
- and he...
  - well, he just bought everything
  - he wanted for himself anyway,
  - so, he's just impossible!

But man, I just had to take out a second mortgage in order to make everyone happy! Christmas is expensive.

You, see, this thing is complicated. It is.

- It's long,
- and it's messy,
- and it's expensive,
- and there's drama,
- and it's, "Kevin, look what you did you little jerk."
- And it's, "Save the neck for me, Clark!"

Right! And all that stuff, it's just our stuff. Right?

Those are just the complications that we've done to Christmas.

Alright?

## **FIRST CHRISTMAS WAS COMPLICATED**

Because when I say that Christmas is complicated, I am also talking about the OG Christmas.

Alright? I'm talking Mary and Joseph having to walk almost 100 miles to Bethlehem to pay a tax bill in-person. Can you imagine that?

- If you couldn't e-file your taxes,
- but actually had to hoof it to your hometown
- to physically pay your taxes?
- I was born in Fairfax, Virginia...
- that's more than 1500 miles away!
- I already hate paying taxes, but can you imagine that?!?

And Mary's pregnant...

- and not like, "Awww...are you expecting?"
- But more like, "Hee...heee...whooo..." pregnant!

And God really could've made it less complicated, right?

- Like, he could have made things simpler
- if he'd just booked them a hotel room or something.
- He had thousands of years to plan...
- it's not like he was caught off guard...
  - like, "What, Mary's in labor?"
  - But there's no room for them in the Inn...
  - what are they going to do?!?"

CHRISTMAS IS COMPLICATED...

## TRANSITION

But then there's this story at the end of Matthew's account that ratchets this thing up a notch.

- The way the Christmas story ends
- isn't like how we want our family Christmas to end,
  - with everyone happy,
  - and festive,
  - and holly,
  - and jolly,
  - and God bless us, everyone!

No, the end of the Christmas story is much darker, and much, much more complicated.

And frankly, this isn't one that gets nearly as much airtime in churches

- like the shepherds do,
- or the baby in a manger does,
- or even the wise men.

But I do think it has something for us today, as we deal with the complications in our own Christmases. Matthew 2. Let's pick it up in verse 13.

### **MATTHEW 2:13–18**

[13] Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." [14] And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt [15] and remained

there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

## **EXPLAIN: HEROD**

Now, the end of the Christmas story features a character named Herod. We met Herod last week, but here's a quick bio.

- In 37 BC, he is appointed as king of Judea.
- But he is not a real king.
- His kingship is given to him by Rome, who's really in charge.

And Herod lives in this tension

- where he lives in fear of the people above him,
  - because Rome could just come in
  - and do whatever they wanted to him.
- But the people below him don't respect him.

You see, he called himself the *king of the Jews*.

- That was his favorite title for himself,
- but he wasn't actually a real Jew.
- He was only a half-Jew.
- So, his reign lived in this constant state of turmoil,
- always threatened.

There were multiple assassination attempts on him in his life, including one from his own son who tried to poison him.

- And in his paranoia
  - he killed his mother-in-law.
  - He killed his brother-in-law.
  - He killed two nephews.
  - He killed his wife,
  - and he killed three of his sons.

And at the end of his life,

- Herod had this mandate that on the day he died,
- he wanted all of the Jewish noblemen in the region
- to also be killed so there would be genuine mourning
- on the day of his death.

But in Matthew chapter two, he's been reigning for 30-35 years-or-so, and he doesn't know who is going to take over as his successor.

- He's killed a couple sons,
- and he doesn't know what's going to become of his kingdom.

When all of a sudden, a bunch of wise men from the east come in and say, *"Hey, where's the king of the Jews?"* And that throws him into a tizzy.

That's where we left off last week.

## **EXPLAIN: EGYPT**

Now what we just read told us that the wise men depart from worshipping this child, and Joseph has a dream.

- The Lord appears to him and tells him to flee to Egypt.
- And there is an urgency in this dream.
- Jesus' life is in danger.

Now, Egypt may harken some bad images for some of you who are familiar with your Bibles.

- Isn't that where the Israelites were slaves?
- Isn't that where Moses had to lay some plague smack-down
  - on Pharaoh before he would "let my people go"?

Yes, that is correct, but in this time, Egypt is actually a perfect place for sanctuary from Herod's wrath.

- Egypt was now a part of the Roman empire,
  - but was outside of the jurisdiction of Herod.
  - Herod was only powerful in the province of Judea.
- What's more, a large population of Jewish people
- had settled in Egypt after the Babylonian exile.
- Some scholars posit that there could have been as many
  - as 1 million Jewish people in Egypt.
- And finally, Egypt was the closest place for them to flee,
  - being approximately 75 miles from Bethlehem.

So, it was outside of Herod's reach, it was Jewish friendly, and it was relatively close.

## **POINT 1**

Now let me stop here and make my first point about why Christmas is complicated.

You see, we want Jesus to bring peace to our lives. Right? I mean, after all, he's called the Prince of Peace.

But what we see here is that **SLIDE JESUS BRINGS STRIFE.**



The principle is clear here:

- the coming of Christ not only solves lots of problems...
- it actually creates lots of problems.

JESUS BRINGS STRIFE. **BLANK SLIDE**

### **ILLUSTRATION: ME**

So, I am a first-generation Christian in my family.

- What that means is I wasn't raised in the faith.
- My mom and brother did become Christians
- right around the same time as I did,
- but our family aren't really 'church-folk'.

So, this generation of believers in my family, is the first.

- But what that means is sometimes,
- things can get awkward,
- or at worst, heated.
- There's sometimes relational strife...

Like, I talk about my dad a fair amount,

- and I really love and respect him a ton,
  - we have a great relationship!
- And I literally pray for him to be saved every single day.
  - Dad, if you're watching this, it's true.
  - Every day.

But I often wonder what went on in his head when my mom, my brother, and I all got saved.

I wonder if he was like,

- *“what kind of freaky cult got a hold of my family?”*
- He didn’t marry some overtly religious woman...
- And he didn’t raise us in this stuff...
- But Jesus just stepped in and messed up a whole bunch of stuff!

Yes, Jesus did bring me some peace when I started following him...  
but it also created some strife in my family.

## APPLICATION

Seriously, Jesus brings strife into families.

- *“Oh, you're a Christian now?”*
- *So, does that mean no more fun for us?*
- *What are you a part of?*
- *Are you a religious fanatic?*
- *What does that mean about your politics now?*
- *Your cousin’s gay, what do you think of that?*
- *What does that mean about your morals now?*
- *Are you gonna judge me now?*
- *Are you gonna try to convert me?*
- *Are you gonna try to shoehorn Jesus into everything we do?”*

In many ways, becoming a Christian does bring peace...

- but in many other ways becoming a Christian
- is like moving out of calm waters,
- into a storm.

You get a radical peace with God when you follow Christ, but you also get immense strife and war in your life.

- A lot of things that used to bother you, don't anymore.
- And a lot of things that never bothered you, begin to.

You see, Jesus brings, to those who follow him, a peace of CONSCIENCE.

- Romans 8:1 says: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- It's a peace of conscience....

But Jesus does not promise a peace of CIRCUMSTANCES.

- The coming of Christ not only solves lots of problems...
- it actually creates lots of problems.

JESUS BRINGS STRIFE.

Well, let's continue with verse 16.

### **MATTHEW 2:16-18**

[16] Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. [17] Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

[18] "A voice was heard in Ramah,  
weeping and loud lamentation,  
Rachel weeping for her children;  
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

## EXPLAIN: THEMES

Now, you're like, "oh yeah, I get why pastors skip that one during Christmas"...right?

- Peace,
- joy,
- hope,
- light,
- angels,
- babies,
- tidings of comfort and joy.

I like those Christmas messages!

- Slaughter.
- Flight.
- Destroy.
- Brutality.
- Death.
- Weeping.
- Lamentation.

Not exactly the themes of the season!

- *"Give us the other ones, pastor...*
- *we like the holly and the ivy...*
- *not those darker themes."*

## **EXPLAIN: SLAUGHTER**

You see, when Herod finds out that the wise men didn't come back to him, but snuck away, he moves forward with his plan to get rid of the newborn King of the Jews.

- But since he doesn't know
- exactly when and where Jesus was born,
- he plays the over-under
- and sets a plan in action to rid Bethlehem
- of all the baby boys two years old and younger.

Again, infanticide is not great fodder for Christmas carols.

Now, Bethlehem was a rural town and rather small, so this massacre would only have killed about 20-30 babies, but it's still a horrible part of the Christmas story.

## **POINT 2**

Now, Tim Keller points out

- that in this passage
- when the wise men come to Jerusalem looking for the child
- they DON'T say they are looking for a personal savior.

They don't say they're coming to find a savior

- who will meet their needs...
- and take care of their problems...
- and take away their guilt and shame.

But they come and say, back in verse 2: **Where is he who has been born KING.** That's what stirred up this whole event.

You see, when a king shows up in a land where there is already a man claiming the kingship...there's going to be war.

- And that's why Jesus brings strife.
- And that's also the next reason why Christmas is complicated
- Jesus doesn't come only to be the savior...he comes as king.

## **SLIDE JESUS IS KING.**

### **APPLICATION**

Jesus as king is what led to this massacre of the innocent children of Bethlehem.

- It's one of the main reasons there is strife.
- Because people are cool with a savior.
- But don't you dare claim lordship over me!

Dallas Willard said something to the effect of:

- *"A lot of people want God to help;*
- *but few people want God to be God."*
- 

Yes, Jesus does come to be your savior. And he does say things like:

## **SLIDE MATTHEW 11:28**

**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

He does say things like this. But that's not all he said.

He also said things like:

**SLIDE MATTHEW 16:24**

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

**SLIDE LUKE 14:26**

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

**SLIDE LUKE 6:46**

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?

**BLANK SLIDE**

**EXPLAIN: LITTLE HEROD**

Jesus doesn't just say he's your savior...he says he's your king.  
And that's complicated.

- Because even when you surrender your life to Jesus,
  - and he becomes your savior and your king,
- there is still a part of you that the Bible calls **the flesh**,
- that to the very end of our days
- will always fight against Jesus' claim as king.

And Herod is a model for us of what's going on inside of each one of us.

- When a new king comes to town, the old king rages.

- And each one of us has a little king Herod inside of us,
  - raging against the King of Kings,
  - who comes, not only offering salvation,
  - but claiming sovereignty over us.

This is actually illustrated in the remainder of our chapter. Look at Matthew 2:19

### **MATTHEW 2:19-23**

[19] But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, [20] saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” [21] And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. [22] But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. [23] And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

### **EXPLAIN: REDIRECTION**

So, Herod dies, and Joseph has yet another dream.

- And in this dream the angel says,
- *“get you out of Egypt. It’s time to go home.”*
- And again, noble Joseph got right up
- and immediately obeys God’s word to him.



But as they're headed back to Israel the text says that they were planning on going back to Judea.

- Judea was where Jerusalem was.
- This is the metropolitan center of Israel.
- This is the hip, cool place to live.
- This is where a young family would want to be!

And as they're headed back in that direction,

- but Joseph hears that Archelaus is now the ruler of Judea.
- And that freaks him out. Why?

Well, Archelaus was the late Herod's son.

- Apparently one of the sons who wasn't murdered by his father.
- But he is now in charge.
- And, Archelaus was disliked because of his cruelty,
  - and actually, the Jews sent a delegation to Rome,
  - complaining that Archelaus had massacred
  - three thousand people near the temple.
- Like father like son, right?

Well, Joseph has another dream

- and changes the plan to move back to the district of Galilee,
- where there is less danger.
- So, they end up back where they started.
- Joseph and Mary's hometown.
- Nazareth.
- But that's not where they initially wanted to go.

And what do we know about Nazareth?

- Well, a Nazarene was a person from a small,
- backwards town who was looked at as a “hick from the sticks.”
- This is what Nathaniel meant in John 1:46
- when he asked, *“Can anything good come from Nazareth?”*
- upon hearing about Jesus.

## APPLICATION

And this is again where we see the kingship of Jesus.

- Jesus isn’t only the savior who gets you eternal life...
- But he is king even when it comes to the details of your life!
  - Like where you live,
  - and where you work,
  - and what you do with your money,
  - and what you do with your time!

Jesus claims his kingship over those things as well. He is king over ALL!

But we’re like:

- *“hey hey...easy there buddy...”*
- *Like, thanks for saving me an everything...*
- *But why don’t you back off on the rest.”*

But this isn’t a pick and choose.

- Jesus is king

## CONCLUSION

And this is the Christmas story that we miss most often!

The real Christmas message is this:

- when Jesus comes into your life,
- he will not come in the way you think!
  - He will not only come bringing peace...
    - he will also bring strife.
  - He will not only come as savior...
    - he will also insist on being your king.

Listen, for some of us this might be the most complicated Christmas we've ever had.

- For some, 2020 will be the first year of Christmas since a significant family loss by death.
- There will be families this year who will be having Christmas without one of their children for the first time.
- There are those who will be having Christmas this year without a spouse for the first time.
- There will be those who will be alone for the first Christmas ever.

And if you're there today...and if Christmas feels vastly more complicated than it ever has before...remember the first Christmas.

- Jesus comes not only to bring peace, but strife...
  - and the only way to get that peace is to embrace the strife.
- And Jesus comes not only to be savior...but to be our king...
  - and he will not be one without the other.

If we've learned anything in 2020 it's that

- it's a dangerous world out there.
  - It always has been,
  - but it just feels all the more so this year.
- And we're not guaranteed a Hallmark Christmas.

But through the strife that Jesus brings you can find peace.

And through the kingship of Christ there is salvation.

And all the complications of Christmas will only be apparent complications.

- Because this baby will grow up to be a man.
- And that man will die on a cross.
- And that death will lead to life.
- And that strife will lead to peace.
- And all those who bow the knee to him as king,
- will also find a savior.

So, is he your king?

- Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.
- Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

## RESOURCES USED:

- Anderson, David. *The Violent First Few Years*.
- Carson, D.A. Matthew: The Expositor's Bible Commentary.
- Keller, Timothy. *Out of Egypt*.
- Osborne, Grant R. Matthew: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.