

## Matthew 2 – When the Darkness kicks back at the Light (The Life of Herod the Great) – Discussion Questions

To go Along with December 4-5 Advent Sermon.

- 1) In this sermon, Jason spent a great deal of time expounding Herod's background. To what degree are/were you aware of some of the historical circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth? How familiar are you with the world of the 1<sup>st</sup> century (in which the stories and writings of the New Testament unfold)? Aside from making the story, "come alive" what difference does understanding historical context make to our study of the scripture?
- 2) Discuss in your group what tools (books, websites, etc.) may be helpful in unpacking the historical and literary background of any Biblical book or passage. (Consider *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* or videos from *The Bible Project*.)
- 3) Among other strategies, Herod built his empire through (a) amassing wealth (b) eliminating rivals (c) cozying-up to power (d) abandoning people who no longer served his agenda (e) taking on projects that would enhance his prestige. Do you see yourself in any of these strategies? What is the Holy Spirit saying to you about that?
- 4) In many ways, Herod's approach to life illustrates the negative side of Matthew 16:24-25.

*Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life<sup>f</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."*

If Jesus is really King of Kings and Lord of Lords, then he has the right to demand anything from us. How do you feel about that? What level of "disturbance" is in your heart when he invites you to submit to him? What specific aspects of your life (possessions, comfort, priorities, habits, etc.) is he asking you to deny? How can your group support you?

Pray for one another about these matters.