

The Seventh Day of Christmas: Herod, the Wronged Villain

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[0 : 00] Welcome back for this, the seventh day of Christmas and New Year's Eve. Today I'm going to be returning to my study of the echoes and the symmetries within the nativity and infancy narratives of the Gospels.

And today I want to focus particularly upon the connections between Matthew's Gospel account of the nativity and the events surrounding it and what we find in the story of the Exodus. And within this set of parallels what we see particularly is the threat to the baby boys.

Pharaoh seeking to kill the infant Hebrews, Hebrew children, and then here we see Herod trying to kill the baby boys in Bethlehem and its surrounding regions. In both cases there is a threat to the promised deliverer, whether that's in the case of Pharaoh and the threat to Moses.

Now he doesn't know that he's threatening Moses, but that is what is happening. This deliverer that's being raised up and this deliverer is threatened at his very birth and he has to be rescued.

And so we see some courageous women standing against Pharaoh, the Hebrew midwives, Jochebed, Miriam, and even from his own household, his daughter. Then in the New Testament we see the threat of Herod to the infant children of Bethlehem and its surrounding regions.

[1 : 18] And this aligns Herod and Pharaoh as two archetypal opponent characters to Israel and its deliverer. Whether it's Moses or whether it's Christ, you have this figure of the king who's the dragon who's trying to consume the child who's just been born.

And this figure of Herod is associated then with the Canaanite kings, with the pharaonic rulers of Egypt.

And in both of these cases it presents him as someone who's about to be overthrown. It presents him as an opponent figure who will be brought low. Now there are more things going on within these texts.

These particular connections are ones that are very familiar to people. It's often pointed out that Herod is a pharaoh figure. And that this event is a familiar one. One that we've heard already and one that we may even hear again on occasions.

But there is more going on here. And what we see going on, I think, is echoes back to a deeper conflict. Not just between Pharaoh and Israel, but between Edom and Israel.

[2 : 25] Between Esau and Jacob. These two great figures who become connected nations that are in opposition with each other. And what we find in the case of the Edom and Israel conflict is something that goes back to the story of David's own life.

And there's a particular passage in 1 Kings chapter 11 which isn't often referenced. I've never seen it really referenced in this context. But it needs to be considered. Because there's a lot that is going on here that's parallel.

And I'll read some of it. Notice again this theme of cutting down all the males.

That Hadad fled to go to Egypt. And he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him. Hadad was still a little child.

Again, another parallel. Then they arose from Midian and came to Paran. And they took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt. To Pharaoh king of Egypt. Who gave him a house. A portion of food for him and gave him land.

[3 : 46] And then he has a wife given to him. And he settles within there. And then he hears when he's in Egypt. That David rested with his fathers. The one who sought your life is dead.

And that Joab, the commander of his army, was dead. Hadad said to Pharaoh, let me depart. Let me go. That I may go to my own country. Then Pharaoh said to him, but what have you lacked with me that suddenly you seek to go to your own country?

So he answered, nothing. But do let me go anyway. So previous to this, Solomon ruled over all the territory. He seemed to have access to the whole territory of Edom.

He was building ships and he had access to the sea there. And then here is opposition raised for him within the land of Edom. And it seems to be on account of his father's own fairly brutal actions.

That David was playing the role of Pharaoh within the land of Edom. He was killing all the baby boys. Oh, he's killing all the boys. All the males. And this is something that we've seen in various occasions in history.

[4 : 47] But it's associated with the bad guys. And within these chapters in 1 Kings, what we see is a twisting of the David and Solomon characters to become more like pharaonic characters.

They are the villains of the piece. And so they have people raised up against them who have the characteristics of Israel. So Hadad, who goes into, who flees from threat into the land of Egypt, who's succored there for a while and then comes back.

And then he returns to the land as an opponent. And so Solomon finds himself in the position of the Canaanite king. Jeroboam is another similar figure who has a time in Egypt and then who returns back as an adversary.

And there are all sorts of themes that are playing out within these contexts that help us to recognize that Solomon and David have become the bad guys. That God has now raised up adversaries against them that have characteristics of Israel.

As if to remind them that now they are finding themselves as pharaoh type figures, as Canaanite type figures. And God is judging them in figures that remind them of what they really are and what they really should be.

[6 : 04] Now, when we read this story and then when we go back to the story of Matthew, what do we find as a connection? I think what we see is the deep struggle between David and his son, David and Solomon, and the king of Edom.

And here in this case, David and Solomon are the bad guys. They're playing a role similar to Herod in the slaughter of the innocents. But when we get to the Gospels, what we see is a reversal of that.

That Christ, the son of David, is the one pursued by the Edomite king who's seeking to kill the males. And what this can give us, I think, is a sense of a deeper history that's playing behind this text.

That Christ is taking on the history of his people. That this threat from the Edomite king is not just a villainous pharaoh type figure who's trying to take down this messianic child, this son of David.

But rather, there is a sin of David. There are sins of Solomon being born here. That Christ is taking on something of the legacy of his ancestors, of those whose name he bears.

[7 : 18] He is the son of David. And he bears the consequences of their sins. He's the one who is threatened by the Edomite king that his father, David, once threatened.

And there, I think, we find something going on that's a lot deeper than just the connection with the pharaoh story, about which we'll say more later. What else can we see?

Out of Egypt I have called my son. That great quote back to Hebrews 11 is a way in which Christ takes on not just the characteristics of David, but the characteristics of his whole people, that he is Israel being called out of Egypt.

Now, in that original context, it's referring to the story of Israel. It's not referring to Christ. But Matthew takes that verse to show that Christ must take on the characteristics of Israel.

And as I've already noted, within the story of Matthew, we see Christ playing this role of Israel. This whole history being played out from the very beginning of Genesis to the very end that we see at the end in the decree of Cyrus in the end of 2 Chronicles, chapter 36.

[8 : 29] And at the end of Matthew, we see the Great Commission, which is paralleled with that. And so we're seeing Israel's history being played out again. Peter Lighthouse, in his book, his Matthew Through New Eyes volume, his first volume on that, he deals with this at some detail.

I'll give a link to that below. But I highly recommend that book if you want to think about some of the parallels which go on throughout the whole of the book of Matthew between Christ and the story of Israel.

There's even more things going on. If you look back to the story of Exodus and Exodus chapter 4, you read, And the Lord said to Moses and Midian, Go return to Egypt, for all the men are dead who sought your life.

Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. Now, again, this is a similar pattern. This is what we see in Matthew's account in Matthew chapter 2, verse 19.

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother and go to the land of Israel for those who sought the young child's life are dead.

[9 : 32] Then he arose, took the young child and his mother and came into the land of Israel. These are patterns that we have seen before. Christ is being portrayed, not just as Israel against Pharaoh, not just as Israel drawn out of Egypt, not just as the one who's the son of David, who's suffering this opposition from the brother of Edom, but he's also the Moses figure, the deliverer, the one who's threatened at his birth and the one who is delivered from death.

He's the one who goes into exile and then he's the one who comes back and he's the one who is who's going to lead this greater exodus. And so all these different parallels help us to build a bigger picture of what Christ is doing, who he is and what Matthew is about within his gospel.

Matthew is presenting a deeper theological argument and the typology helps us to get at that, that the typology isn't just some decorative flourish. It's helping us to see what Matthew is driving at.

Matthew is explaining who Christ is. Christ is Moses. Christ is Israel. He's the one who bears the identity of his people. Christ is David's son. He's the one who suffers for David's actions, but he's also the one who fulfills the promises associated with David.

There's a lot more that could be said here of Herod and Pharaoh's figures, but I will get back to this perhaps at a later point. Thank you very much for listening. If you'd like to support this and other videos like it, please do so using my Patreon or PayPal accounts.

[11 : 01] I'll leave the links to those below. If you'd like to ask any questions for me to answer, please do so using my Curious Cat account. And I hope to get back to those when I finish doing these videos. Thank you very much for listening and Lord willing, you're having a great day.

God bless.