

# Friends of the Center

## The Coming of Christ, the Clash of Civilizations

*In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophets:*

*And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah  
Are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
For from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.*

*The Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road (Matthew 2:1-12).*

Each year on January 6, Latine and Hispanics Christians across the world celebrate Día de Los Reyes. Also known as Epiphany, the day traditionally commemorates the manifestation of the messiah in the world. Its historical significance cannot be overstated, and words fall short in describing its impact. As John declares, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn. 1:14). The incarnation of Jesus the Messiah is the great epiphany of human history.

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?” the wise men asked the people of Jerusalem. What might have appeared to be good news was instead met with fear and trembling, as both King Herod and the Jews were disturbed by the rumors of a new king: King Herod, by the apparent legitimacy of this newborn king as demonstrated by the quest of the magi and the threat that legitimacy represented for his own rule; and the Jewish people, for what Herod’s wrath might evoke. Their fears would come to pass when Herod issued a public decree to murder every child under the age of two. Thus, the birth of Jesus would cause great joy and great sorrow.

The coming of Christ signified the clash of two realms: the Kingdom of God and the worldly kingdom of



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humans. What King Herod did not know is that the Kingdom of God is not like Herod's own rule. The power of the messiah was not nurtured in chambers of earthly power but in the borderlands of Galilee. Christ's Kingdom was not born out of violence but out of love. The glory and power of Jesus does not rely upon His ability to exert dominion or rulership over others but in the power to transform hearts and minds towards loving obedience to a holy king. It is this that we celebrate on Epiphany.

The Kingdom of God does not rely on might or power but on the presence of the Spirit as revealed in the ministry and character of Jesus. It is this that we honor on Epiphany.

It is in meekness and humility that the characteristics of the Kingdom are found. Wiser than Herod, the three magi recognized the kingship of the baby born in a lowly manger. It was this king who fulfilled the words of the prophet Daniel, "his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him" (Dan. 7:27). This is what we proclaim on Epiphany.

As we approach this Epiphany season, may we remember the good news of "God with us." While kings and kingdoms of this world often visit violence and destruction upon the most vulnerable in our society through unjust decrees and cruel actions, may we remember Christ, whose birth was to "proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Lk. 4:18). The great epiphany of the birth of Christ is that the one true king has finally come. Therefore, as we draw near to January 6, may we give thanks in remembrance that the Kingdom of God is not found in insurrection but in the resurrection of Christ our Lord.

– Daniel Montañez, Ph.D. Candidate, Boston University

