

THE CHRIST OF OUR CHRISTMAS

POINTS TO PONDER

1) *What metaphor would you use today to describe the role that Christ plays in your life? Would it be that of a prophet, priest or king?*

WORDS TO WRANGLE

1) *The Bible describes David as a "man after God's own heart." What does that phrase mean to you? Are you such a person?*

CONCLUSIONS TO CONSIDER

1) *How can you honor Christ as King at church? In your home? At your work?*

VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS LESSON SERIES:

"For to us a child is born; to us a Son is given" (Isaiah 9:6 NIV).

When God's people were forming themselves into a nation, they wanted a king. Other nations in the area had kings, but the people of Israel wanted a king. Many of us believe that God did not want Israel to have a king, but that is not entirely true. God just had a certain type of king in mind.

The problem wasn't selecting a king. The problem was ignoring the advice. When Samuel was the prophet, Israel requested a king. Faced with a threat from the Philistines, Israel wanted a king who could lead them in battle, who would represent them well in public. The Israelites did not ask for a king that God would choose, but one the world would revere and respect.

The contrast between Saul and David was striking. Saul was introduced to Samuel as he was out looking for lost donkeys. Throughout his life, Saul did things to satisfy his own desires and not God's. David, however, was described as a man after God's own heart. When he sinned with Bathsheba, he was consumed by sorrow and grief, knowing that he had strayed from a path toward God.

God promised David that his house and his throne would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:16). Mary was told by Gabriel that Jesus would have "the throne of his father David" and that there would be no end to his kingdom (Luke 1:32-33). Jesus is called the "Son of David" and was born into the lineage of David (Matthew 1:1, Revelation 22:16).

The Jews thought that the Messiah would be a political king who would free them from the control of the Romans (Matthew 21:1-11). What Jesus actually did was free them from the slavery to the power of sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). Jesus has the ultimate authority and power (Matthew 28:18, Philippians 2:9-11). He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Christmas story introduced us twice to the understanding of a king. Matthew tells us about the wise men who are called Magi. Who were these men? Perhaps if Luke the historian had written about them, we would have precise details of their identity and origins. But Matthew's account is vague. The tradition they were kings can be traced all the way back to Tertullian who died about 225_{AD}. It was his belief that the magi were astrologers by trade and they were considered kings.

Of course, the other king we are introduced to in Matthew's account of the birth of Christ is King Herod the Great. Herod's jealousy and fear for his throne is evident in the story, but was present throughout his life. Tradition has Herod dying around 4_{BC} so the slaughter of the innocent babies was one of his last official acts as king before he died.

It is probably no accident that a grandson of this Herod would one day require that on a cross of Jesus' crucifixion the words "King of the Jews" would be etched.