

Bookends of the Gospels: Matthew 2 and John 21

Looking for Jesus

Matthews bookend

It's all about two views of Jesus. One has him as a baby. The other is him in a different body at the end of John's Gospel. The baby is protected by God. The baby is guided by angels. Men are seeking this child. There are prophecies that give them direction and signs to look for. In a way, I think it's about the words "follow me." In this chapter 2 of Matthew we have people following signs and wonders to find Jesus. They are all asking the question "who or where is this child?"

We have the parents of Jesus following instructions from angels. It's interesting that Mary is guided by an angel in Luke. Elizabeth and Zechariah are guided by an angel. The shepherds are told to follow them to Jesus. A star in the sky says follow me to Jesus (sort of). Herod is looking for a way to Jesus. I suppose the quotes of old prophesy in Matthew point the way to Jesus. All these people are following God to the birth of the Lord and savior. Yet, in John it says follow Jesus.

The word Lord attached to Jesus is used a bunch in all four Gospels. I know I am looking at Matthew but some parts of the same story are found in Mark and Luke. I suppose what I'm saying is that the whole Synoptic gospel narrative leads to the resurrected Christ. That is where the prophets pointed too. Yes, a baby would be born and a man would rise, but it's deeper than that. The first three Gospels build a case for the Christ.

Herod asks if it's the Christ. The Magi are looking for this King of the Jews. Mary is told in Luke that she will birth this special child. She ponders it in her heart. John the Baptist appears in chapter three of Matthew and confirms that he is paving a way to the Lord. I like the fact that there are different views on the Birth of Jesus. Matthew is more prophesy and an angelic path. Mark opens with the anointing of Jesus as the Christ. Luke looks deeper into the birth and how the path is paved. Both Matthew and Luke drive the lines of Mary, Joseph, and John together to a central event. The Birth of the Christ.

Before we look at John next week. Think about who is following who. Mary is guided to understand Jesus birth. Joseph is guided to protect that birth. John is guided to make a path through prophesy. Three paths listening to the Lord. They are led to this Christ child. You could say the Magi and shepherds were led too. Herod is interesting. He is deceived. He is looking to kill this child. He is misled by the Magi. Herod kills all the boys two years and under, yet he did not find the Christ child. All the others did.

What's it all mean?

It's that at times we are asked to understand the Bible. We should read the Bible. Why? Who cares? We know the story. I think the four gospels tell us the why and who cares. These men obviously read or heard the stories. In some instances, they witness or knew someone who did witness Jesus. They all knew the Old Scriptures. Those are the Bible too. They got it, understood it, and were looking for it. The Old Bible asks us to wait and look for the Christ.

On this bookend we are looking for Jesus. We are asking who he is. There is a certain amount of confusion and misunderstanding. Prophecy is meant to be interpreted. Jesus said you should and will know the sign of the times. The religious rulers did not see it. Herod took an interest but he had other motives. The Magi were studying the signs. Mary and Joseph knew of the Christ. I am sure the shepherds did too. All of them were surprised when it happened. In the end, what it means is that Jesus was misinterpreted by many. Some expected a warrior. Others thought he would come from other places. I feel it's about setting up the final plan. People thought Jesus, at that time, was the final plan. The other bookend of this story gives us the other side. Yet, it's consistent with Matthew. Preparing the coming of the Lord, the Christ Jesus.