

THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Part 1: Birth of a King

In a world where outcomes are determined by money, power, and fame, it's easy to forget that the all-powerful Creator of the Universe chose to infiltrate the world in the person of a child. And while Jesus certainly came to befriend humanity and forgive us of sins, contemporary culture seems to minimize one of the most striking details of the baby at the center of the Christmas story: on Christmas, we celebrate the birth of a King— not merely a forgiver of sin or a conscience cleanser. Jesus didn't come primarily to forgive. He came to be followed, implementing a radical new value system that threatened the powerful and emboldened the people culture had deemed worthless.

Start Talking

1. If you were allowed to zap one Christmas song out of existence forever, which would you choose and why?
2. With Thanksgiving over and Christmas and New Years on the way, we are officially in the middle of the holiday season. When you look back on December 2021 in a few months, what stories do you hope you can tell about this time? What would you like to prioritize?

What About You

3. Do you ever find yourself carving out a non-intrusive role for Jesus in your life? How would you describe that role (Forgiver? Emotional support friend? Backup plan?)?
4. Can you think of a time you saw Jesus presented as a "backup plan" or "conscience reliever?" What was the context? How did it affect the way you think about faith?
5. How does it make you feel when leaders, bosses, or parents have to remind you of their authority? What does it reveal to you about their confidence?
6. In your opinion, how does the idea of Jesus as "chosen One" and "King" differ from the less authoritative roles our culture tends to cast him in? Why do you think we do that?

Look It Up

Read the following passage before answering the questions below: Luke 2:1, John 1:14, Luke 1:30–33. Matthew 2:1–8. Philippians 2:9–11.

7. When you read the description of who Jesus will become in this passage from Luke, what stands out? How does it differ from the ways the contemporary church presents who Jesus is?
8. When you think about how kings operated in the ancient world, how does Jesus's brand of authority differ from the norm?
9. How do the power structures of the ancient world respond to the birth of Jesus? What does it tell you?
10. How do you imagine Mary responded to the news she gets in Luke 1?

Putting It All Together

11. What can you do to re-orient your outlook towards Jesus as *King* this week? How can you sidestep the natural tendency to default back into "Jesus as backup plan?"
12. If you were to take the role of Jesus as Christ seriously, what might have to change about your daily habits? The way you spend your time? Your money?
13. One reason Jesus represented a threat to Herod was because love and grace were more powerful and persuasive than the "might makes right" outlook of Roman culture. Where have you traded the subversive values of Jesus for the norms of the modern world? Can you think of a few tangible ways to move towards a way of life that reflects the values of God's kingdom?
14. What kinds of daily reminders can you leave yourself in order to choose to follow Jesus, rather than habits, instinct, or culture, each day?