

# Matthew 2:3

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[ 0 : 00 ] If Christmas is hard work, it's probably because you're having lunch with somebody who's difficult.! We've all got them, haven't we? In our families, we love them, at least we should, but they're difficult.

And the reason why you are in a difficult relationship with that someone, whoever he or she may be, is because you've probably engaged in some sort of power struggle with them, or them with you. It could be a spouse, it could be a parent-in-law, it could be a son or a daughter, it could be a parent, it could be a cousin. Let me try and define what I mean by saying a power struggle.

A power struggle is when one person wants to change another person, and the other person doesn't want to be changed. A power struggle is when one person wants to change another person, and the other person does not want to be changed.

And that explains Many of the problems Some of the problems that we have in human relationships But let me tell you tonight I think that that is one of the ways Of understanding the problem that we have with God And that's what I want to speak about For the next few minutes Let's bow our heads in prayer, let's pray Dear God, we may well right now May be in a power struggle with you We may Lord want to change you Into something that you are not And you refuse the change Because you are who you are You are God And actually Lord, your word teaches us That you want us to change That we might treat you properly And so we pray that tonight As a result of what we hear from your words tonight You would help us to realise That there is no better way to live Than to be transformed by you Through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen Now there is nothing more helpless is there

[ 1 : 58 ] Than a newborn baby You know what it is Like, you don't feed them And they don't get fed You don't change them And they stink You don't move them And a newborn baby just sits there We species, we homo sapiens We don't come out of the womb And are we ready to go for a job We don't We are very dependent On our parents All we have is a scream Or a cry To get them to come Come on man They scream and they cry Which makes what we read In our last reading A bit of a surprise When you hear Herod's response To the birth of this child He hears that a baby has been born King Herod does A baby has been born in Bethlehem And he and the whole area of Jerusalem Are anxious And they are disturbed Can you just look there It was the last week That was read to us They are anxious And they are disturbed Matthew chapter 2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem

In Judea During the time of King Herod Magi from the east Came to Jerusalem And asked him Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews We saw his star in the east And have come to worship him When King Herod heard this He was disturbed And all of Jerusalem with him When he hears this phrase The king of the Jews He is disturbed Now why?

Well the reason King Herod is disturbed Is because that is his title He is known as King of the Jews That is the title Of the Roman Empire The Roman Senate Gave to him 40 years back King Herod is probably In his 70s At this point And what you discover As you read Matthew 2 And I'd love it If you did go home And read it Is that there is a great clash Between the two kings King Herod Who is 70 years old And has built things Like the temple Right through to King Jesus Who is probably two years old And what I want to do In this just short time Is contrast it to kings The Lord Jesus If you read Matthew's Gospel Is clearly the legitimate King of kings And Lord of lords His credentials show that Israel was a people That was waiting Just like you boys and girls You're waiting aren't you How many sleeps till Christmas?

Can anybody tell me? How many? Noah Um Two Is it two? Is that right? Three I think it's three Is it? Three Never mind Two or three One of the One of the Is it?

But we wait We wait And we wait And we wait Until Christmas And we know what it's like To wait We're really looking forward to it When you were children You did didn't you? And the nation of

Israel Has been waiting For the saviour to come It's been waiting And waiting And waiting For a long time What we've done tonight Is we've traced The bible story From Genesis From that first promise That they were given In Genesis 3 That they were given a promise That a redeemer king Would come Way back then And that he would be A human child of Eve And then if you go forward To Genesis 12 God promises Out of all the nations Of the world A saviour king Will be born From one nation The Jews From one nation A child of Abraham And then you go To the end of Genesis Which is the first book Of the bible And God makes a promise In that chapter That of all the tribes Of that nation Israel The saviour would come From the tribe of Judah So it narrows down It starts that he would be Human It tells you he would be From Israel And then it tells you He would be from [ 5 : 21 ] The tribe of Judah And then you go Further on in the Old Testament To Samuel 7 And of all the families In the tribe of Judah Within the nation of Israel From amongst all the nations Of the world God says And they'll come In the family line Of King David And then of all the women To be born He will be born Of a virgin Isaiah's son And then of all the cities And all the towns In the tribe of Judah And in the nation of Israel Of all the nations Of the world He will be born In the little town Of Bethlehem As promised in Micah 5 That was read Until finally You come To Matthew And the king comes And he's born And who's the one Who tells you But wise men From the east Outside of Israel My point is this Jesus ticks All the boxes He is the long Awaited one Herod on the other hand Has got no credentials To be who he is He's not even A full blooded Jew He's not a son of David He wasn't born For a virgin

And he wasn't Born in Bethlehem He was just appointed By the Romans Now if you think Tonight You're a little bit Insecure As a human being And who isn't I certainly am King Herod Is Mr. Paranoia His paranoia Is so bad He is vicious The Jewish Roman historian Josephus Tells us He was so insecure Of losing his power That he murdered His favourite wife You know a number of them Somebody whispered In his ear For as long as she lives He will not be saved So he takes her out And he then regretted it For the rest of his life That he killed The very woman That he loved He was so desperate To cling on to power But it didn't end there He had a bunch of sons But he had three of them killed He killed his own brother-in-law He killed his mother-in-law No jokes about that He killed her Because he feared She would be a threat To his kingdom This is a nasty piece of work Somebody said of King Herod That it was safer To be his pig Than his son And that's true And if he didn't kill you

He'd marry him To your family Which was even worse He was married Ten times And he married The enemies Of his So that he could Manipulate them And bring them on side He is a Saddam Hussein Of the first century Do you remember him?

He's gone now Is he? But do you remember Saddam Hussein of Iraq In his heyday? There's one story There of two of his Sons-in-law Who had betrayed him And so they fled Iraq And they came to the UK I think Anyway Saddam Hussein Sends a message To these two sons Sons-in-law And says Come back All is forgiven And those idiots Go back to Iraq And he kills them On the airport runway King Jesus And Herod Are two very very Different types of king Herod is so terrified To lose his power I mean the guy is 70 And he's so desperate Not to lose his power To this two year old That he embarks On a mass killing In Bethlehem Once he finds out That the long awaited Messiah Is to be born In Bethlehem In that town This is what he says Let me read to you Chapter 2 verse 16 When Herod realised That he'd been outwitted By the Magi The wise man He was furious And he gave orders To kill all the boys In Bethlehem And his vicinity Who were two years old And under In accordance with the time He'd lurked from the Magi Here is the butcher Of Bethlehem He spills the blood Of how many Little boys We don't know exactly But 50 60 Or 100 Are the best guesses Now I think As we read About the massacre Of those infants We have real emotional Connection with that When we think about it Do you remember In 2012 The school killings In the US In Sandy Hook A gunman Goes into a school And there are 28 deaths 20 of them 6 and 7 year olds 8 boys 12 girls And as we read About that As we see those images On TV screens We remember that We cannot know What was going on In the mind Of the man That killed those children But we do know What was going on In the mind of Herod In Bethlehem That he was so desperate Not to let anyone Or anything Take his power Away from him And it's so different

[ 9 : 39 ] From King Jesus King Jesus Will go on to live A life of 33 years On this earth Who went around Doing good If he wasn't Healing and preaching He was forgiving And casting out demons He was liberating People from their sins From their broken bodies From their oppression Under the reign of the evil When he went around Doing good And when it came To the appointed time That

God had him And he chose To be part of it To die on the cross They came to arrest him Peter one of his sidcaps Pulls out a sword And he slices off The ear Of the servant Of the high priest Jesus looks at him First of all He picks up the ear And heals the servant Of the high priest And then he says Put the sword away Don't you know If I wanted to If I wanted somebody To protect me I'd call on my father In heaven And he'd send 72,000 angels To sort them out They'd take care of me He says The Pontius Pilate The Roman governor Who's about to authorise

His execution He says to Pilate My kingdom is not Of this world The only blood That Jesus spills Is his own The only blood That Jesus spills Is his own Blood spilt So that you and I Could be forgiven Once and for all And that is the purpose Of the death Of Jesus What is this What is all this Doing As we read Matthew 2 What it does Is the coming of Jesus All of a sudden Brings to the surface A problem that we all have That desperation That we all have To rule our lives To say this is my life And no one Can tell me How to live That has been On the lips Of every person In this building Among the seven people Seven billion people Who live on this earth

And that is why We have so much trouble Isn't it Because if I am God How can you be God If seven people On earth Are playing God It causes a lot of trouble C.S. Lewis Who wrote Narnia And he was an atheist A well known atheist He didn't believe in God And he didn't think Anybody else Would believe in God And then he became A Christian And he describes How he too Was in a power struggle With God And he wrote this What mattered most of all Was my deep seated Hatred for authority I want to live My life My way Christianity Placed at the centre What seemed to me To be the great Interferer Who is that?

God That is how C.S. Lewis saw God As the great Interferer He said What I wanted More than anything else Was somehow Some area However small Of which I could say To all other beings Including God This is my business And mine only So Surprise off Does that sound A little bit familiar?

There is a part of us That connects with that Isn't it? Certainly in my life I want to run my life My way And that is what Herod is doing And what he did Was atrocious It's a terrible thing But he did it With a certain Flair Rebellion to Christ Might not always Look as ugly As that As what Herod did But it can be done In other ways Can't it?

[13:13] What we do To God Is really What we do To other people That we don't like And our best strategy Is this We just ignore them We don't invite them We sidestep them We avoid their calls So if somebody invites you To be their friend In Facebook You don't reject it You just ignore it And if those people Happen to be In your life That you don't like And you can't Escape them Well you tolerate them You tolerate them For say A Christmas meal You last the Three or four hours And then you get Into your car Say thank goodness We don't have to see Them again for another year And then you move on And you enjoy Your life again And that is how We treat God We are engaged In a power struggle With him And he Has been wanting To change us And we have been Resisting his claim On our life

And over the last year In 2013 The chances are If you have not Given your life To Christ You have probably Heard him Tapping On your door It might be A conversation That you have With someone At work Or a neighbour That made you think I wonder It might be That guilty conscience That's just Percolating Beneath the surface It may be That something Happened And it made you Want to thank God But then you went On to other things And you're mindful Of it It may have been The beauty of creation And your breath Was just taken away By it It may be That something Really horrible Has happened this year And God Was kind of Tapping on your door Saying It's time We do business But you've Engaged In a power struggle And your strategy Has been the most Common strategy In all of the world Not the execution Of boys under two But just quietly

Quietly ignoring him And God wants To change you And you don't Want to be changed And you are Trying to change God To fit him Into how you Want him to be So that You don't have to Treat him the way That he deserves A friend of mine Started reading the Bible And one of the things That he realised He said Was that He and God Thought very differently And he began to realise That one of them Had to change Well you can guess Who changed Herod doesn't want To be changed Does he Quite the opposite He wants to change Jesus from life To death But the Magi From the East They are a class act Aren't they They were wise men Probably from Persia And they've come To worship Jesus And we are reminded In that That Jesus is not Just For his people For his own people The Jews He is actually For all people From everywhere

From all religions Here are people In this passage From another part Of the world From another religion Coming and doing What God expects Every human being From every religion To do To come and bow Before Jesus If you want to Worship God properly You have to Worship his son And that is Exactly what happened We don't really Know exactly How God revealed The truth to them He used this star To guide them To the long Awaited saviour In Israel And that is Exactly what happens But what makes These magi wise Is what makes You and I wise When you start To give up In that power Struggle with God And worship him On his terms It comes down to this There are two people That you can worship You can either Worship you Or you can Worship God Those are your two options You can worship

Your own version Of God But that is really Just worshipping you It's just a conversation With yourself And these magi Worship someone Who they've never Worshipped before They come to Jesus And they worship him As king Of kings He's called the Christ What does the word Christ mean It's not a serenium It's a title Let's say your name Is Carlos And your job Is a plumber And your job description Is to fix taps Well let's apply that Jesus Jesus is his name And his title Is the Christ And his job description Is to rule the world And everything in it That is who Christ is The magi Magi from the east They come And they bow down They worship Because you can do Nothing else But worship The one who is God Become man And in this story They move from Worshipping the stars Probably That was their world To worshipping The creator Of the stars

[18:16] The one who Hang the moon In its place Now lies In a manger And will eventually Hang on a cross And rise to life Look at chapter 2 Of Matthew In verse 11 Just see that reading In verse 11 When coming to the house They saw the child Of his mother Mary And they bowed down And worshipped him That physical act Of worshipping Bowing We don't bow Do we We don't I have never had Anyone bow down Before me If you know me And I know That I'm a sinner Like you It happens to the queen Doesn't it You know when people Get their night church But they don't It's not really a bow It's kind of a nod Isn't it in some way It's not a thought about him But what these Major are doing In this context They are saying God You are greater than me You Jesus Are greater than me You Jesus Get to set the agenda

For the rest of my life Not me And these wise men They travel 500 miles To worship Jesus Herod and the rest of Jerusalem Including the priests Who should have known better Can't even be bothered To travel six miles From Jerusalem to Bethlehem You see You cannot win If you enter Into a power struggle With Jesus You cannot At this point He's two years old For goodness sake And Herod Cannot win Herod is as stupid As he is rebellious He schemes He plots He plans He lies He does everything He can to kill This kid But he can't do it And if you read Matthew Do you know who ends up Dying in the chapter It's not Jesus Is it It's Herod When you get to the end Of the story It's Herod Who drops his clans And not Jesus Because Jesus Will only die

At a time That God Has determined And Jesus affirms And at every point It is so clear In this story As you read Even the earliest Accounts of the gospel The earliest chapters Of the gospel That God is in control And God brings the Magi From the east To worship Jesus And when Herod Tries to kill Jesus He brings dreams Firstly to the Magi Then to Joseph To move them here There and everywhere It is a cat and mouse thing A game of chess And Herod is outsmarted He is checkmated Every time Because if you enter Into a power struggle With God You're not going to win God wants His Son To live a perfect life To die on the cross So that you and I Can worship Him That's why you were created Have you ever wondered that?

Of course He has Why were you created? Have you ever wondered What the meaning Into life is? Well I just told you So that you could Worship Him It's very simple And very straightforward Jesus is saying You're not called Just to worship a baby In a manger He says I'm no longer in the manger But I've become a human And I've stayed a human And I'm calling you To worship me Not just as somebody Who's hanging on a cross Who died for your sins And paid the price Because that cross Is now empty And the price is paid And you're not called To worship somebody Who's still dead In a tomb In Palestine Because on the third day I rose from that tomb And that tomb Was empty You are called Tonight To worship Jesus Who lived Died And rose again And now is at the right hand Of the Father Where there is all authority And power belongs to Him alone And He gets to set the agenda And I will say to you There is no better way To live Than to have this

Great Kind Merciful Savior Of the world On your side So let me ask you Tonight As I finish Are you still in a power struggle With Jesus Are you still trying to change God To fit your terms Or are you prepared To let Him speak For who He is And will you let Him Change you To receive Him To

worship Him To enjoy His forgiveness To know Him As Father And have Heaven As your home  
And have God's Spirit Live in you To live at peace To be comfortable In your own skin Don't we  
want that?

[ 22 : 50 ] Because the war In your conscience And in your heart With God Is over Don't you want  
that? The best part of you Wants that So the message Of this Christmas Is this End the power  
struggle With God That is the message Of Christmas Tonight You can say Sorry to Him To say I  
was wrong And it's not you That need to change God Actually it's me He has the right And He is  
good To say thank you For God's patience With you And for Christ's death On the cross It's to raise  
the white flag Isn't it?

And to surrender to Him And I know that's not easy The message of Christmas Is the best news Of  
a King Of God's King Come to earth To rescue That is the message Of Christmas Let's pray To  
ending the Holocaust To ending the Holocaust To ending the Holocaust To ending the Holocaust  
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