

Advent Bible Study 3

Play Nooma 'Kickball' DVD

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCWtCo_CDR0

What's your initial reaction to this week's DVD?

How do you find it similar or different to the previous week's DVD?

Does the message in this DVD connect with you? In what ways can you identify with what Rob Bell is saying?

We'll try and see how this DVD fits with Advent and as we look forward to Christmas.

Rob Bell spoke of his son's 'Wants' in the DVD, but who had a 'Want' or 'Wants' in the Gospels' Birth Narratives?

1. **Caesar Augustus** Luke 2 : 1 – 3

He wanted to know a headcount...

...that all the world should be taxed; or "registered", or "enrolled"; for this was not levying an immediate tax, or imposing tribute upon them, but a taking an account of the names of persons, and of their estates; and which might be, in order to lay a tax upon them, as afterwards was: for the payment of a tax, there was no need of the appearance of women and children; and so the Arabic version renders it, "that the names the whole habitable world might be described, or written down": such an enrolment had been determined on by Augustus.

2. **Quirinius** Luke 2:2

What (Publius Sulpicius Quirinius) Quirinius wanted isn't recorded in the Gospel narratives but it is recorded elsewhere. He wanted to be a 'mover and shaker' he wanted high office and wanted to be a close associate of the Caesar, whichever Caesar was in power. His being appointed as Governor of Syria was a sign that he was

achieving his 'wants' as this was a plum job in the Roman Empire. And he also had authority over Judea, hence the census – but he was hated by the Jewish Zealots – Quirinius for the most part got what he wanted, but he didn't achieve popularity with those who governed – this he never wanted – all he wanted was the position of authority and standing. In modern terms he wanted to be a celebrity politician.

Quirinius served as governor of Syria with nominal authority over Judaea until 12 AD, when he returned to Rome as a close associate of Tiberius. Nine years later he died and was given a public funeral.

3. Mary Luke 2: 6 & 7

She wanted somewhere to rest after an 80 mile journey and a place to give birth to her baby

(Joseph we covered in wk 2 of the series)

4. Shepherds Luke 2: 8 – 15

They wanted to go and check out if what the angel had told them was true

5. Magi Matthew 2: 1 – 3, 9 - 12

They wanted to find this new king

They wanted to know if their best guesses were true

6. Simeon & Anna Luke 2: 28 – 32, 36 – 38

They wanted to see the Messiah before they died

7. Herod Matt 2: 3 – 8 & 16

Herod the Great /Herod I, was a Roman vassal king of Judea, referred to as the Herodian kingdom. The history of his legacy has polarized opinion, as he is known for his colossal building projects throughout Judea, including his expansion of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (Herod's Temple), the construction of the port at Caesarea Maritima, the fortress at Masada and Herodium. (Vital details of his life are recorded in the works of the 1st century CE Roman–Jewish historian Josephus) Herod also appears in the Gospel of Matthew as the ruler of Judea who orders the Massacre of the Innocents at the time of the birth of Jesus. Despite his successes, including singlehandedly forging a new aristocracy from practically nothing, he still garnered criticism from various historians. His reign polarizes opinion amongst scholars and historians, some viewing his legacy as evidence of success, or a reminder of his tyrannical rule.

Upon Herod's death, the Romans divided his kingdom among three of his sons and his sister—Archelaus became ethnarch of the tetrarchy of Judea, Herod Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea, Philip became tetrarch of territories east of the Jordan, and Salome I was given a toparchy including the cities of Jabneh, Ashdod, and Phasaelis.

As Herod's family were converts to Judaism, his religious commitment was questioned by some elements of Jewish society. When John Hyrcanus conquered the region of Idumaea (the Edom of the Hebrew Bible) in 140–130 BCE, he required all Idumaeans to obey Jewish law or to leave; most Idumaeans thus converted to Judaism, which meant that they had to be circumcised, and many had intermarried with the Jews and adopted their customs. While Herod publicly identified himself as a Jew and was considered as such by some, this religious identification was undermined by the decadent lifestyle of the Herodians, which would have earned them the antipathy of observant Jews.

Herod later executed several members of his own family, including his wife Mariamne I.

(above text and further information available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_the_Great)

In effect Herod wanted to secure his weak position as the 'king' who ruled only as the authority of Rome would allow – Caesar had the power, hence he issued the census not Herod.

8. What did God want?

- To fulfil the OT prophecies
- To fulfil his promise of the redemption of humankind
- READ Luke 1: 68 - 79

OR...did God *need* to do this?

- (again picking up the theme from the DVD) because he loves us (John 3:16)

9. What do we want?

Spending on Christmas this year will be? (£77.56bn – of which £20.97bn will be on line and of this £20.97bn there will be an increase of 51.2% which will be ordered on line through a mobile phone)

10. What do we need?

Luke 2: 1, John 1: 10 – 14.

We need Christ the baby of Christmas for He is our Christ of the Cross, our Redeemer, Saviour, Friend - the One who reconciles us with God.