

Come Worship the King

Matthew 2:1-12

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Matthew Chapter 1:18-25 tells us of the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ. It begins, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: after His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.' So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us.' Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus."

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.'" Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly

Come Worship the King

great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

This is the Word of the Lord. Let us pray.

Father, we pray that You would send the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to see the wonder of the Incarnation, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and how we as Your people have been called to come and adore Him, the One who is Christ the Lord. I pray that You would give us ears to hear what the Spirit will have for the church this morning, that You would give me the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to make known the truth of Your Word with full assurance of faith, knowing that this indeed is the Word of truth, the very need for our soul. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

This morning, I want to consider the wise men that came to worship the Son of God. The Gospel of Matthew records for us, out of all the Gospels, the only Gospel that makes mention of the wise men and gives us insight into their journeyings to come to the place where Jesus was. Matthew, in his Gospel, uniquely sets out to prove and to show that this Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem, was from a lineage which authenticated or ratified His reality that He was the Messiah. And if you look at Matthew Chapter 1:1, the Gospel of Matthew begins like this: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." And then Matthew goes on to introduce this genealogy, showing the lineage of Christ through the kings of Judah to David, and he goes on to show beyond that also that this Christ was not only from David but He was from Abraham. And the reason why he brings out this argument is to show that this Jesus presented here in the pages of Scripture is indeed Christ the King.

Christ the King, and he shows these two greats of Israel, the two greatest men in the history of the Israelite history, David and Abraham. Remember what the Jews said to Jesus, "We're of our father Abraham," and everyone knew that Messiah was going to be born of David. And this is not just merely for the fact of a genealogy itself, to show the family tree, to see the interest of who we belong to, who He belonged to, or whatever it was. What Matthew was showing here is that Abraham and David, to them, were made promises that this baby Jesus fulfilled. He was the son of Abraham, not in the sense that He was like Isaac, no, He was the son of Abraham in that He was the one who was the seed of Abraham who would fulfill the promises made to Abraham. And this is why the Scripture shows us in Galatians Chapter 3:16, "He says the promise was made not unto

seeds, as unto many, but as unto thy seed," Paul says, "which is Christ." And Matthew is showing here that Jesus Christ is the son of Abraham.

What was special about the promise made to Abraham? Well, one of the things that should stand out to us was this, that in Abraham's seed, all the families of the earth will be blessed. The Gentiles and nations will be blessed by this seed of Abraham. What about the son of David? Is that to say that Jesus is just like Solomon? No, not at all. In fact, one greater than Solomon is here. The promise that was made to David concerning his son was that he would sit on the throne of his father David, and his kingdom would be established forever, not established as long as he, as Solomon reigned, because it was not of the physical seed that the promise was ultimately made, but unto the son of David, Christ the King, whose kingdom shall be forevermore, an everlasting reign.

And Matthew, in the beginning of his Gospel, begins to show this connection between Christ the King, who will bless the nations, and why this is so important is to understand that this King that came, Matthew shows that in Matthew, he first shows that He was met by a group of Gentiles, a group of men that came from the east, and they came and worshiped this King of Israel. Look with me in Matthew Chapter 2:1 as we see the son of Abraham, the son of David, being worshiped by these Gentiles. "This is now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.'"

Straightaway, Matthew, after showing us of the birth of Jesus and the message of the angel to Mary, introduces us to these men who come from the east, in the days of Herod, inquiring, following a star, inquiring about the birth of this King of Israel. Who are these men? Well, wise men is a nice title for them, but they were Magi. That is what the Greek word is; it's Magi. And it actually is used of magicians and astrologers that came from the east. There wasn't wisdom in the sense of heavenly wisdom, although in this hour, they by the grace of God displayed such, but these were men of astrology, men of learning that came from the east. In fact, what the Bible teaches about this word Magi that appears here, though these wise men, it also appears in Acts Chapter 13 when Elymas the sorcerer is rebuked by Paul for his sorcery. He was a magician of dark arts, and he was rebuked by Paul, and he was a Magi.

This word also appears in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, in the book of Daniel. You remember when the king was troubled, Nebuchadnezzar, concerning a dream, he called the magicians and the astrologers. He called the Magi to come and help him discern

his dream and the answer thereof. So these were men of acute awareness when it came to the spiritual or to the supernatural, and people that were quite interested in the study of stars and of learning, and yes, mingled with much superstition, no doubt, but also mingled with the studies of science as well. But these were men that were students of the stars and men of inquisitive minds, and because they were of a kind of religious order, in fact, in Persia, there were men who were priestly caste called the Magi because they were of a priestly order or from this kind of spiritual order. They would be a people that were concerned with what the religions of the world would be teaching concerning their great ones.

And here we see that these Magi see a star in the east, His star, the star of Messiah, of this King of Israel in the east, and they are inquiring and following this star to come and meet this King. It's very interesting, isn't it? What do they mean they saw this star? Well, there's many reasons why people think this star is what kind of star it was and have many kinds of interpretations for what it means, but one thing we can be sure of is that it was a supernatural phenomenon by God given to these inquiring minds to lead them to Christ the King.

But they could have been looking up in the stars, and why did they, how did they connect the idea of star and king? This is the question we have to ask ourselves. "We have seen His star." You know, this King of Israel star. They come in and say, "Where's the King of the Jews? We've seen His star." Hang on a minute, what do you mean you've seen His star? Where did they get this idea from? There are many suggestions as to what that might be, but one thing I think that it might be is that these men had come from the east, which means they probably came from the vicinity of Babylon and Persia and Parthia at the time, and they probably were in touch with the Jewish scriptures because of the influence of Daniel and the exiles that were taken by Nebuchadnezzar in the destruction of the temple in 586 BC, and they were probably taken into captivity, and the word of truth was being shared even in the kingdom of Babylon. And perhaps for many years, there were leftover writings or thoughts or things that these men had studied and were inquired about.

Perhaps as they were studying the scriptures or trying to learn about this Israelite religion, maybe they came to understand the prophecy of Balaam, for Balaam himself said, by God giving him this word of prophecy, "A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter," which is the idea of a reigning king, "shall rise out of Israel." And maybe there was between that, the star that shall come out of Jacob and the scepter, the star who is the king rising out of Israel, maybe that's what they thought it was. We're not sure exactly, but one thing we know is that when they saw the star, they were aware that this star was leading them to Him who was King of Israel.

Where did the Magi come from? I mentioned they came from the east. They may have been as far as 1,200 to 1,500 kilometers. These men were serious about meeting this King. They were concerned to know who this King was. They were ambitious. Why did they come? They didn't come merely for the sake of coming to add one more pilgrimage to their efforts. They wanted to come and meet and worship, as the Bible says, this King, Christ. They came with an ambition to worship Him who was born in Bethlehem. They believed that He was the King of the Jews. Look what it says in Chapter 2, verse 2 of Matthew. They enter in upon the city, following this star, leading them to Bethlehem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" They believe that this one who was born was King of the Jews, had been born King of the Jews. And as Don Carson makes a point here, he says His kingly status was not conferred on Him later, but it was from birth. How many people are born king? These men realized that whoever was being born was born king. Most men rise up through being princes first, and then they become kings, and while they are young and princes, there may be a queen that is leading. This is the ordinary way of things, but here Christ was born in Bethlehem, and as the Scripture teaches here, that He was born King of the Jews.

Jesus was not sent to become King; He was King, He is King, and shall be King forever. In fact, when Pilate was trialing Jesus there, and his trial in John Chapter 19, he asks Him this very question, "Are You a King then?" Jesus says to him and answered him, "You rightly say that I am a King. For this cause, I was born, and for this cause, I have come into the world." He was sent by God as King, and in a manger, as a baby, He was King. He's Christ the King, whom these Magi recognized and came to seek and came to worship Him.

But it's important for us, as we consider who the Magi were, what they were doing, where did they come from, and why they came, it is important to realize the manner in which they came. These men were on a pursuit to meet Christ the King. They were ambitious about seeing Him who was King of Israel. They traveled a long distance through deserts, perhaps through difficulties, through dangers. Traveling was not like us jumping in a car and heading straight down on the Hume Highway to Victoria. Their travel was much more dangerous than that. On camelback, it would have taken them many, many weeks, perhaps, to arrive there. It would have been met with hunger and difficulty and other things. Perhaps they had, obviously, cattle with them, or they had to look after their beasts as well that they were traveling on. This was not an easy journey, but it was a journey that they were ambitious to make because they had their eyes set on Him who was King.

They were concerned, they were ambitious to find Him who was Christ the King. And not only were they ambitious in their traveling, so as to travel so far to meet this King, they were ambitious in also their inquiry. I don't know about you, but I'm not one for inquiry. You ask my wife, when I go to Woolworth's and she wants me to find something, I don't go up to the store clerks straight away and ask where can I find this item. I'd wander around, having a look. Natalie's an inquirer; she goes in there, "Hey, where's this? I'm looking for this. Where's this?" She won't bother looking all over the place, wasting her time; she'll just go and get it. But the inquiry is sometimes, for me anyway, a little bit hard, you know, asking, asking. I'll just go find it myself.

But these men, they followed the star that led them to Jerusalem, but in Jerusalem, they wanted to know where this King was. And look what the Bible says in verse number two. It says, well, verse one, in the end part there, "In the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men came from the East to Jerusalem," and then it says the words "saying." The word "saying" there is in the present tense. These men came into Jerusalem, and they were saying, they were asking and asking and asking. And how do we know that they were asking not just one person but a lot of people? Well, look at verse number three. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Here are these wise men coming into the gates of the city, and these people that probably seeing these men that have come from the East, maybe a strange-looking bunch, and they're coming saying, "Hey, where's this King of the Jews? We've come to worship Him. Hey, where's this King of the Jews? We've come to worship Him. Hey, can you tell us where this King, Christ, will be born? We followed His star from the East, and we've come to worship Him."

You can imagine what the people are saying. "What King of the Jews? You mean the son of David? You mean Christ the King, the one whose throne will be established forever?" And you can imagine the commotion that was going on in the city, and word gets to Herod, and Herod is not happy. He's troubled. All Jerusalem is troubled. Herod's troubled, saying, "King? King? I'm King. What do you mean, King of the Jews? This is a rival to my throne. This is one who would overthrow my purposes to establish his own. This is a threat to my authority and to my reign." But they continue to ask, and it's so beautiful that in their pursuit to ask and to discover who Christ was, God continued to lead them.

He did not just lead them by the star in Jerusalem. Even in their engagement with people in the city that caused the stir, in the good providence of God, this led to word getting to the king, and it's from the word of the king that they were sent to Bethlehem to find Christ the Lord. What happens here in the text of Scripture is that as there was a commotion, Herod wants

to know about this King. So Herod calls upon who? The chief priests and the scribes, and he gathers them together, and he inquires of the professionals of the Scripture and says, "Tell me, where's He going to be born? I want to know." Now, up to this point, the Magi do not know exactly the precise location of the Son of God. All they know is that they're following this star, and they're coming from the east, and they're following this star to the city of Jerusalem, but they don't know exactly the precise location.

And in Herod, seeking to find out by anxious, by selfish, by sinful means, fulfills the good purpose of God, and the chief priests and scribes open up the Scriptures to Micah Chapter 5:2, and they say, "Hey, this King, this ruler in Israel, is going to be born in Bethlehem, in a very unlikely place, a small little town of Bethlehem. He will be born there." And it says to us in the Word of God here, in verse number 7, "Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, he determined from them what time the star appeared." And look, verse 8, "And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go, search.'" That's amazing. These people are coming to worship the King with pure motives. They run into a man with evil motives that wants to kill the King, and God uses a man with evil motives who desires to kill the King to lead these men who have a genuine desire to worship the King to find the King in Bethlehem. Amazing how God was guiding them.

And the Bible teaches us in verse number 8, after he sent them, he said, "Go, search carefully for the young Child, and when you find Him, bring back word to me that I may come and worship Him also." A lie, that was. Verse 9, "They heard the king, they departed, and I love this, and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it stood over where the young Child was." God confirmed, as it were, to them the word of the king, in that the star continued to display the location of the Son of God in Bethlehem. But you can see that these men were so ambitious to worship this King, to meet this King, that God, even by providential means, guided them by the star and guided them by a threatened king who received an answer from the chief priests and scribes and let them know about it.

And now we see the worship of these men. Notice how their pursuit to worship results in their praise. Look at it. It says in verse number 10, "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy." Not just when they saw the star. It's the verse before that says it stood over where the young Child was. In other words, when they had arrived, these men traveling far on a pursuit, making inquiry, come to the place where Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born. And when they saw the star over the place where He lay, the Bible teaches us that they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. These men were not excited because of the journey that they had just taken. They're not excited, "Look how many steps we took from however it was, you know, it's from the east to the west." They weren't excited neces-

sarily about where they had come from, but they were excited at the reality that they had now arrived, and that they were now in the presence of the King, that they had now come to the place where they had so long pursued.

And in one way, it is figuratively put to us, as the hymn writer says, "Hallelujah, I have found Him, whom my soul so long has craved. Jesus satisfies my longings; through His life, I now am saved." It was almost like they had been on this long search. "All my life long I had panted, from a drought from some cold spring, to quench the thirst that was within." And I had found Him, the Son of God. They had found Christ the King. They had pursued Him for days and weeks, and perhaps even longer than that. The reason why we know it may even be longer than that is for this: Herod commands that children from the age of two and under be killed. When they came to Jesus, He was a young Child. When Herod asked them, he wanted to know what time the star appeared. So we don't know exactly, but Herod was probably playing safe and wanted to kill from two years down. But the reality was it may have been quite some time for the wise men to arrive. They met Him as a young Child, not as a babe wrapped in a manger. They met Him in a house as a young Child, which means these men were hungry and pursuing to meet the Son of God.

And when they arrived upon Him, when they came to the place where He lay, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy because they have now come face to face with the King of Israel, the King of the Jews, the one that they had been longing for. That's the praise of their worship. Verse 11, look at the posture of their worship. "When they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him." Him. Here is the posture of humility. Here is the posture of reverence. Here is the posture of one who is paying homage, one that is bowing, one who is coming down and realizing and laying their glory down so that He, the King of the Jews, might receive glory, honor, and praise. These men did as the Psalmist calls all men to do, "Kiss the Son." Kiss the Son, in of the Messiah, basically pay Him homage, give Him respect. This is what people do when they come to a king. They give honor, they give respect, and they kissed the Son, as it were. They worshiped Him. They bowed before Him. They humbled themselves. "He laid His glory by, born that man no more may die." But they laid their glory by in the light of the King, realizing that we have no glory of our own in the presence of the One who has humbled Himself as a young boy in a house there in Bethlehem.

They laid themselves down. In fact, this was more than just, I could say, mere humility and reverence by bowing of themselves. It was an indication that they were giving themselves as with an allegiance to this King. They honored Him. They worshiped Him. They praised Him. They bowed before Him. And their worship went from praise to humbleness of heart and rev-

erence, and then that went into the presentation of their gifts to the Son of God. They not only gave themselves to the Lord, but they gave gifts to the Lord in such a way as to show that they really do believe that He is, in fact, the King.

Now, there's a lot that can be said about the gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and a lot of things have been, you know, extrapolated from why these gifts have been given exactly, but one thing is important that I want to draw out at the very least, without going into the gifts, is this. In verse number 11, "When they had come to the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented to Him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh." These men had their most precious objects in, like what we would have, like a safe, traveling safe for them, whatever it was, a treasure chest. And in that treasure chest was their most precious and prized possessions. And what they gave to the Son of God was not their leftovers from their journey. What they gave that day as a gift to the King was called in the text of Scripture "treasures."

They had the spirit of David, who said this to his Lord, "How can I give to the Lord that which cost me nothing?" David realized that the sacrifice that I borrowed from another to give to the Lord was not enough. I must give Him of my own precious substance. I must give Him in such a way that it hurts, if I could say that, give Him something that's precious to me, something that I feel has gone from me to Him who is King and worthy. And so they open up their treasures, that which is precious to them, and they give that which is precious to them to Him who is more precious, to Him who is King, to Him who deserves all of the substance that they possess. And they gave themselves in worship, and they gave themselves, their offerings to Him, their prized possessions, so as to show that the person, to whom the One who is before us, is indeed Christ the King.

These men were Gentiles. These men, if we could say, were one of the first that tasted of the blessings of the seed of Abraham, the One in whom the nations will be blessed. But they had that blessing because they pursued the worship of the King. They followed the light to the Light of the World. They followed the providential star. They followed the Word of God when it was revealed to them there in Jerusalem, and they came to meet Him who is indeed the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Son of God.

What about you? Have you come to worship the King? Have you come from a far country, a place perhaps of comfort? Have you left your place of comfort, your place of security, to come and meet the Savior? Have you eagerly, anxiously understood the importance of meeting the King? Have you packed, as it were, your treasures, like Jesus touched the rich young

ruler and said, "If you come after Me, give all that you have and come follow Christ"? Have you packed your treasures, willing to depart with the very things that you love, so that you may come and offer praise, worship, and adoration to the King? How have you responded to this babe who was born in Bethlehem, who is Christ the King?

You see, many people have responded as Herod; they're threatened by the presence of a king. They're threatened by the fact that their own kingdom, which they have been building, their own lives, their own glory, their own power, their own fame, may be laid in the dust in the presence of this king. They are threatened by the fact that if I pursue Him, and if I follow Him, and if I'm led to Him, then I no longer have allegiance to myself. I no longer can have my own little kingdom in which I sit up as king and reign, but I must bow to the throne of the Son of David, the One who is enthroned forever.

Many people, when they hear the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that this King had come, was born, and died, and has risen again, as enthroned in heaven, and is ruling and reigning, and calls sinners to repentance, they say, "No, we will not have this King. We'll have Barabbas. Do not give us Him. Give us Caesar. He will be our Lord." At least, and they forget the fact that the Bible teaches that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

And maybe you are threatened by the presence of this King. He's going to overturn your life, take over your kingdom, conquer your plans, conquer your desires, conquer your dreams, and set up His everlasting kingdom in your heart. You have to bow to Him. Many do not leave Babylon. Many do not leave the East because they don't want to face the King.

Or maybe you're like those chief priests and scribes. You know exactly where the text of Scripture says Christ will be born, in Bethlehem, and He is the ruler, but there's no word of them going to Bethlehem to find Him. They're like the indifferent, aren't they? They're happy to know the facts but to do nothing about them. They have a strange sense of comfort in knowing the text of Scriptures wherein lies the answer, but will they go and follow the star? Will they leave their Jerusalem and come to Bethlehem, lowly Bethlehem, to meet the King? Surely the King can't be born in Bethlehem. I'm sure there's a deeper understanding to this text. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" they later said.

And so many of us, so many people in the world today, are like that, aren't they? They grow up in the Christian Church. They know the story of Jesus. They know about the King. They can take you to the text of Scriptures, but will they leave and follow the star to the King? You say, "Well, only if we had

Come Worship the King

a star, then I'll come to Jesus." My friends, you have more than one star. You have creation that testifies to Christ the King. You have conscience that tells you that you need a King, that you're a sinner, and you need a Savior. You have the Word of Truth here before you now, pointing you there, Micah 5:2. There He is. Come and worship the King. What more do you need? What more do you want? What more can you ask for?

Christ is born. He has risen. He died. He is risen again, and He calls you to come to Himself for rest, for peace. He wants you to give up that which you hold so dearly and come and worship Him, to come and bow before Him, to come and worship the King. Will you confess your desire this morning, then? "I need Him to be my King." Would you confess your desire this morning, at least? "I need to begin my pursuit and ask some questions and make some inquiries." Or will you even come and bow this morning and look upon the King who was born, crucified, and risen for our sins, that we might be saved by His grace?

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace, there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever." You know the passage ends off like this, says, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." God is doing it, has done it, and will do it. And it'd be better for us if we get on and worship Him now before it is too late, for we perish for not kissing the Son, lest His wrath be kindled but a little, and we perish in the way.

Let us pray.