

Matthew 2:1-12

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 5/3/2009

Three responses to the birth of King Jesus

Prayer

Father again, what a privilege it is to come before You, to worship you as a body. To give You glory and honor due Your name. Father we praise You for who You are, and what You have done. We thank You so much that You have sent Your Son Jesus, that You loved us so much that You would send Your only begotten Son, that whoever should believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Father we praise You that in Christ You have delivered us from darkness to light. I thank you so much for an opportunity to come together and Father I pray as we look into Your word, that You would open our hearts and minds to understand the Scriptures. Father I pray no one here would sit here and listen to Your word, and stay in their sin. I pray they would confess that before You, that we would be right before You and receive Your word implanted. Thank You for this morning, we commit it to You, we pray that Your son would be greatly glorified, as His word is proclaimed, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sermon

I was thinking of a Proverb that's been in my mind all week. And I just wanted to share it with you, it doesn't have anything to do with the message, well, maybe it does, but it's Proverbs 28:9, and it says "He who turns his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination". We can turn our ears from listening to the word, we may listen to it, but we can turn away from really hearing it with an intent to obey. And we can come to church, and we can go through the motions, we can claim to follow the Lord, and throughout history you know, there's nothing new under the sun, there have always been those who claim to follow the Lord, but yet in their heart of hearts are not doing that. Jesus would share in Luke 6:46 "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I say"? When we get to the Sermon on the Mount, Lord willing, in chapter 7 of the book of Matthew we see there are those who are serving the Lord evidently their whole lives I appears, "Lord, did we not do this and that in Your name", and He says "Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness, you are identified by your sin, you are not redeemed. Depart from Me you who practice lawlessness, for I never knew you."

There are many different responses to the person of Christ, and to the Word of God, right now we have His revelation in the Word of God, but we're going to see today that actually the person of Christ had come in human flesh, and we're going to look at responses to the person of Jesus Christ. So, if you would turn in your Bibles with me to Matthew 2, and we're going to be looking at a portion that's been shared a lot, it's a Christmas message often, it has to do with what the Christmas card companies would say, or what the carolers would sing "We three kings." And we're going to look at that, and we're going to see from Scripture what it's about. But I believe we're going to see three responses today to the birth of Jesus Christ.

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We're going to see one of joyful worship, we're going to see fearful agitation, and then we're going to see murderous hate. And I believe we're going to see that that fearful agitation would be murderous had if the opportunity was available. So again would you turn in your Bibles to Matthew 2. Now again we've begun in the book of Matthew, we're in chapter 2, and Matthew inspired by the Holy Spirit has written his gospel for us, it is transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament, it is very Jewish, there are many quotes from the Old Testament. It is the presentation of Jesus Christ as King of the Jews, and within that presentation of the King, there is teaching concerning His Kingdom, and there is the opposition to His Kingdom which the Lord God Himself predetermined would be the means to in which He brought about redemption by Christ going to the cross.

So we see that it is the presentation of Jesus Christ as the King of the Jews. And in verse 1 we saw what this book is about, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Son of Abraham". He is David's son, He is in the line of the king, He is the one who will reign on the throne forever, He is the son of Abraham, He is in Abraham's seed, He is the one in which we have salvation. Jesus Christ fulfills the covenant in David that there would be a king ruling forever, and Jesus Christ fulfills that Abrahamic covenant, in which in Abraham's seed all the nations would be blessed.

And last week we saw the birth of Jesus Christ, we saw the account of His birth, and we saw Joseph's dilemma "It's not my baby". That Mary was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph desired righteously to put her away secretly. But the Lord God intervened through an angel in a dream to Joseph, pointing to the great truth, "That which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." And he told Joseph, to not fear, but to marry Mary, to take her as his wife. And why is he to do that? Because God in human flesh, is going to save His people from their sins. You will call His name Jesus, the LORD is salvation. And all this points to prophecy fulfilled, that we saw in verse 23 of chapter 1, ***Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which translated means, "God with us."*** That God, in Christ broke the sin barrier, and mankind can have fellowship with the living God because of Christ.

And now we turn to chapter 2, in which we see responses to the birth of Christ. And again as I shared, there are three responses, and actually there are four but two of them are basically the same; three basic responses to the birth of Jesus. So then again let's turn to Matthew chapter 2. Now first of all, we're going to see the Gentile magi arrive looking to worship King Jesus verse 1 of chapter 2,

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him." [Matthew 2:1-2]

Chapter 2 begins with this statement "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of king Herod." Matthew inspired by the Holy Spirit is pointing out timing here for chapter 2. He is pointing out the time in which things took place, after Jesus Christ was born, in the days of Herod the king. Now notice he says Jesus was born, after he was born in Bethlehem of Judea. We have the first mention of the place of His birth in the book of Matthew, Bethlehem of Judea, also called the City of David, Luke

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chapter 4. And Bethlehem was about six miles south of Jerusalem, it was fairly close, and right now, it's really a suburb of Jerusalem. And it's really interesting to note that the word Bethlehem or "Beth-lehem" means "house of bread." In the context of God's sovereign hand, I believe it's no coincidence that Christ was born in the "house of bread." Certainly as we see in Scripture in this gospel, and in other gospels that Christ is the true bread of life. He alone is the one who brings the words of eternal life, He has the words of eternal life. And it is in Him alone that we are saved.

Now in our text notice that our author gives us another marker of timing, he says "in the days of Herod the king". Jesus was born in the days of Herod the king. Well who was Herod? There's a few Herod's in the Bible, but who was this Herod? We see first of all from the text that it says Herod the king. And if you go to Luke 1, you can look at it later, verse 5 we see Herod is called the king of Judea. So who is the Herod guy? First of all, he is Herod the First (Herod I), known in history as Herod the Great. He was an Idumean, which is basically one of Edomite origin. Esau would have been his great, great, great, great...great grand-dad, somewhere along the line there. And we know from Scripture that the Edomites hated the Jews. We know that they had a hatred for them, a jealousy for them.

Now Herod was not a very nice man. In 47 B.C. when he was about in his mid-twenties he was named the governor of Galilee. It was a very high position, the Romans intended to put someone in there who could keep the Jews at bay, keep those rebellious Jews down. And they wanted someone who could pacify them, and, through a trail of much blood Herod did so. Herod was a clever, yet violent man, as we will see in Scripture, who would use anything, any violence, to hold onto power. In 40 B.C. the Roman senate named Herod the king of the Jews. Like Luke said, the king of Judea right? The Roman senate said "You know what Herod, you're the king of the Jews." He was a powerful man, although he was not a Jew by birth or religion. He refurbished the temple, it was actually called Herod's temple. He was also a brutal killer, he killed many people to stay in power, we see in history, including his brother-in-law, his mother-in-law, one of his wives. He also orders his sons of one wife to be put to death by strangling. He was a brutal man, he was a murderer. Even Caesar Augustan said of Herod "It is safer to be Herod's sow, than Herod's son." Certainly we see in the latter portions of chapter 2 that Herod was a murderous maniac of a dictator. We'll look at that later.

So then Herod was king of the Jews by virtue of Rome. But as we will see the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the true King of the Jews has come onto the scene. Verse 1 again "Now when Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold (means take a look, pay attention) magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem saying "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?

Now for Herod, Houston we've got a problem. Herod is king of the Jews right? He is king of the Jews in his mind, he is a dictator, a murderous, hateful man holding absolute control over Judea. And these magi come saying "Where is He who is born King of the Jews?"

Now before we continue we need to understand who these magi are, and I want to encourage you at this point, do not get your theology from Christmas cards. Sometimes it's right, many times it's wrong.

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Nowhere do we see the term here, three kings, nowhere do we see the term three. The star didn't, as we will see, actually lead them from the east to Jerusalem. The star appeared in the east, they came to Jerusalem, then it lead them from Jerusalem as we will see to Bethlehem. So what do we know about the magi, what do we know from Scripture about the magi? First of all, it's not my intent to get into all the issues concerning what the magi might be, and all their history and all that stuff. Why? Because the text doesn't go into that. So I'm going to briefly give you a few points concerning the magi here.

First of all we know from Scripture they were magi from the East. They were somewhere from the east. Now the term magi comes most likely from a Persian word which meant a special class of priests in the Persian Empire. We think these people came from either Persia or Babylon. We don't totally know. And some expositors who I really respect go so far as to say that these magi were king makers, and this is possible, but I don't see that in Scripture. And I wouldn't stake my sermon on it. What I do see is they were not coming to make a king, but to worship a king. So it's certainly possible that these magi, not the same ones, but the descendants of them existed in the time of Daniel, when Israel had been exiled to Babylon. And it's interesting to note that because the Lord enabled Daniel to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he placed Daniel as a ruler over the province of Babylon, and Daniel 2:48 as the chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. You have Daniel who knows the Word of God, who loves the Lord as the head of all these wise guys, 500 years earlier. And I believe, I can't say for sure, but I believe he probably taught the Word of God to these wise men. And they certainly understood some of the Word of God, from the prophet Daniel.

Now most likely these magi were the wise men of their day. They were most likely highly educated like those in the day of Daniel, you can look in Daniel, they were the highly educated ones. Now were these magi pagan astrologers? Certainly possible. We don't know much about them, we know they're looking at the stars, right, at least we see. We don't know if their pagan or not. What we do know is that they were giving revelation by God, and they responded, that's what we do know about the magi.

So what else do we know from the Scripture now concerning the magi? Apparently they had influence. For they were able to receive a hearing before king Herod. Also it's apparent that there were probably more than three, now the reason why they say "we three kings" is because of the gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh and they've deduced that there were three kings, and that's why. But it's apparent that quite possibly there were more than just three, that there were a group of magi quite possibly, and in these days people would travel in caravans, it's quite possible that these magi had their own protective soldiers. And the reason why we think there's more is because we'll see later on all of Jerusalem was troubled, the whole city knew about it. They came and something happened that they understand, and they saw what was going on. So the text doesn't say it specifically, but most likely there were much more than three magi.

So back to our text we have these foreign dignitaries coming and arriving in Jerusalem, asking questions of those in Jerusalem, where is He who was born King of the Jews? Now the star we will see was in the east, and they knew that the King of Jews had been born, they believe the revelation, and they went "Ok, where do we go?" King of the Jews born, go to Jerusalem, go to the capital right? So they have

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arrived in Jerusalem and they are asking the question “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” No doubting there, it has happened. “For we saw His star and have come to worship Him”.

And again notice they were confident that the King had been born. And they validate this statement “For we saw His star” they attribute it to Him. “We saw the King’s star, in the east.” Now our text doesn’t explain this, it just says simply “We saw His star in the east.” And again many have put together all sorts of ideas concerning what the star might be, there was in 7 B.C. an unusual alignment between Jupiter and Saturn, and some say it could have been Haley’s Comet, and some... There’s all kinds of theories. But based on the text, I believe it was a supernatural phenomenon, it was a miraculous star, it was His star, and later on if you look down at verse 9 we see this star acting in a different way than just something out in the sky. Verse ⁹ **And having heard the king, they went their way; and lo, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was.** ¹⁰ **And when they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. [Matthew 2:9-10]** This is no aligning of planets, this is not Haley’s comet, this is a supernatural phenomenon, it is His star, and it went six miles and it went right there over the house and they knew exactly where to go.

Now why did they come so far? Why did they come so far? These pagan wise men were given revelation from God, possibly in coordination with the prophecies they had heard from Daniel 500 years earlier. They understood the King of the Jews had been born, they understood it was His star, and what were they coming to do? In to verse 2 “and have come to worship Him.” Why did they come almost 1000 miles with not much revelation, they came to worship Him. The magi had very little revelation, they understood that the King of the Jews was worthy of worship. Everything we saw in chapter 1 that God had taken on human flesh and only God is worthy of worship. And these magi came, looking for He who is born King of the Jews.

So with this in mind let’s take a look at some of the responses to the revelation that the King has been born. First of all we see the response of king Herod, and then we see an unexpected response of the Jews in Jerusalem, that they are very troubled. Again verse 1, chapter 2 “¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him.” ³ And when Herod the king heard it, (notice he’s Herod the king) he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”

Herod gets the news there’s some people looking for the King of the Jews who has been born, those in Jerusalem, everyone knows about it obviously, the question that they’re asking has spread around that it is obvious, and notice “he was troubled,” Herod’s initial response. And the term troubled means to literally shake up, or to stir up, to be unsettled, to be thrown into confusion, speaks of mental and spiritual agitation, speaks of being disturbed, troubled, upset, agitated. Herod was all shook up. And you probably understand the feeling, you know when you get news that surprises you we get a troubled feeling right? Something that we don’t expect all of a sudden, we may act a certain way. Certainly we were all troubled and agitated when we heard of the Trade Towers being bombed, the planes going in there right? There was that feeling of “What is going on?” right? Well Herod was agitated, he was

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troubled. Now it's interesting that in light of the character of Herod I understand his response, he's the king of the Jews, and all of a sudden people are looking for the King of the Jews who has been born. He's an evil, wicked man who does not want give up his power, and he will kill to keep it, oh he is just like Satan right? He is the king of the Jews, and now these magi are looking for the one who has been born King of the Jews. Uh oh!

In the context of Herod's wickedness I understand his response right? But what I don't understand is the response of Jerusalem. Verse 3 "³ And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." All Jerusalem was upset, all Jerusalem was shook up, he was troubled and Jerusalem with him. And I'm amazed at this because they get all shaken up, and they're six miles away from where we will see they understand and know where the baby should be born. The Jews understood that He would be born in Bethlehem. And they're all shook up, but they don't go look for Him. The text says they were troubled, agitated, stirred up. And this leads to the question why would they be shaken up by the news? Why wouldn't they be saying "I can't believe it! They're saying the Messiah's been born. Could that be true, we've been waiting, oh I can't believe it, maybe He's been born!" But they're troubled instead. Why would they be troubled? Why would all Jerusalem be troubled at such great news, or at least the possibility of such great news?

Let me suggest a possible answer to the question. First of all the Jews in the time of Herod were in unbelief. They didn't believe. They knew the Word, they claimed to know God, yet they were in unbelief. And their unbelief is exemplified later on by the fact that they would ultimately reject the Messiah and stand by and allow Him to be crucified. John 1:11, ¹¹ **He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.** They were in unbelief. Do you remember what Jesus said concerning Jerusalem in Matthew 23, He says ³⁷ **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.** Do you remember what happened after Jesus fed the 5000, and later on the people saw Him and wanted more food, they wanted to be sustained, rather than to see Christ? John 6:35 Jesus said to them "I am the bread of life. You're looking for the physical bread, I am the bread of life" He said. "He who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall not thirst, but I said to you, you have seen Me, yet you do not believe." They didn't believe. They didn't believe.

What about in John 10, we see the outright rejection of the Messiah, the Good Shephard, John 10:24,

²⁴ **The Jews therefore gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."** ²⁵ **Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me.** ²⁶ **"But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. [John 10:24-27]**

"You don't believe!" That's the response of those who have no faith, they were troubled with the possible news that the Messiah had been born. They were troubled.

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Herod was in unbelief, the Jews were in unbelief, and they were agitated and troubled. This baby certainly, now there's lots of possibilities why they might be agitated in the mindset of an unbeliever, certainly a baby didn't fit into their plans. They needed someone to deliver them from Rome, they were looking for a Messiah. They were very impatient. One who would deliver them from the bondage of Rome. It could be the fact that if they had to wait for a baby to grow up, boy, this really doesn't fit into our plans. "We're going to endure this for forty more years?" Certainly could have agitated them in their unbelief. They were looking for a king to address their needs, rather than to release them from the bondage of their sin.

Folks I see this today, the true gospel doesn't fit the paradigms of non-believers when they hear it, it doesn't fulfill their desires and they get agitated and irritated. It's not what they want. Now another possible thing that troubled them certainly was that this would rock the boat. Herod is an evil man, he's got a lot of power, now there's this contention, there's this possible other King of the Jews. We don't know what it is, but what we do know (I believe) from Scripture is that the Jews were in unbelief and that explains why they responded that way. They were unbelievers unwilling to seek Him. They were unwilling as we see from Scripture to go six miles south to see, is this really so? Paul puts it this way in Romans 3:10 "As it is written, there are none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God." They had this wonderful news, and they are troubled.

One pastor (Deffindorf) writes,

Unbelieving Jews are just like all other unbelievers--they refuse to seek God or to worship Him. Being Jewish no more inclines one to recognize God's salvation (which is what the name "Jesus" means, the LORD is salvation) than being raised in a Christian home does. Proximity to truth is not enough. Ultimately it is those to whom God chooses to reveal Himself who come to Him (cf. Matt. 11:27; John 8:42-47; 10:22-3). It is not shocking to find that when our Lord publicly presented Himself to the nation some thirty years later, accompanied by signs and wonders, they failed as a nation to accept Him as their King, and it was in Jerusalem that He was crucified.

They were unbelievers. They were unbelievers. And they were very troubled by what should have been good news. Let me ask you this. Is this service troubling to you? Does it agitate you? Does it agitate you to hear the Word of God? Does it trouble you? Does it agitate you when those around you worship Christ? If so, it's an evidence, possibly, of your unbelief, which means you're still in your sins. You are dead to God because you are in sin and you need a savior. And that Savior is the LORD, the LORD is salvation, it is Jesus Christ.

Now let me remind you, those who might be agitated at this point, that false religion will not agitate you, it will entice you, it will give you a good show, it will make you feel good. But if you are in unbelief, your agitation may be an evidence of that. These Jews did not seek to worship Christ because they didn't believe. Is this your response to the Word of God concerning Christ? You might be thinking "No

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big deal, no big deal they were just agitated.” But I believe we’re going to see that, you are no better than Herod. They were no better than Herod, the wicked murderer.

Let’s take a look at his response. Verse 4,

4 And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he began to inquire of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 And they said to him, (this is to Herod) "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet, 6 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Ruler, Who will shepherd My people Israel.'" 7 Then Herod secretly called the magi, and ascertained from them the time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, "Go and make careful search for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, that I too may come and worship Him." [Matthew 2:4-8]

Herod inquires first of Israel’s theocrats, where King Jesus is to be born. It’s amazing, he believes the truth of Scripture, that the Messiah is going to be born, but he doesn’t believe in the Messiah. James 2, it’s like the demons who believe and shudder. He believes it, and he’s going to track it down based on the Word of God, but for his own desires. Do you use the Word of God for your own desires? That’s satanic, that’s an evidence of an evil heart, and that’s what Herod is doing.

So first of all, he is gathering the theocrats together, he gathered the chief priests and the scribes of the people and he began to inquire of them where the Christ was to be born. Now he gathers the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and the chief priest wasn’t like a title, there was not someone who was “chief priest” but it was a term to describe the high priest, any ex-high priest, possibly the captain of the temple, and some other higher priests. It also included the seventy, the Sanhedrin. These were the top religious guys. And you must understand Israel was a theocracy, so those on the top religiously were in power, yet under Herod, but yet they were in power. These were the religious rulers, the chief priests, you see them throughout Scripture, the chief priests and the scribes. Those are the ones conspiring to kill Jesus throughout the gospels. They are the top religious guys. They were the theocrats. And then notice we have scribes of the people. These were not priests, they were from other tribes, however they were learned in the law, they were learned in the Scriptures, they were the theologians. So you’ve got the religious theocrats here, and Herod, an unbeliever, inquires of these theocrats where Jesus is to be born.

And look at the answer, verse 5 “Well we’re not sure...” They knew right away! “And they said to him, in Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet.” They knew exactly where He would be born. And then they quoted “And you Bethlehem, land of Judah (this is Micah 5:2, a quotation of this that Matthew gives inspired by the Holy Spirit), are not least among the leaders of Judah, for out of you shall come forth a ruler (that’s a King) who will shepherd My people Israel”. That’s a shepherd, shepherd King. No hesitation, boom, Bethlehem, Micah 5:2. They understood it right away. Simple answer, and it’s important to realize that not only did the chief priests understand this, the people knew this answer. In John 7, I’ll share this portion, John 7:40,

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⁴⁰ Some of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet." ⁴¹ Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? ⁴² "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" [John 7:40-42]

The people knew where He was to come from also.

The chief priests knew, people knew, the Jews knew where the Messiah was to come from. This is what I find so tragically telling in this story first of all, is that the leaders knew the Word of God, they knew where the Messiah was to be born, yet we have no record of them going to search for Him, to worship Him. Six miles south, two hours walk. You think those who knew the Word of God would have said "Do you know what, why don't we take a trip to Bethlehem today, why don't we go look for Him, just, let's go alright?"

This is telling of their spiritual condition, and some of you come week after week and hear the Word of God but yet you care less about worshiping Christ. You don't come to worship Christ, actually it's a drag to get up at times. You're in deep trouble if that's your heart, and these Jews were in deep trouble. Because it's an evidence of unbelief, just like these religious rulers. I tell you I'm so greatly encouraged after the service when people want to share about Christ and His Word, and I'm so greatly discouraged when 20 seconds after the service people are talking about their own stuff, and their own lives, rather than Christ. These leaders did not seek to worship Christ because they did not believe. Six miles away, and they wouldn't even go there, magi, thousand miles, very little revelation, came very far and continued to seek to worship the King.

So then Herod knows where the child is to be born, he believes like the demons, he believes Scripture, he's going to use it for his advantage, yet he doesn't believe in Christ. And now he's going to ascertain from the magi when, so he knows where, now he's got to find out when, he's sneaky, he's a sly fox. Then Herod secretly called the magi, verse 7, "And ascertained the time when the star appeared." Now Herod is starting to show his sneakiness now, he found out it's Bethlehem, now he wants to know the time. So he secretly calls the magi, to ascertain from them the time the star appeared. And we know from the book of Matthew later on that their answer must have been, within the last two years because Herod later orders every child from two and under in Bethlehem in that area to be a slayed. So he obviously ascertained the timing in which he thought Christ had been born from the magi.

So Herod knows the place, and the approximate age of Christ, who has been born King of the Jews. Now next we see he deceptively uses the magi, and their desire to find Jesus and worship Him, for his own advantage. Do you use people who trust Christ for your own advantage? Do you do that, you're like Herod, you're like Herod, exhibiting unbelief. Verse 8 "And he sent them to Bethlehem and said "Go and make careful search for the Child, and when you have found Him, report to me, that I may come and worship Him."

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Now do you think Herod is telling the truth? Nope, you read later on we know he's not telling the truth, we know the real truth, it sounds great on the surface, Herod is saying "I want to worship Him too," he knows what to say, he says the lingo, "I want to worship too. Go find Him, when you find Him come back to, let me know so I can worship Him." But this is not what his true desires are. He has no desire to worship Christ, his desire is to kill Him. Indeed we see later on in verse 13 that Joseph is warned in a dream to take the Child to Egypt because of his (Herod's) desire to slay Him. Look down in verse 13, ¹³ **Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."** Now if you think destroy doesn't mean kill, if you go down a little farther to verse 20 we see that when they are to come back, ²⁰ **"Arise and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead."** Dead. Herod didn't want any competition. He was the king of the Jews, and he would attempt to eliminate anyone who challenged his throne, even the Messiah.

Now some of you say "I would never do that. I would never do that, never ever ever do that." And I say, "Oh really?" I believe there are some of you who actively put to death the thought of Christ's Lordship in your life all the time. You don't want Him to be King over you, because you're a king. You don't want someone telling you how to live your life, therefore you are agitated and angry at those who would share the Word of Christ with you. Your anger is as good as murdering Jesus would say. Turn a little farther to Matthew 5:21,

²¹ **"You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' ²² "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. [Matthew 5:21-22]**

Folks I'm painfully aware of people who can't stand me because I tell them what Christ says. There are people who are angry at me, and why is the reason? Because of Christ. And if you are a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ the world will hate you too. John 15, I'll read this for you verse 18 Jesus says,

¹⁸ **"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. (The world is the world of non-believers in the world, they don't know Christ, they are in unbelief) ¹⁹ "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. [John 15:18-20]**

Are you a believer in Jesus Christ? Do you graciously by the power of the Holy Spirit in the context of mercy and love share the Word of God? The world will hate you too. Jesus said so, a slave is not greater than his master. And I believe that everyone who is in unbelief if they had the power and there was no

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consequences, they would do the same thing as Herod. Herod didn't have any consequences; he could do what he pleased. What is your view towards Christ and His Word? Is it one of agitation and hate? Or is it one of apathy, no different than Herod, and it's an evidence of unbelief.

So then, the responses to the news right now are not good so far right? The Jews in Jerusalem were stirred up and agitated, the religious bureaucrats understanding the truth were apathetic and unwilling to go search for the Christ. Herod was stirred up to seek to go kill Christ. And then we come to a wonderful response of those of faith as we see the Gentile magi continue in their search to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 9,

⁹ And having heard the king, they went their way; and lo, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. ¹⁰ And when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. (No agitation there!) ¹¹ And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him; and opening their treasures they presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. [Matthew 2:9-11]

Notice the magi, who believe that Christ had been born and desired to worship Him, did not stop their search. "Well, we can't find Him, let's give up. Well, maybe He's over here." The minute they heard he was to be, they were on their way. Now it must have been a shock when they came to Jerusalem, the capital of the Jews, saying "Where is He who is born King of the Jews" and not everyone there is wanting to go find Him. But notice we see their joyous search continue, "And having heard the king, they went on their way, and lo, the star which they had seen in the east went before them until it came and stood over where the Child was." The magi were seeking Christ. They believed the revelation that God had given them, they desired to worship Him. And at this point the star appears again and takes them right to the house where Christ was.

No ordinary star, hanging out above the house. Some say it was the Shekinah Glory of the Lord, His star. Miraculous star, "And when they saw the star (verse 10, what did they do?) they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." When is the last time you rejoiced exceedingly with great joy? It's easy to get complacent, it's easy to forget who Christ is and what He has done. They rejoiced, they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. Do you rejoice when God leads you through His Word to Christ? Do you rejoice when His Word works in your heart to point you to Christ? They rejoiced exceedingly and it was His star.

Now they weren't rejoicing in the sign (meaning the star), like many unbelievers would. They were rejoicing in the fact that His star would lead them to Christ. So then the star leads them there and what did they do? Verse 11, "And then they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him." Quick side note, Mary is not with a manger here, the wise men didn't come to a manger here, they came to a house. Shepherds visited a manger but the wise men, these magi visited a house. The Child was most likely a year old, something like that, He was certainly still a babe. And what's the first thing they do? Do they say "Mary, we are magi from the east, and have come to worship your Son, we would like to do this approximately at 10:00 A.M Sunday. We'll take Him

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to the temple and we'll have it all set up. They bowed down and they worshiped Him. They were in the presence of God incarnate, and they worshiped Him. That's what they did. Genuine worship, bowed down, fell down and worshiped Him, not contrived by man and his flesh like so many churches, the worship was based on the revelation they had concerning the King. And indeed this worship was not detoured by the surroundings, they didn't say "Small house, not very wealthy, maybe it's not the guy." They bowed down and worshiped Him.

I need to say this, Christ is the center of true worship. That's the center, it's about Christ. My heart breaks when I hear the term "worship song, worship leader, worship band." That's not worship, I don't see the band here, certainly we can worship Him in song, and we do, but we worship *Him*. They fell down and worshiped Him. When confronted with the Christ of the Word, the only valid response was worship. They fell down in humility.

Now notice Scripture shows that their worship continues, they opened their treasures, verse 11, middle of 11 "and opening their treasures they presented Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Don't miss this, opening "their treasures," they were "their treasures," and they were opening them and they were giving Him their treasures. They presented to Him. This is by faith, this is a baby in probably not a very nice house, and they are by faith worshiping Him.

Now, certainly most commentators believe these gifts might have been used to fund Mary and Joseph's trip to Egypt, that's certainly possible, as they were obedient to the Lord's demands. But I believe also there is certainly symbolism in these gifts. There are different views concerning the symbolism and I'm going to give you my view of what it is. First of all I think the gold represented wealth and power, and it pointed to the fact that He is the King, He is the King, gold. Secondly frankincense was incense used in temple worship, you can look back in Exodus 25 I think it is, it pointed to the deity in the context of worship right? He's the King, He's God. And it's interesting to note as Nick read earlier in Isaiah 60 during Christ's millennial reign, the nations will bring gold and frankincense to Israel, gold and frankincense. Isaiah 60, and I'll read this for you again, verse 6 & 7

⁶ "A multitude of camels will cover you, The young camels of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba will come; They will bring gold and frankincense, And will bear good news of the praises of the LORD. ⁷ "All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you, The rams of Nebaioth will minister to you; They will go up with acceptance on My altar, And I shall glorify My glorious house. [Isaiah 60:6-7]

Near prophecy fulfilled in these magi coming far, we'll see, and Christ reigns as King on Earth.

So what about myrrh? Myrrh was used for beauty treatments. Smyrna was an area where they had myrrh. I didn't share that in our Revelation Bible study, but we'll go back. Makes sense, missed that one. Used in beauty treatments, it was mixed with vinegar for an anesthetic, it was also used to anoint the body and prepare it for burial. John 19:39 declares that Nicodemus brought around 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes, that they used to prepare the body of Jesus after He was crucified.

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He's the King, worthy of worship, the King who would die. The King who would die. He is the only one worthy of worship, and it's interesting that it's the Gentiles who are worshiping here and not the Jews. In God's sovereign plan, through the rejection of His own people would bring about salvation that all the nations would be blessed.

So we have the King of the Jews, Jesus Christ who is God, worthy to be worshiped who would suffer and die for our sins. Remember back in chapter 1:21 "And she will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

In verse 12, back in chapter 2 we have, I believe another response that they were true believers, they obeyed, verse 12,

² And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their own country by another way. [Matthew 2:12]

They were warned by God, and they did what God said.

So then three responses to the birth of Christ the King. Remember in the beginning? Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, (this is the responses to the birth) the Jews were troubled, and agitated, and apathetic, they were unbelieving. They had revelation, they were unbelieving. Herod, a murderous madman who could get away with anything (no consequences on earth at least) saw Christ as opposition, and desired to destroy Him, so that he could continue within his own wicked will. And lastly the magi, with little revelation, who went to great lengths to find and worship Christ. And when they found Him, they joyously worshipped Him in the context of obedience.

Let me ask you today, who are you like? Are you like the Jews, who knew much but yet when confronted with the truth of Christ, you have no desire to worship Him? You are agitated. Are you agitated when you hear the Word of God? Are you troubled and angered when it calls upon you to die to yourself and your own desires? I'll tell you right now, if you are like the Jews you are like Herod too. You hate Christ, because He is in the way of your desires, but Christ is so wonderful, He is so gracious, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, that in the midst of our hatred for God, whether we would identify it or not, Christ died for us, that He bore the penalty of our sins in His body on the cross. And if you confess your sin, if you cry out to Him and repent, if you call upon His name to save you, He will save you. The ones who hated Him, the ones who would kill Him, He died for them, and for you and me. If you would cry out to Him He'll save you.

Or are you like the magi? Seeking and desiring to worship Christ by faith. Maybe some of you are like the magi and you've been truly saved, but your worship has grown cold, it's no longer about Christ, it may be about the things of Christ. Just confess that and come before Him and say "Lord I've failed, it's been about other things rather than you, and I am sorry." Come before Him and give Him your greatest treasure which is yourself, offer yourself as a living sacrifice, acceptable. And how will you know if you've done that? You'll have a desire to obey Him, who are you like today?

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Prayer

Dear Lord thank you for Your Word, thank You that You don't hold things back, that You show the condition of the human heart, that the heart is deceitful, that hearts are hardened and wicked. Yet, You are so gracious, You offer salvation without cost, and salvation has come in Christ. We praise You for Your Son, we praise You for who He is. We thank You for who He is. King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, who took on human flesh, who humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, and now is highly exalted above all. Father I pray for anyone here who doesn't know You, who does not harden their hearts if they hear Your voice. That they would acknowledge their sin, humble themselves before You, "Have mercy, oh God, on me a sinner." And they would accept Your provision of salvation through Christ. And Lord thank You for those here whom You have saved, it is Your work. We praise You, and worship You, and thank You for Christ. May we not forget who we worship and praise. We thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.

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