

## **Bible Readings**

### **Matthew 2:1-23**

#### **The Magi Visit the Messiah**

**2** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

<sup>6</sup> "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel."

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

<sup>9</sup> After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

## **The Escape to Egypt**

<sup>13</sup> When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

<sup>14</sup> So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, <sup>15</sup> where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

<sup>16</sup> When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. <sup>17</sup> Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

<sup>18</sup> "A voice is heard in Ramah,  
weeping and great mourning,  
Rachel weeping for her children  
and refusing to be comforted,  
because they are no more."

## **The Return to Nazareth**

<sup>19</sup> After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt <sup>20</sup> and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

<sup>21</sup> So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, <sup>23</sup> and he went and lived in

a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

## Sermon

### Wise Men Still Seek Him (Matthew 2:1-23)

27-Dec-20

Please have your Bibles open to Matthew 2:1-23

Let me pray before we have a look at this passage.

Let's pray.

## Intro/Context

We pick up the story this morning...

[PowerPoint 1-Magi]



- **Jesus** has been born in **Bethlehem** during time of King Herod - a **Roman client/puppet king**
- And we see in v1-2 that some **Magi** come from a country **east** of Israel and then **follow a star** and they **come to King Herod** looking for a new King who has been born
- We'd better **explain** who the **Magi** are
- They are **wise men and astrologers** - who **study the stars** - and they noticed a **special star** - and they **know** enough about the Bible - to realize this **might be the one God promised** to send as the **Messiah**
- In the OT - Numbers 24:17 says:

I see him, but not now;

I behold him, but not near.

### ***A star will come out of Jacob***

- Traditionally we say there are 3 Magi or 3 wise men
- But the Bible doesn't say there were 3 - we **assume 3** because later on 3 gifts are mentioned
- And sometimes we say they are **3 kings** - coming to see The King of Heaven and Earth - again the Bible doesn't say they are kings - but they are certainly wise and **intelligent men**
- The **Magi ask Herod where this new King is**
- Herod **asks** his **religious men** where the OT says the **Messiah would be born**
- **Herod told the Magi** to go and **search for the child** and then **come back and report** to him, so he can go and worship the child too
- When the Magi find the child - he's not in a **manger** in a **stable**
- Mary and Joseph and Jesus are **now in a house** (v11)
- **The Magi bowed down and worshipped King Jesus**
- And gave him **gifts** of **gold, frankincense** and **myrrh**
- It's a **Magical story** and I'm sure we've all heard the story many times

This morning though I'd like to look at a few things

1<sup>st</sup> - The **provision of God** in this story

2<sup>nd</sup> - The response of the **chief priests and teachers of the law** - the response of **King Herod** - and the response of the **Magi**

Then 3<sup>rd</sup> - **our response**

## God's Provision

As we look at this passage - **God's provision is amazing**

[PowerPoint 2-God's Provision]



- God **provided a star** [mention conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn this week] for the Magi to follow (v2, v7) and the **star stopped at the exact place where Jesus was** (v9-10)
- God **warned the Magi** after they'd seen baby Jesus not to return to King Herod
- God also **provided an angel to warn Joseph** (v13) to take Mary and Jesus to **Egypt** - because King Herod was planning to kill baby Jesus
- God also **provided an angel in Egypt** to tell Joseph Herod had now died and he could return to Israel v20
- **God warned Joseph in a dream v22** - not to return to Bethlehem as Archelaus, Herod's son, was the new ruler - and he was **as bad as his father** - so **Joseph settled in Nazareth** in the North of Israel
- The **gifts the wise men brought** - were **God's provision for Mary and Joseph** - they would need these gifts - the **gold especially** would be **useful as they fled to Egypt**
- **God spoke through His prophets** about these events

- The **place** where **Jesus** was to be born - **Bethlehem** - was foretold in Micah 5:2 - and God said this child to be born would **shepherd His people** - and Jesus grew up to be known as **the Good Shepherd**
- God said His **son** would be **called out of Egypt** in Hosea 11:1
- God said that **Rachel** - Jacob's wife - and considered the mother of Israel - and who was buried in Bethlehem - would **weep over her children of Bethlehem** in **Jeremiah 31:15** - this verse from Jeremiah is referred to when Herod ordered the boys under two to be killed
- All this is **remarkable provision** and a **remarkable fulfilment** of prophecy
- God doesn't leave anything to chance
- There are **no coincidences** with God
- And we can take from this - He will go before us - and He will provide all that we need - not all we want - but all we need
- We can trust He has every little detail of our lives under control
- We don't have to know what the future holds - because we know God holds the future

Next, we'll look at the **responses of the main characters** in the story

## Responses

### The Response of Chief Priests and teachers of the law

First the **response** of the **chief priests and teachers of the law...**

[PowerPoint 3-chief priests]

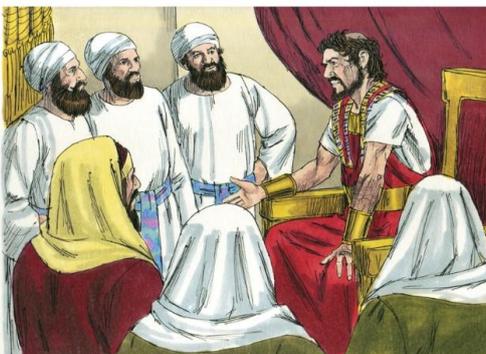


- When King Herod asked his religious men where the Bible said the Messiah would be born
- The chief priests and the teachers of the law had the right information - they knew where the Messiah/Christ would be born - in Bethlehem - v5 - but they didn't do anything with this knowledge
- It was head knowledge - not heart knowledge
- They didn't go looking for King Jesus
- Like many today - they may know of Jesus - but they don't know Him personally

### The Response of King Herod

Then there's King Herod

[PowerPoint 4-Herod]



- He's **jealous** that there is another King - that the Magi have come looking for
- Herod **pretends to want to worship Jesus** - v8 - and tells the Magi that when they find Jesus - they come back and tell him - so Herod can worship Jesus too - **of course he's lying**
- When Herod found out that he'd been outwitted by the Magi - v16 - he was **so angry** - that he **ordered all boys under two** in Bethlehem to be **killed**
- Compare King Herod with King Jesus
- What a contrast we have - Herod is **selfish, proud, arrogant and plain evil**
- Whereas Jesus - is **God with us** - He's **loving, humble - full of goodness**
- What we have here is a **picture** of the spiritual battle of good versus evil - a battle Jesus came to win - He is the light that will overcome the darkness of evil
- Compare the wise men with the unwise Herod - Herod brought no worship - He brought no gifts - just rejection and a **plan to kill Jesus** - there was no room in Herod's life for Jesus
- Like many today - there is **no room for Jesus in their lives**

### The Response of the Magi

Then there's the response of the Magi

#### [PowerPoint 5-Magi]

- We can learn from the Magi
- They were **committed** - they followed the star for a long time - we need to be committed to King Jesus like that

- When their search became difficult - they didn't give up - we shouldn't give up in wanting a relationship with Jesus - and we shouldn't give up on Jesus - when life gets difficult - that's when we should cling to Him even more!
- The Magi had a **desire to worship Jesus** - it wasn't just about bringing gifts - they got down on their knees and worshipped baby Jesus - because they knew they were standing before God with skin on - the King of Heaven and Earth - the creator of everything - the **ONE true God**
- They knew He was the promised Saviour Messiah - and deserved their worship
- The wise men also brought those three gifts to Jesus:
  - **Gold** - a kingly gift - to show Jesus is THE KING
  - **Frankincense** - a priestly gift - reminding us of the incense burnt by the priests when they make a **sacrifice** for sins - and of course reminding us that **Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice for sin**
  - **Myrrh** - used for **anointing** - reminds us Jesus was **anointed** as God's **chosen one** - and **myrrh** is also used for anointing dead bodies - and so it **reminds us that at Jesus' death** - women went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body
- In bringing gifts they were showing their love for Jesus - and showing that their **worship was sacrificial** - to follow Jesus it will cost us something

- **When they saw** that the **star** that had been leading them **stopped** - v10  
- the wise men rejoiced greatly - they were overjoyed - are we overjoyed in knowing King Jesus? We should be?

## Our Response

Which brings us to our response

### [PowerPoint 6-Our response]

- In our **passage** today we see **3 different responses** to Jesus - typical of today
  - **Herod** - shows open **hatred, hostility** and **rejection** of Jesus as King
  - The **chief priests and teachers of the law** - were **indifferent**
  - The **wise men** sought out Jesus and worshipped Him - the Greek for worship here - means **literally falling on your knees at bowing down in reverence and respect**. The wise men **worshipped King Jesus** - even at great cost
- It's not too difficult to see **which response we should make** to King Jesus
- **Wise men and women** will still seek King Jesus today
- What will our worship of King Jesus look like? As we start a **new year** - it's perhaps a good time to reassess our **worship of King Jesus**
  - Will we **invest a greater proportion of our time** in worshipping Jesus and serving Him?
  - Will our worship at church be **more than just Christmas and Easter** - and **more than squeezing worshipping Jesus** into our busy life schedule?
  - Will we **read our Bibles** because we have to or because we want to?

- Will we **pray only when** we want God's **help** - **or** will we **pray** to **praise** Him, **thank** Him and **confess** to Him?
- **What gifts** will we **bring** King Jesus? The **gifts** that the **wise men** **brought** King Jesus - would have **benefited** **Mary and Joseph**. **Are we using our God given gifts** and talents to **help and serve others**? **When we use our gifts to serve others**, we are **actually serving** **Jesus**. As Jesus Himself says in Matt 25:40 - **truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me**
- Remember **our worship of King Jesus** - **may cost us our time** [time is probably our **most precious commodity** these days - are we prepared to give our time for the Lord and His people]
- **Our worship may mean using our talents** [God has given us talents or gifts to use - if we're not using them - do we think that pleases God]?
- **Our worship may involve using our possessions** [remember all we have - **we only have because God blessed us with it** in the first place - **all we have rightly belongs to Him** - **not us** - so we **should share it** with those less fortunate]
- **Why** would we want to **worship** King **Jesus** **anyway**?
- Well - **if someone saved you from drowning** in a rip at the beach - you'd **never forget that would you?**
- **Jesus saved us** from **drowning in our sin** - He **gave** us a **life buoy** - that **life buoy** was **His death** on the **cross** - **He died instead of us** - so we could live

- We should never forget that - and we should want to worship Jesus all the time
- Jesus should be the forefront of our mind - All the time! - not just an afterthought
- The Apostle Paul describes worship like this in Romans 12:1

[PowerPoint 7-Rom 12:1]

Finish with Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy [explain], to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.

Let's pray...