

**Refuge City Church — December 24, 2023**  
**Christmas Series: “Above Every Name” (Matthew 2:1-12)**

**Introduction**

- *Last week*: we looked at the divine, miraculous birth of Jesus; proving his deity as God in the flesh.
- *Today*: we carry on with the birth story, as we see various reactions to the birth of the King.

**“Wise men seek Him” [verses 1-2]**

“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 saw *his star* when it rose and have come to worship him.”

- Wise Men [Magi] = sorcerers; magician; astrologers.
  - Very possible they came from Babylon; very important in Babylonian culture and politics.
    - Although a monotheistic sect of men, they did not hold belief in the one true God.
    - Many of these wise men failed to assist King Nebuchadnezzar to interpret his dreams, yet God-fearing Daniel did [Daniel 2:48, “...[Daniel] chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.”; 600 years prior to the birth of Christ]
  - So why are they referred to as ‘kings’, as the song suggests?
    - Psalm 68:29, “...kings shall bear gifts to you.”
    - Isaiah 60:3, 6, “And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising... They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the Lord.”
  - [verse 2] “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?”
    - These wise men, interested in the stars, dreams, and the future could have taken direct interest in all they learned from the biblical influence that may have spread through Babylon [being wealthy, they could have obtained a copy of the written scriptures].
    - As all of scripture speaks to Jesus, they could have set course to find the one who would be king.
      - Genesis 49:10, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him...”
      - Numbers 24:17, “...a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel...”
- The star
  - Was it a literal star? Some say it was Jupiter, or the celestial combination of Jupiter and Saturn. Was it a comet?
  - Could it have been God’s guiding light; similar to how He led the Israelites through the wilderness. [pillars of cloud and fire]
  - Regardless of speculation, these men were guided by a star and came to *worship* the newly born king of the Jews!

### **“Fools despise Him” [verses 3-6]**

“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the *Christ* was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ‘And you, O *Bethlehem*, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a *ruler* who will *shepherd* my people Israel.’” [Micah 5:2]

- The star led them to Judah, but not directly to Jesus.
  - King Herod becomes troubled. He wasn’t the rightful king of the Jews, but rather an outsider appointed to the position/title by Rome.
  - Herod was a skeptical and cruel ruler, needing to hold his position by force. So this caused all of Jerusalem to become troubled as well.
  - Herod calls the religious elite and keepers of the Jewish law and custom together to advise the wise men of the possible whereabouts of the king.
  - These gentile wise men had more faith than those who had constant access to the word and it’s prophecies.
    - **QUOTE:** “The magi were seeking the King; Herod was opposing the King; and the Jewish priests were ignoring the King. These priests knew the scriptures and pointed others to the Savior, but they would not go to worship Him themselves! They quoted scripture, but did not obey it. They were five miles from the very Son of God, yet they did not go to see Him!” [Warren Wiersbe]
- **Verses 7-8:** “Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”
  - Herod devises a way to get the information he needs to protect his power.
    - **Matthew 2:16,** “Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.”

### **“Followers worship Him” [verses 9-12]**

“After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the *star* that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.”

- After receiving word from the chief priests and scribes. The wise men set out to Bethlehem.
  - **Verse 10:** When they saw the star again, they “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.” [Reminder: the angel’s declaration to the shepherds]
    - **Luke 2:10,** “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”
    - The same joy that is to be expressed by us who have found, received, and experience Jesus as Lord; this is the very reason why the Christmas story should never, ever grow ‘old’ to us!

- They entered the house and fell down and worshipped Jesus, offering him gifts.
  - **Gold** = a gift fit for a king; most likely helped finance their impending trip to Egypt and back.
  - **Frankincense** = a fragrant offering; incense stored and used in temple worship and sacrifice; some distinguish it as a gift for deity or priesthood.
  - **Myrrh** = Another perfume. Used for various reasons, but two that point to the death and burial of Jesus [anesthetic for pain, and used for burial purposes]; a gift fit for sacrifice.
  - **QUOTE:** “Right worship is always, and must be, the only basis for right giving, and right learning and right service. Giving that is generous but done apart from a loving relationship with God is empty giving. Learning that is orthodox and biblical but is learned apart from knowing and depending on the Source of truth, is empty knowledge...Service that is demanding and sacrificial but done in the power of the flesh or for the praise of men is empty service.” [John MacArthur]
    - **1 Chronicles 16:29**, “Give to the Lord the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come into his presence. Worship the Lord in all his holy splendor.”
    - **John 4:24**, “For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”
- What do we learn about worship from the wise men?
  - They learned of the coming king through the spoken and written word.
  - They asked questions to learn more and how to find the king.
  - On that word, and by faith, they sought Him out.
  - When they saw Him, they may have worshipped Him with words, but it was out of the abundance of praise they worshipped Him by giving.
- Our life, our purpose should be charged by a desire to know Jesus, seek Jesus, and abundantly give to Jesus. [Matthew 6:21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”]

## **Review**

- **Week 1:** Jesus’ rightful claim to the throne was proven through his lineage/genealogy.
  - He is the King of kings.
- **Week 2:** Jesus’ divine & miraculous incarnation proves He is God in human flesh.
  - He is Immanuel, God with us.
- **Today:** The varied response to His presence indicates the reality of who He is by His name; as indicated by this story alone.
  - *Jesus* = Yahweh is salvation
  - *King/ruler* = by political right, yet as sovereign ruler over all things.
    - This caused “King” Herod to fear Jesus and seek to have him destroyed.
    - For some, the name of Jesus brings hostility and hatred, because He will most effectually humble you in whatever position you think you hold.
  - *Star* = He’s the light of the world [John 8:12] & bright morning star [Revelation 22:16]
  - *Christ* = the anointed one; promised Messiah

- The reality of who Jesus is caused those who 'knew' the scriptures to ignore that they were seeing the fulfillment of prophecy.
- Many today ignore the fact of who Jesus is. They know that He will shed light on their sin, and choose to remain ignorant in their darkness.
- *Bethlehem* [house of bread] = He is the bread of life [John 6:48]
- *Shepherd* = He is the good shepherd [John 10:11]; He leads, guides, corrects, protects, and provides.
  - For others, in this case, the lowly shepherds and wise men [both outsiders], accepted Jesus for who He is... a King fit to be worshiped!
  - It's human nature to be led. We need leadership in our life. Get to know the voice of your Shepherd.

## ***Conclusion***

- Are you seeking Him? Are you following His light?
  - **Titus 2:11-14**, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."
  - God's perfect timing and guidance will always lead to salvation for those who seek Him.
    - **Jeremiah 29:13**, "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart."
- Are we ignoring the voices of discouragement & dissuasion, and doing what He calls us to do... Worship Him unashamed and give to Him wholeheartedly!
  - **Daniel 12:3**, "And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."
  - The wise men disappear from history, yet their significance to the birth of Jesus cannot be understated.
  - You never know the affect you may have in someone's life when you worship & live for Jesus, the name that is above every name!