

Matthew 2:1-12 - Welcome the King with Joyful Worship

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[0 : 00] Our reading is from Matthew chapter 2 verse 1 to 12. That's on page 9666.

! After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the East came to Jerusalem 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.

When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him. 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.

In Bethlehem in Judea, they replied, for this is what the prophet has written. But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, are by no means least among the rulers of Judea.

For out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. When Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared, 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.

[1 : 38] 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.

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him.

Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Amen. Good morning, everyone. For those of you that don't know me, I'm Ray. I have the honour of sharing the Lord's word with you today.

Will you join me in a prayer as we look at the word together? Father, thank you for the wonderful, true story of Christ coming to this world.

[2 : 47] To be born as a baby, to live as a man and to die as a saviour for us. Open our eyes this morning, open our hearts, Lord, that we may hear your word and we may respond in the right way.

In Jesus' name, amen. Well, last week we looked, if you were here, we looked at Matthew chapter one, verses 18 to 22.

And we saw that central to the passage was that the birth of Jesus. Jesus was a fulfilment of what God had promised through the prophets years before. We again see that this week in chapter two, the verses one to 11 that Lucia read to us.

But the surprises in this week's passages are the responses of those who witnessed his birth. So we'll work through this together.

OK, right now I've got the hand of the clicker, hopefully, hopefully be OK. So the story as you as it was read to us by Lucia, if we follow it, it's something like a dramatic film script.

[4 : 05] Now, if you've been watching the TV over Christmas, it's kind of one of those unnecessary, unfortunate, necessary things, isn't it? You see the films Home Alone 2 was on yesterday.

Home Alone was on yesterday. And whether you like it or not, you've got to admit it is pure fiction. All right. It's beyond the realms of possibility. This is like a dramatic film script, but it is truth.

It is gospel truth. That's a wonderful thing we're looking at today. A child is born to an obscure poor family in a small rural village in Judea in humble circumstances.

But this child produced extreme reactions from the influential and from the wealthy. A king in nearby Jerusalem wanted to kill him.

And a strange nobility from another country fell down and worshipped him. If we really understand this morning who Jesus is, it should produce a profound reaction in us as well.

[5 : 16] It doesn't matter who we are, what age, what background or education, ethnicity, religion or any other label or way you like to see yourself.

Whoever we are, when we come face to face with the claims of Jesus, there must be, there will be a response.

Nobody can hear the gospel story and stay neutral. Verse one sets out the scene for us and we're introduced to the three main characters of the story.

We have here, well, let's read the verse. After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the East came to Jerusalem.

So here we have the three main characters, Jesus, Herod and the Magi. The passage presents them each with a defining characteristic.

[6 : 21] I think this is true and not something I've made up, but this is how I see it, okay? The promised child, a troubled king and wise visitors.

So we're going to look at those in turn now quickly. The promised child. Who was this child? We saw in last week in chapter one, verse 21, that his name is Jesus.

But in the passage we're looking at today, we're told his name in terms of what he would do more of a title. The wise men called him King of the Jews.

Verse two, Herod called him the Messiah. Strangely in verse four, the chief priests and scribes quote the prophet Micah, who called him a ruler who would be a shepherd.

In verse six. So Jesus is King, Messiah and ruler promised years before by the prophet sent by God, the father for his people.

[7 : 28] Just want to look very, very briefly with you now at what these titles mean. Very briefly. The promised king. He was God's king to lead his people.

To govern them with justice, but also mercy. The promised Messiah. He was the Christ, the one anointed by God, anointed for a purpose.

Again, chapter one, verse 21, to save his people from their sins. He was also the promised ruler. He was a ruler who strangely we hear from this passage was to be a shepherd.

Putting all this together. He was no ordinary child, but God's chosen king sent to rule his people. Promise to God's people for centuries before in the scriptures.

So why a shepherd. Why a shepherd. Why a shepherd. Prophecy that the religious leaders are paraphrasing. is found in Micah chapter 5 verses 2 to 5 which describes not only where he would be born but what he would do and this is where the shepherd comes in in what he would do how he would do it not sure if you can see that on the screen but it's the words of Micah chapter 5 verses 2 to 5 and I'll read those to you but you Bethlehem Ephrathah though you are small among the clans of Judah out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel whose origins are from of old from ancient times verse 3 then tells us that there's a woman who will bear a son and the Israelites that were away from the other body of Israelites would come together verse 4 says he will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God and they will live securely for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth so where does this ruler shepherd come from we're told to be born in Bethlehem but Micah tells us more in verse 2 he says out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over

[9 : 57]

Israel now this is it whose origins are from old from ancient times so we're told that this baby was from ancient times in other words he existed long before his birth John chapter 1 tells us that he was in the beginning what with God you may recall that verse and with God he co-created the universe so Bethlehem was not the start of Jesus's life so what would he do he will rule his over his people and how would he do it he would do it as a shepherd verse 4 Micah says he will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord so his mission was from the Lord and he would stand in the strength of the Lord displaying the majesty of his father and his rule his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth this was a promise made to God's people of Judah about 700 years before Jesus was born which we continue to see unfold now today 2025 as people from every nation across this globe now accept the rule of Jesus the king with that mission and that power God promised God's promised ruler would stand and shepherd his flock so the important question for us this morning is how should we respond to that shepherd ruler we're going to see how the two groups Herod and the wise men responded first of all Herod now he's a troubled king who was he historians call him Herod the Great he was installed by the Roman senate as king of Judea or king of the Jews he was known as a ruthless man who even had his wife and his three sons executed he thought his wife was trying to poison him so he got rid of her before he thought she could get rid of him at this point I've got to say this is the guy we are not to follow all right this is not the example we are supposed to follow he was also a Jew and he would have been familiar with some of the prophecies and the expectation of the coming Messiah so we're now going to take up the story again in verse 2 if you're reading in your bibles it's page 966 or hopefully I thought it was going to be here on the screen so if you've not got your bibles you'll just have to listen along here there it is sorry where is the one who has been born king of the Jews we saw his star when it came when it rose and have come to worship him when king Herod heard this he was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him when he called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law he asked them where the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem in Judea they replied but this is what the prophet has written 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 then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared 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 why was Herod disturbed and that word disturbed can mean agitated or troubled the reason is because in verse 2 the visitors the Magi were looking for another king of the Jews not that one day this king would rise to power and perhaps become a king but this king was born a king Herod was installed as a king by the Roman Senate Jesus was born as king by divine order a completely different order of king this is why he was worried so he calls the wise men secretly he plays them along and he pretends he wants to worship the child as well later chapter 2 verse 16 we see his real ambition he hatches a plan to get rid of the child but in so doing he would wipe out all the boys in Bethlehem aged 2 and under

Herod knew the scriptures he knew who the child was but he determined to get rid of him he would not tolerate what he saw as a rival to his throne but in so doing he rejected God's king and God's rule let me take you back to Genesis chapter 3 Herod's reaction though very extreme has been the story of mankind since Genesis chapter 3 Adam thought he knew best he disobeyed the one God had given the one rule God had given him and we still do that today look frankly we may not be as bold as Herod but we often still want to be king or queen we still want to make the rules we do not want to live subject to God or under his rule

I wonder whether you can relate to some of this we don't want to kill the king but we may behave as if he wasn't there and therefore if he's not there we needn't be subject to him we may be troubled or agitated when we hear of the exclusivity of the rule of King Jesus that there can't be any rivals to him such as friends such as even family there can't be rivals in the things we have as a priority maybe work or studies everything must be subject to him if Jesus is king he's king over all but those of us that have come under that rule of Jesus those of us who have submitted to him we do know him to be a shepherd one who cares for his sheep he leads his sheep he feeds his sheep he protects and provides for them so that's Herod he wanted to get rid of Jesus the last group in the story who also knew who Jesus was but their response was completely opposite the Magi

I call them the wise visitors and I read to you those I have that yeah I read to you that text if you may be able to follow it on the screen or if not in your Bible starting at verse 9 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 when they saw the star they were overjoyed on coming to the house they saw the child with his mother Mary and they bowed down and worshipped him then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold frankincense and myrrh and having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod they returned to their country by another route so who were these visitors they're called Magi in the text here their precise meaning of that word is a little nuanced it can mean several things but verse 2 shows us that they were probably people who studied the stars some kind of astronomy and they also studied the ancient scriptures including of course the Old Testament prophecies we pick that up from verse 2 they followed the star and sought the child born king of the Jews we're told they were from the east we're not told exactly where in the east and that doesn't really matter but the point is they were strangers they weren't Jews they were foreigners from another country they were rich highly educated and respected by those in their region we sometimes think of them as being three guys with crowns on camels in fact I might have got a picture of that somewhere

[19:38] I've got a picture of that no that was the one before there they are three guys on camels going across the desert but it wasn't quite like that these were rich guys who were very influential they would have had servants with them they would have had camels behind them carrying the various things they needed for the journey it was a big retinue and they would have made quite a big impact as they came to Jerusalem and although not part of God's people they recognised Jesus as one greater than themselves their response was completely opposite to Herod's they couldn't wait to see the king I don't know whether you've ever asked yourself as you've read this account but why does Matthew include them in the gospel account they're strangers you know in some senses they shouldn't have been there or maybe a better question is why does God include them in the events of the saviour's birth and I think it's precisely because they were outsiders it's because the gospel is not just for the Jews

Jesus wasn't just king of the Jews the gospel is for all people whoever we are whatever nationality background rich poor secular religious whoever we are we all need a saviour so it's for us all of us and it's for you so when they see the star again in verse 10 it directs them to the house where Jesus was and we read in the NIV that they were overjoyed now if you have an English standard version it puts it a bit more flowery and I like this it says this they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy all right that's pretty overjoyed isn't it that's pretty good that's pretty accurate to how how they responded when they went into the house they prostrated themselves so they fell flat on the floor and worshipped before Jesus now this is the right response to the king of kings this is the right response to the king at Christmas and always joyful worship falling on our faces in wonder and submission that God's ruler come to earth in humility as a helpless baby how much did they understand about Jesus how much did they understand about the king we don't know exactly but the gifts they bought were not only very costly but they also were loaded with prophetic meaning they bought gold a suitable gift for a king so they were saying by presenting this king this gift he is a king they bought frankincense which is an incense used by priests in worship in worship of God so by giving him this gift they were saying he is God myrrh is a gum resin which was used in embalming dead bodies so they were saying by presenting this gift that he was born to die did they know it was so that he would save his people from their sins we don't know but their limited knowledge of the king was enough to produce awe wonder and joyful worship how much more with our knowledge of Jesus through the gospels through the cross through the resurrection through the ascension how much more should we fall prostrate before him in humble in humble but joyful worship i'd like to show you a little picture to illustrate this this is emerald pool in dominica it's probably my favourite place on the planet you can probably appreciate some of its beauty just by this picture but look if i was to tell you how you get to it you'd be surprised you get to it by leaving the hot caribbean sun trekking down through the cool rainforest and you're surrounded by towering trees and beautiful fauna you can hear birdsong and as you get closer to the waterfall you can hear the increased sound building up of this waterfall and then it comes into sight and this is what you see so i think maybe now you appreciate even more than just the picture you have a little more knowledge but let me tell you this the only way

you can fully appreciate it is to go there if you ever get the opportunity i recommend it you get the full experience you don't just hear you don't just see but you are you are there to experience it so we can have some knowledge of the poor or a fuller knowledge but experience brings more wonder and in a similar way the wise men had knowledge of who jesus was but we have a fuller knowledge through the new testament we know more of who he is what he came to earth to do his ascension and his rule in heaven now but beyond head knowledge if we've experienced jesus forgiving us and bringing us into god's family being our kind shepherd we of all people should fall to our knees in joyful worship so let me just draw this to a conclusion we've seen that the arrival of god's promised king provoked heart responses of aggression from herod and adoration from the wise men we're left with some questions perhaps some personal questions what is our heart response to jesus god's king messiah and savior have you experienced this forgiveness this reconciliation to god the purpose for the king coming have you experienced that yourself he came for you and you can receive that forgiveness and that new life even today lastly we should all be moved in joyful worship my question is are we moved in joyful worship as we look at jesus today let me pray father we christmas time we're faced with so much myth and so much things that aren't true but are exciting in various ways but lord when we dig deep into the real christmas story we see the king of the universe being born as a baby born to die as a messiah who gives his life for his people father help us today and going forward to have the right reaction to the king of the jews the king of the universe jesus amen as

Thank you.