**KING OF THE JEWS**

Matthew 2:1-12

Key verse 2

“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.””

**Introduction**



Two thousand years ago wise men made a journey. It was with one purpose in mind, to worship Jesus, a baby in a manger. When they worshipped him they became overjoyed. May we learn something of their hunger and thirst for the truth, their heart for God and what it means to worship. May God teach us the secret joy that comes from worshipping Jesus this Christmas! Amen!

1. Read verses 1-4. When and why did the Magi come? (1-2) Why were king Herod and the people of Jerusalem disturbed? (3) What then did Herod do? (4)

1-1, Read verses 1-4.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 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.”

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 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.

1-2, When and why did the Magi come? (1-2)

***After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 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.”***

* Jesus was born in Bethlehem. As God almighty he gave up his glory in heaven to live among us, to suffer with us, love us, bear with us and finally die for us. But most people took no notice at all and were too busy with their own concerns.
* This happened during the time of King Herod which was not an easy time to live. He goes down in history as one of the most horrific rulers. He was not Jewish but Idumean, a puppet of the Romans who had found favor with Caesar Augustus and made king in 37 BC. He ruled with terror until 4AD.
* In order to hold onto power he murdered his wife, his three sons, his brother-in-law and uncle as well as thinking nothing of massacring all the boys under the age of two in Bethlehem.
* People must have suffered in fear under the reign of King Herod. It was into his palace that the Magi, these mysterious men, came looking for the one born King of the Jews.

* Magi were wise men, probably from ancient Iran or Iraq who spent their lives seeking the meaning of life and the destiny of man. As astrologers they would have been fascinated and amazed by the strange star that had appeared to them, signifying the birth of a great king.
* Yet it is one thing to see an amazing star in the sky. It is quite another to travel a thousand miles to worship a baby. What made them leave their families, their people, their comfortable and privileged lives to make this long and dangerous journey across the Arabian desert?
* We learn their spiritual desire for the truth which eventually led them to Jesus. As young men and beginner Magi, they probably were very confident they could solve the world’s problems if only they studied hard enough.
* But as the years passed, they became wiser. They would have found that there was a limit to what they could do, especially when it came to human suffering, pain and sorrow, and in bringing people true freedom and eternal life.
* We know that since Israel’s exile into Babylon, around the 6th century BC, Scripture from the Old Testament would have been available to the Magi. The Bible tells us that no amount of wisdom can solve the fundamental problem of mankind which is simply called sin.
* Sin means a broken relationship with God. Sin is at the root of man’s selfishness, hatred, fear, and spiritual blindness.The consequence of sin is death and eternal punishment. Sin and death make human life meaningless; everything we live for and work for, everything we hope for comes to an end with death. Human life is meaningless because everything we work for during our lifetime, no matter how noble, ends with death.
* The Magi, in order to help their people and overcome their own fatalism had to find an answer to the problem of sin. They would have been well aware of the idea which Jewish exiles had spread across the east: that a Savior of the world would come as the King of the Jews and the sign of his appearing would be a star.

Numbers 24:17 says,

“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the sons of Sheth.”

* This is one of the many verses that prophesy that God would send Jesus. The Christ is described as a star that would in the future come out of Israel, and that he would crush the power of evil and darkness.
* This must have given the Magi great hope! The star had now arrived and moved them to seek out this great and mysterious king. They must have been so excited.
* But they were not satisfied with the mere knowledge of Jesus. Instead, with the knowledge they had, they acted in faith. There tends to be two kinds of people; those who just like seeking knowledge without making any commitment and those who put what they know into practice and live it out.
* God called the Magi through this star and they moved. Despite their age and the uncertainty of what they would find, they were still up for the adventure. They set out on a pilgrimage that would change their lives forever.
* Significantly, they say “King of the Jews.” It is a strange thing for a baby to be born a king. Usually they are princes for a while before they succeed the position as king.

1-3, Why were king Herod and the people of Jerusalem disturbed? (3)

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

* The wise men came first to Jerusalem, assuming that the leaders of the Jews would be aware and excited about the birth of their Messiah. The wise men are about to find that this wasn't the case at all.
* When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed due to his paranoid character. All Jerusalem with him was in the same boat.
* We can understand why Herod might be disturbed. It was because he realized that there was a genuine Jewish King as prophesied in the Scriptures.
* But why were all Jerusalem disturbed with him? It is because when Jesus comes into our lives, we have to decide whether to accept or reject him.
* John’s gospel describes the human condition in this way: “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light.”

1-4, What then did Herod do? (4)

***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.***

* He had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.
* This was the first contact the religious leaders had with Jesus. They understood the Biblical information correctly, but failed to apply it to their lives.
* Chief priests would especially include those who once held the office of High Priest; Herod changed the High Priest often because it was largely a political appointment.
* The 'teachers of the law were experts in the Old Testament and in its oral tradition.

2. Read verses 5-10. What does this prophecy tell us about Jesus? (5-6) What else did Herod try to do? (7-8) Why were the Magi overjoyed when they saw the star? (9-10)

2-1, Read verses 5-10.

“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

6 “‘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.’[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+2#fen-NIV-23176b)]”

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.8 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.”

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. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

2-2, What does this prophecy tell us about Jesus? (5-6)

***5 “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:***

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* Quoting [Micah 5:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/micah/5/2/s_898002), the chief priests and scribes understood that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea, distinguishing it from another town of the same name further north.
* From this passage in Micah, they understood not only that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but also that He would be a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.
* Sadly, these experts had the right information but seem personally uninterested in meeting the Messiah for themselves.
* The Magi put the chief priests to shame, for while they knew about the Messiah and even the precise place he was to be born, they failed to seek him as the Magi did.
* Bethlehem is only 5 miles outside Jerusalem. The religious leaders did not even try to walk outside of town to see if Jesus was there.
* When Herod heard the description of Jesus he must have been challenged. Herod had maintained control of his people through intimidation and force.
* Yet Jesus would be a very different kind of king. He would rule the people with a shepherd’s love. Rather than forcing people to follow him he would love them and teach them the word of God. He would lead His people into all truth.
* Finally he would give up his life on the cross praying for each one of us, “Father forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing.” From this we learn Jesus didn’t come as a political ruler but he came to rule our hearts.
* Who rules our hearts really affects our whole life. When Herod ruled the people they were full of fear, anxiety and oppression.
* When we look at Herod, he was ruled by paranoia, hatred and a hunger for for power. Who was ruling him? The Bible tells us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the devil.
* Behind our fear, laziness, temper, behind our depression, anxiety, and deep sense of meaninglessness is the devil, wanting to rule our hearts by the power of sin and death.
* Satan wants to distract us. Satan wants us to waste our lives on meaningless pursuits. Satan wants to leave us far short of God’s vision and hope of who we could be.
* Yet when we come to Jesus and simply repent and ask him to rule us, he gives us his peace and leads us into a meaningful life to live for his Glory.

2-3, What else did Herod try to do? (7-8)

***7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.8 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.”***

* Herod was very shrewd and made his own evil scheme to kill Jesus.
* He was used by the devil to try to eliminate Jesus as early as possible. But his plan failed. Inevitably Satan’s works surely comes whenever a great work of God happens!

2-4, Why were the Magi overjoyed when they saw the star? (9-10)

***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. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.***

* They must have felt like leaving that spiritually dark place, Herod’s palace, and again set foot on the trail to find Jesus. The star was quite distinct in the way that it led and pointed to the very spot where Jesus was.
* When the wise men saw this star, they were overjoyed. The KJV emphasizes their joy saying, “They rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.
* People look for joy in relationships, in success and achievement at work, in holidays, in cinema and in redbox, in getting a nice Christmas gift. These things may bring short-term happiness, but it doesn’t last.
* We get thirsty again and if we are honest, joy from the world never really satisfies us as we want. Christmas time very often is a time where people are desperately seeking joy, in shopping, presents, in food, TV and often it ends in stress instead of joy.
* But the wise men here reveal the secret of true joy; true joy comes as a result of finding Jesus. Rather than seeking joy we need to see and find Jesus. Then we’ll have true joy! May God help us this Christmas to find Jesus and rejoice with exceedingly great joy!

3. Read verse 11-12. How did the Magi worship Jesus? (11) What can we learn from them? How did God help the Magi and protect them from Herod’s scheme? (12)

3-1, Read verse 11-12.

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. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

3-2, How did the Magi worship Jesus? (11)

***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.***

* Old and wise men, who had lived their lives in search of truth, who had journeyed hundreds of miles over many months, now came to bow before the child Jesus. 
* In the orient, old men don’t usually bow before babies. Usually it should be children who should honor old men. But in this case it was not just a matter of merely showing respect. These men were worshipping the child Jesus.
* According to the dictionary it means to honor as God with adoration and devotion. If we worship something it means we give first place in our heart to that thing. Our priority, love, and commitment are there with what we worship.
* The act of worship is unique to man. In every culture that has ever existed, people have worshipped something; it is what distinguishes us from animals.
* The Bible tells us that we worship because we are made in the image of God. It was how God created us. In that sense man cannot help but worship something.
* Who or what we worship is very important. It determines our whole life, how we spend our time and who we eventually become.
* Herod worshipped power and he became a dictator. Likewise if we worship money or fame we become materialistic and vain. If we worship nothing we end up investing our lives and wasting our lives on nothing meaningful.
* God wants us to worship him. It is why he made us, to know him as God and have a loving relationship with him, to give him our hearts. When we worship Jesus we can grow into his image, revealing God’s love and truth to others. There is such beauty in these Magi bowing down and giving their hearts to God.
* The Magi not only bowed before the Son of God but also they gave him gifts. They had prepared and carried them all the way from their country. These gifts were rather strange to give to a child.
* Each of the Magi’s gifts has symbolic value. Gold is for a king, incense is for a priest and myrrh is what people embalm a dead body with to keep it from decaying.
* It’s very strange to give a baby myrrh! It’s almost like giving a child a coffin. Yet these gifts reveal that the Magi really understood why Jesus had come. He had come as our King to rule our hearts. He had come as a priest to pray for our forgiveness. And He came as a ransom sacrifice to die, as the sacrifice for our sins.
* We learn from the Magi that they did not worship Jesus on their terms; rather they had studied the Bible deeply and worshipped him as God wanted.

3-3, What can we learn from them? How did God help the Magi and protect them from Herod’s scheme? (12)

***And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.***

* We see that having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.
* The Magi simply went back; they did not receive a receipt for their gifts. They did not need words of appreciation from Joseph or Mary for their great effort.
* They had nothing in their hands, but they had great joy in their hearts.

**Conclusion**

Like the wise men in this passage, let’s follow their footsteps in humbly bowing down and worshipping Jesus. We can learn from them. They were not satisfied with merely head knowledge about the Star. They did not merely see the star and admire it from afar. Instead, when they saw the star, they did something about it. They set out and followed it all the way through. They persevered in their tedious search and in following after the Star. They were not discouraged in the search. They rejoiced at the Star. They worshipped Him rather than waiting to see. They gave something instead of just their empty handed adoration. May God help us to worship Jesus with all our hearts and receive his exceedingly great joy! Merry Christmas! **One word: King of the Jews!**