



# **MATTHEW**

The Savior-King and His Kingdom

## **Wise Men seek the King**

**Matthew 2:1-23**

Message #3 of 80 – S1033

**Sermon given on January 29, 2023**



Sunday Morning Service

**Pastor Rick Lancaster**

# Wise Men seek the King

## *Matthew 2:1-23*

### Opening Comments

- Today, we continue a series through the gospel of Matthew – **The King and His Kingdom**
- For Christmas this year we did a series – the Songs of Christmas.
- We looked at some of the most popular Christmas carols and talked about what they taught us about the birth of Christ.
- In today's text we are going to debunk a popular Christmas song.
- We are also going to look at the response of different groups of people to the birth of the newborn Savior-King.
- We should all be able to find ourselves in one of the three responses.
- One of the three is the right response.
- We are going to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to each of us which response is true for us - **Pray**

### Teaching

- **Wise Men seek the King**
- Chapter one included Jesus' genealogy proving that He had a right to sit on David's throne as King – one of the signs of the Messiah.
- It also included an account of Jesus' birth from the perspective of Joseph, the husband of Mary.
- Some time passes between chapters one and two – maybe as much as two years.
- **Matthew 2:1-2**
- Herod was a half-Jew who had been appointed by the Romans to rule.
- Herod was a terrible person.
- Among his many atrocities, he executed his wife, mother-in-law, and three sons.
- Caesar Augustus once said it was safer to be one of Herod's pigs than to be one of his sons.
- As bad as all that is, what he does in this text is the worst.
- Herod is visited by wise men from the East.

- A popular Christmas song is written about these wise men – ‘We three kings’.
- There are a couple of problems with that song.
- First, nowhere are we told how many of them there were.
- The number three comes from the number of gifts they present to Jesus.
- Also, they are not kings.
- ‘wise men’ = ‘magoi’ – magi – we get magician
- They were into astrology and studied all kinds of ancient writings.
- They interpreted the movements of heavenly bodies as having meaning.
- A spectacular phenomenon would be interpreted as God signaling some great event or person.
- The wise men are responding to just such a spectacular phenomenon.
- A ‘star’ appeared.
- It is believed that these wise men are from Babylon or Persia.
- May have had access to the Scriptures the Jews took with them into the exile to Babylon **Numbers 24:17**  
**I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel...**
- Regardless, what it was, something led them to believe that an exceedingly important event had taken place in Israel.
- So important was this event that they packed up their camels and travelled hundreds of miles to check it out.
- They weren’t coming to check it out – post it on Twitter – they came to worship this newborn King.
- Well, that presented a problem to some.
- **Matthew 2:3-4**
- Herod was a jealous and petty tyrant.
- He violently put down any threats to his rule.
- We might understand his response.
- But the chief priests and scribes is a different matter.
- The wise men come and say they are there to worship the King of the Jews. Same as saying, we have come to worship your Messiah.
- Why did that trouble them?

- Herod was bothered by anything that would threaten his rule.
  - The chief priests and scribes were bothered by anything that might threaten their influence over the people.
  - Herod needs more information.
  - **Matthew 2:5-6**
  - At the start of the message, I mentioned three responses to Jesus.
  - The first response to Jesus is **Indifference**
  - The wise men come and ask where the Jewish Messiah was – they wanted to worship Him.
  - The chief priests knew where the Messiah would be born – in the same city King David was born – Bethlehem.
  - This was my attitude regarding Christ before I was saved.
  - Kelly tried hard to convince that I needed Jesus and that the Bible was true, but I just didn't care.
  - The difference between my indifference and that of the chief priests and scribes is that they said they cared about God and His Scriptures.
  - My indifference was sinful, but it was based mostly in willful ignorance.
  - Their indifference is exceedingly wicked because they knew the truth and refused to believe it.
  - The wise men showing up would have caused quite a stir.
  - They come claiming to be looking for the newborn Messiah.
  - It does not appear that even one of them travelled the five miles to Bethlehem to find out if it was true. **John 1:11**
- He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.**
- The church today is not much better than the people of Jerusalem.
  - It doesn't surprise us at all that the unbelievers in this world are indifferent to Jesus.
  - What is shocking is how much of the church is indifferent to Christ.
  - Churches who put social issues above holiness and discipleship.
  - Churches who are not faithful to teach God's Word to God's people.
  - And it is not just churches.
  - Believers show their indifference when they don't pray regularly, don't read their Bibles, or don't make church attendance a priority.

- What will they say for themselves when they stand before Jesus and see the wounds in His hands, feet, and side, and He asks them, ‘Why didn’t you care about Me?’
- We prove we care by what we do.  
Herod shows us the next type of response.
- **Matthew 2:7-8**
- The second response to Christ is **hostility**.
- Herod knew, at some level, that what the wise men were saying could be true.
- That was a threat to him and his place in the world.
- People in our culture today are hostile toward Jesus and Christianity because it is a threat to their way of viewing the world and their way of living in the world.
- If it wasn’t a threat, they could just ignore it.
- We will see how Herod’s hostility manifests later in the text.
- **Matthew 2:9-12**
- The wise men follow the star to where Jesus and his family are staying.
- Upon seeing the Child, they bow down and worship.
- The third response to Christ is **worship**.
- This could be one of the greatest expressions of faith in the Bible.
- ‘fell down and worshipped Him’ – This is an act of great humility to a Child they find in a humble home to humble parents.
- These wise men are wealthy, influential men.
- They had traveled a great distance (probably Babylon) at great expense and danger.
- Herod, the chief priests, scribes, and people of Jerusalem were just five miles away and couldn’t be bothered.
- The wise men are Gentiles coming to worship the King of the Jews.
- This reminds us of what the angel said to the shepherds on the night of Jesus’ birth **Luke 2:10-11**.  
Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. <sup>11</sup> For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
- The gifts are symbolic.

- Gold – a gift for a king. Jesus is King of kings.
  - Frankincense – a sweet perfume used in temple sacrifice. A gift for a priest. Jesus is our great High Priest.
  - Myrrh – used for making ointments for preparing bodies for burial.
  - Even at the birth of Christ, His sacrificial death is in view.
  - God knew what Herod would do if the wise men told him where to find Jesus – sent them home a different way.
  - Mary’s husband Joseph is brought back into the account.
  - **Matthew 2:13-15**
  - There were colonies of Jews in Egypt where Joseph and Mary could have found associations among their own people.
  - Joseph and Mary were not wealthy. God provided for their trip and stay in Egypt with the gifts from the wise men.
  - ‘stay there until I bring you word’ – That is a word of wisdom for us all. Stay where God told you to go until He tells you to go somewhere else.
  - At some point Herod figures out that the wise men aren’t coming back.
  - **Matthew 2:16-18**
  - Herod’s hostility turns into rage and utter brutality.
  - Bethlehem was not a large city. It is estimated that about twenty to forty boys would have died in this slaughter.
  - God sent Jesus and His family to Egypt to protect the Child but that was not where He was supposed to grow up.
  - **Matthew 2:19-23**
  - One of the things that struck me about this chapter is that God speaks to Joseph three times, just in chapter two.
  - That says something about Joseph’s faith and willingness to hear and obey God’s voice.
  - So, Jesus grows up in the city of Nazareth = ‘City of the Branch’
- Isaiah 11:1**
- There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.**
- Nazareth was an ethnically diverse city – on a major trade route.
  - He grew up around Jews and Gentiles **Isaiah 42:6.**

**I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles...**

- Everything about Christ's life was ordained by God for the work God prepared for Him to do – culminating in the cross to save the world from sin.
- The wise men came to worship the Savior-King.
- The chief priests and scribes were indifferent to their Messiah.
- Herod was hostile toward the King of the Jews.
- If you are here, you are probably not hostile toward Jesus.
- But just because you are here, doesn't mean you are here to worship God.
- The chief priests and scribes went the temple and went through the motions of worshipping God – Jesus said **Mark 7:6-7**.

**He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. <sup>7</sup>And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'**

- Life has a way of causing us to grow indifferent to the things of God.
- God doesn't want us to just show up and say we are worshipping Him – He wants it to be true worship **John 4:24**

**God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**

- The wise men came seeking to worship the Savior-King.
- If you want to be wise, you will seek Him too.
- Before you pray, remind yourself that you are praying so that you can talk to your Savior-King – and that He is listening.
- Before you read your Bible – remind yourself that you are doing it so that you can get to know Jesus better and learn how to better live in His kingdom today.
- Before you come to church – remind yourself that you are doing it as an expression of faith – to join in the worship of God with His people. Also remind yourself that we gather so that we can experience God together.
- God is looking for worshippers – let's pray that He finds them here.
- **Pray**