

Messiah is Worshipped - Matthew 2v1-12

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Date: 23 December 2018

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[0:00] 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 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 may go and worship him.

[1:08] 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.

Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for this wonderful, true historical account of the early years of Jesus.

And particularly this account of the Magi as they come to worship Jesus. We pray that we would not just fill our minds with information nor mere facts, but that our hearts would be moved and stirred to worship you as the Messiah.

[2:37] Teach us today why and what it means to worship you. May we see you in all your greatness and in all your glory.

And may we too be overjoyed at meeting Christ afresh. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Well, Matthew's account introduces us to perhaps the most well-known visitors to Jesus in the whole story, the Magi.

And three things we're going to learn from them and from this passage as we follow their journey to Jesus. Here's the first. Who the King is.

Right at the beginning, there's a question mark about who is the true King. Have a look at verse 1. 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?

[3:51] Now, something is not right when you go to the King of the land and ask the King, where is the King?

It's like knocking on the door of Aras Anukteron and asking Michael D. Higgins, can you tell me where the President of Ireland is? So, who is the King?

Well, first, Herod claims to be the King. Herod was installed, historians tell us, as King over Judea by the Romans.

He was a ruthless character. He killed off members of his family who were a threat to his power. He had no problem disposing of them. He ruled with an iron fist.

So, when we read in verse 3, when King Herod heard this, when he heard that there was another king born, he was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him.

[4:55] When King Herod's kingship was threatened, there was every reason for people to be in fear. In fact, if there was any hint of rebellion, he sent in his hit squad.

And the events that follow in chapter 2 prove it. At the end of verse 13, the dream that had come to Joseph, and in the dream he was told, end of verse 13, that Herod is going to search for the child, that is Jesus, to kill him.

Verse 16, when Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious. And he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and in its vicinity, who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

A massacre of baby boys. It was a nasty, nasty piece of work. He was a power-hungry, ruthless tyrant.

So Herod claims that he is the king. But the visit of the Magi would have us look to Jesus.

[6:15] Because they claim that Jesus is the king. Now we don't know a lot about the Magi. Tradition calls them the three wise men.

I was talking to somebody during coffee and they said, we certainly need a lot of them. And three kings. That's another way they're referred to. Probably because there are three gifts mentioned.

But the fact is, we don't know a whole lot about them. We don't know how many there are. And nothing tells us that they actually were kings. Verse 2 just tells us they were Magi.

People who studied the stars. We might call them astrologers today. And while their identity is unclear, their mission is absolutely clear.

Look at verse 2. They've come from another country to Jerusalem and they ask the king, where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?

[7:19] We saw his star when it rose and we have come to worship him. Now no one gets to be born a king.

You become a king. To have the right to a throne, you have to wait until the present king dies or the king abdicates or there's some kind of overthrow of the kingdom.

You are not born a king. You become a king. But yet the Magi, as they come, are claiming that this child, whose star they have followed, in verse 2, is born king of the Jews.

They're claiming that Herod, well, you're not the king, but Jesus is the king. Now he's not just king of the Jews, but Jesus is king of all people and all nations.

Well, how do we know that? Well, there are two things, I think, that from this text that point to this fact that Jesus is king, not just of the Jews, but of all people.

[8:27] Firstly, the Magi are not Jews themselves. They've come from the East, but yet they want to worship King Jesus.

Why would someone from another culture and another country want to worship the king of another people? You don't worship another king unless you're sure that the king is also your king too.

Second, the Magi are also staking their life on it. They don't just think this is true, they're actually ready to put their life on the line for it.

If Herod was ready to kill all the boys under two, then you can be quite sure he would put these foreigners to death even for questioning his kingship.

The fact is, by asking Herod, where is the true king, they run the risk of being put to death themselves. You see, Matthew is wanting us to see that the one born king of the Jews, Jesus, is the king.

[9 : 40] But not just king of the Jews, he's king of the Magi, he's the king of all peoples and all nations. And the problem is with that, people don't like it.

And we often don't like it either. Because I want to live as king. You see, Herod, in his role and in his position of authority, can't stand another person taking his place as king.

He sees it as a threat to his rule. In fact, he'll do anything it takes to keep his kingship. Even if that means the death of innocent two-year-old boys.

He will massacre whoever stands in his way. Anything to keep hold of power. But perhaps what is even more disturbing is the fact that I am Herod.

And you are Herod. Because I want to be king of my life and king of my world. I want to be the one who makes up the rules.

[10 : 52] And no one is going to tell me how I should live. No one, especially King Jesus, will tell me what I can do and what I can't do. In fact, we stand alongside the crowd who cried for the blood of Jesus.

It comes later in Matthew's Gospel where Jesus has been arrested and he is before Pilate. Let's read what's on the screen.

What shall I do then with Jesus who is called the Messiah? God's chosen king, Pilate asked. They all answered, crucify him. Why?

What crime has he committed, asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, crucify him. You see, every time we fight against the kingship of Jesus, every time we disobey his word, when we turn our backs on what he has to say to us, we stand with those who called and cried out for the death of an innocent man.

Like Herod, we have sought to get rid of Jesus to maintain our self-autonomy. Jesus is not just king of the Jews or just king of the Magi.

[12 : 16] He is born king of my life and he's born king of your life. So first, who is the king?

Well, Jesus is our true king. Second, why we worship this king.

Well, there's two things that show us why we should worship Jesus as king. First, there's the extraordinary events around the birth of Jesus Christ.

when Herod hears that there's another king, he calls in all the religious experts in verse 4. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and the teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

And being religious experts, they knew the answer. Verse 5, in Bethlehem in Judea, they replied, because this is what was written by the prophet, the prophet Micah.

[13 : 24] Verse 6, But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah. For out of you, out of Bethlehem, will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.

Now that quote, verse 6, comes from the prophet Micah. Written over 700 years before the coming of Christ.

Predicting that the Messiah, the king, God's saving king, would be born in a town called Bethlehem. Well you say, what's so unique about that?

I mean, hundreds of babies could have been born in Bethlehem since that prophecy. So how do we know that Jesus is the one being talked about?

How do we know Jesus is the one who is to be born the king? Well something had got the Magi's attention. Verse 2, We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.

[14:33] Verse 9, And 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.

Now that's extraordinary. They don't have access to Google Maps. They have just a star. And as astrologers, there has been something different in the sky.

There is something unique about this star. something that's different. It moved so that they could follow it. We're not quite sure how or what, but it moved in a particular direction that they could follow.

And it was at a level or a height, I guess, where it stopped right above where Jesus was. So they knew this was the place where Jesus was.

These are extraordinary things. A prophecy made 700 years before and a star that pinpoints the exact location of this child.

[15:42] At the very least, we have to stand back and be amazed at extraordinary events such as this. This is no ordinary child. This is the Messiah who is to be worshipped.

It isn't just the words of God, but also all of creation through the stars themselves that point to the very fact that Jesus is here.

So first, we have the extraordinary events as to why we should worship. Then who Jesus is because Micah not only tells us where the king will be born, but what this king will be like.

Let's read verse 6 again. 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. Bethlehem. you might as well call it Bally go backwards.

[16:52] Not a lot goes on in this small town of Bethlehem and not a lot comes out of Bethlehem either. But yet, what is considered to be least amongst everybody in all the talk, it's a least place, it's a nothing place.

Yet, the prophet tells us, verse 6, out of you, out of backward, unimportant, insignificant Bethlehem will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.

Now, Matthew identifies Jesus as being this shepherd. A little later on in Matthew, we read this, when Jesus saw the crowds, when he saw the crowds, Jesus had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

You remember the reading Ralph read from Ezekiel? The people were leaderless. They were left to themselves, nobody looking out, everybody just looking out for their own self.

And as Jesus looked out on the world, as Jesus looked out on the people, he saw lives broken and ruined by sinful behaviours and selfish choices. Literally, heading towards hell and not even knowing they were in danger.

[18:20] that's what it means. They are harassed and helpless. They're going in every direction but the right direction. And just like sheep need a shepherd to lead them and direct them and show them the way to safety, so we need a shepherd king who will lead us and bring us to safety, bring us to a place of security, bring us to a place of peace and joy.

And that's what Jesus, the true shepherd, did. He is the shepherd of the people. Just as Ezekiel had pointed forward to, God said, I will.

I will come and rescue and bind up their wounds. I will heal them. I will restore them. I will lead them. And so Jesus is that promised shepherd king who came to give his life for us on the cross, who rose again from the grave defeating death and giving us true life.

You see, many people will see Jesus as insignificant and unimportant. The Christmas celebrations will go on but Jesus doesn't get involved or isn't included because, well, he's from Bethlehem.

Backward, unimportant, insignificant. But yet, he is the great shepherd, the one who has given his life so that we might have life.

[20:00] This is the Messiah who has come into the world for you and for me. He is the king. who is to be worshipped. You see, Jesus is worth it.

Look at verse 10. Look at the response of the Magi. Verse 10, when they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

When we examine these extraordinary events, a 700-year-old prophecy, a moving star, when we see that Jesus is the great shepherd who loves us and gives his life for us, we will not be disappointed.

We will be overjoyed. In other words, when we come to Jesus, it is beyond what our imagination could ever take in. In fact, it is only those who worship Jesus experience true and lasting joy.

Look back at these religious experts in verse 4. They had all the scriptures, they had all the knowledge about where Jesus, the Messiah, God's chosen king, was going to be born.

[21:20] They only needed to be asked and they knew it straight away. Oh yeah, Micah, the prophet, Bethlehem, you'll find him there. But they don't move an inch, do they?

They don't follow after the Magi. They just stay put. They would not worship. But look at the Magi. These were pagans, non-religious people.

They didn't have a Bible. Well, they had heard about the king of the Jews, but they didn't have the privilege of having the scriptures. They didn't have great teachers to teach them about the coming Messiah.

But what little knowledge they did have, what they saw from creation itself, they acted upon. They followed the star and they were not disappointed.

They were overjoyed. How much more privileged are we today in 2018 to have the fullness of God's revelation?

[22:32] All the scriptures, the account of Matthew, all of it written down for us, the gift of his Holy Spirit to lead us and to show us who is the true king.

God's Lord's and we could name all the different people and all the different folk who came to visit Jesus, where it happened, when it happened, who he is.

But we can stay put where we are in our seats and not budge an inch and worship the true Messiah. We just go home and carry on our lives as per normal.

Nothing changes. Just full of religiosity, full of knowledge in our heads, but never in our hearts. We only experience true and lasting joy when we follow with the Magi and worship him and we will be overjoyed.

Jesus is worth it. So, who the King is, why we worship the King, and then third, how we worship the King.

[24:00] The Magi, it's crystal clear, have come to worship Jesus. We see that at the end of verse 2. We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.

Now, worship, to worship someone or something, is to give them the highest value or the greatest worth. So, it's not surprising that in the New Testament, the word worship is only ever used in relation to God.

No one else receives worship. No one else is deserving of worship. Worship is set apart for God alone.

And Matthew helps us to understand how we should worship Jesus, God's King, the God-Man. Two things we see from verse 11.

First, we submit to Jesus. Verse 11. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him.

[25 : 08] Bowing down, that physical act of bowing down is to lower yourself before someone who is greater than you. I mean, they're before a child, an infant.

But they bow down, lowering themselves. In other words, they are acknowledging that this child who they come before has authority and power over them.

And when we bow down to someone, we are saying, they are worth trusting. You deserve my total allegiance and unwavering loyalty. Yes, there were other folk there.

Mary was there. I assume Joseph was there too. But only Jesus gets the worship. The one born a King.

And that is exactly what is expected of us. Worship is not just singing songs for 20 minutes on a Sunday. It includes our singing. But worship is submitting yourself to Jesus.

[26 : 15] It's bowing down to him. Bowing our lives to him 24-7. The one who deserves and demands our total allegiance and unwavering loyalty.

In bowing down, we are submitting to his word, to the authority of God's word. It's living a life that says daily, your will be done.

Not my will be done. It's surrendering our self-autonomy. This willing and wanting ourselves to rule over our life.

It's putting that to one side. Turning from it in repentance. And joyfully obeying Jesus. So how do we worship this King?

We submit to him. Second, we serve Jesus.

[27 : 13] Look at the rest of verse 11. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Now, an awful lot has been said about the meaning of these gifts and their symbolism. Some talk about gold being of value, great treasure, frankincense, gold for a king, frankincense for deity, myrrh, speaking of his death and his burial.

But Matthew doesn't actually say anything about their meaning, so we can't be quite sure about that. But the emphasis seems to be on their treasures and gifts.

The point is that what they bring is valuable and precious. The Magi have sought to give their best treasures. They opened their treasures and presented him with gifts.

In other words, nothing is too extravagant for Jesus. And this is what getting to the heart of worship is all about. So let me ask us all a question.

[28 : 28] What is it that you most treasure in your life? Think about it for a minute. What is your greatest love or possession?

or who do you value the most? Maybe it's your spouse or your child. Maybe it's your house or your job.

Because whatever you value the most, whatever you set up to be having the greatest value, that is what you worship. It's what you give your life to.

It's what you serve. It's what you dedicate your time in doing. The account of the Magi is telling us this, that there is only one person who is worth our worship.

Only one who deserves our service. Therefore, everything else and everyone else is to be given over to him. All our desires, all our hopes, all our wishes, all our dreams are to be put and sacrificed to him.

- [29 : 41] He is to be our greatest treasure, our greatest value. And if he is our greatest treasure, then it demands our very life itself.

Listen to what Jesus said. Just flick forward to Matthew chapter 10. Matthew chapter 10.

Verse 37. Verse 37. As we read these verses, just think of that question.

Who do you treasure the most? What is your greatest value? What's of worth to you?

Verse 37. Anyone who loves their father or mother, this is Jesus speaking, anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

Anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. No one. No one.

- [31 : 05] Not even your closest spouse or child can come before your first primary love of Jesus.

Verse 38. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. If you cannot sacrifice and let go of your treasures and take up your cross, you're not worthy of me.

whoever finds their life will lose it and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Jesus is saying, you must give your life to me. That's what worship is. Give your life to me.

Submit to me as your true shepherd. Serve me as your true shepherd. The one who gave his life for you. The one who will lead you in paths that are plentiful.

- [32 : 16] The one who will give you life in all its abundance. Life where you will be overjoyed. Jesus is the king and the king is to be worshipped.

He is worth it because he has given his all, his everything for us. Let's pray.

As we pray, let's just take a moment in the quietness to reflect on those things that we value and treasure more than the Lord Jesus.

Ask him to help us to surrender those things to him and that we would give our life to him in complete surrender.

Amen. Father, we are sorry.

- [34 : 09] Sorry for playing Herod, for wanting to rule over our own life and to protect our self-autonomy. Father, please forgive us.

We run afresh to you, the true shepherd king who loves us immensely, who has given his life for us, who has given us life in all its fullness.

And so we come, Father, we bow before you. We submit, we surrender. We give our life as our gift to you to say thank you.

Thank you for being our king. help us that we would worship you rightly and honor you for who you are.

And may the world also follow in the steps of the Magi. May people we meet this season see the greatness of Jesus and may they bow down and be overjoyed.

- [35 : 36] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.