

Matt. 2:1-12 "God Draws You to Himself"

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[0 : 0 0] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Standing, let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, Father, sometimes we think you have to act with more decorum. It bothers us because you do odd things.

Father, you know that there are some people who really only like it when you do odd things, and they get troubled when you do normal things. But Father, most of us probably get more bothered when you do odd things. And so Father, we ask that this story would do a wonderful work of grace in our hearts, to open our hearts and our minds to just the bigness of what it is that you do.

And as Father, we catch a better vision of your greatness and your power and your grace, that we might be formed more and more to be people of fervent prayer. And so Father, we ask that you do this work in us this morning, and we ask it in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

[2 : 1 8] So, it'd be interesting afterwards during coffee, or maybe we'll get some emails from some of you folks about some things, but I've known, I know of at least two people, I could tell you a couple of others, but two particular stories of very, very weird conversion stories. And I should have arranged beforehand to have a little line going across the stage saying, the screen saying, don't try any of these things, okay? The first one is, I know a man who had a very nominal Christian background, I think it was United Church or something like that, stopped going to church at 12, got completely and utterly caught up in the counterculture. And one day, he was out in the country, and he was stoned out of this tree on acid, and Jesus met him. And he had a conversation with Jesus while he was stoned.

And the result of it was that he gave his life to Christ. And when I met him about five years later, he was a practicing Christian and hadn't done drugs in five years, because he met Jesus while he was stoned. Don't do this, by the way. That's not how you get to see Jesus. The second case is darker. However, I know a woman, I knew a woman who, she was suffering from depression, and she started to become interested in Jesus, but the depression was stronger than her interest in Jesus. And I mean, afterwards, you know, she was telling me afterwards, she can't imagine why she thought she should do this, but she lived alone, and she didn't want to go a long time without her body being discovered.

So she didn't want to commit suicide in her home. So she rented a hotel, and she had a bit of a science background. So she did research to make sure that she would take enough pills to commit suicide.

And because she really wanted to make sure that she committed suicide, she took 10 times more pills than were needed for her to commit suicide. And as she took the pills, she cried out to Jesus and say, Jesus, I don't know if you're there, I don't know if God exists. If you do exist and I die, please have mercy on me. But if you're real, keep me alive, and I will give my life to you. And she woke up the next morning alive. Once again, don't try this at all. It's a very, it's not how you come to

Christ. These are two very, very weird ways of becoming a Christian. I mention this because the Bible text that we're looking at today is a weird God story. It's a story that God, about how God, actually, if you could put up the very first point now, that would be very helpful. This is in a sense that the big, one of the big messages of the whole story. The Lord draws the unlikely close to himself. And we're going to unpack that. He does it by stooping. He does it in weird ways. But the Lord draws those who are very unlikely, those who are far from him, close to himself. And that's what the story is all about. It's the story of the visit of the Magi. So if you have your Bibles, we're going to look at it. And it's found in Matthew chapter 2, verses 1 to 12. And if you don't have a Bible, the words will be up on the screen. But it's good. I like it. I like my congregation to be Bereans, to look at the text and read around the text to make sure that I'm trying to help us read the text together. And here's how this weird story goes. And it's really, it's one of those stories actually where if you know what the words mean in the original language, it gets weirder. Not less weird, but more weird. So the more you know about the original language and the original cultural context, the weirder the story becomes. And it begins like this. Now, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, Magi, it says wise men in our translation, but it should be literally Magi. Behold, Magi came, Magi 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. Now, we're going to camp on this for just a moment because it's here that we see the weirdness of the story. So first of all, this is an historical story in the language. It's not, you know, there is language in the original language that could make it sound like it's a once upon a time, you know, myth type story. This isn't once upon a time language. This is historical type of language, what you would see in an academic history or today, at least in principle, you'd see in a newspaper account of something that's just gone on. And so it's claiming to be history. If you, we don't know for sure who the Magi were, but if you have any Iranian friends, you can tell them afterwards that we discussed a story about people from Persia coming to meet Jesus, because they're probably Persians or what we would now call Iranians. And here's where now, none of these things are particularly odd. Herod is Herod the Great, and he's a very, very well-known figure in history. He was known for his building projects all over. He, in fact, sort of rebuilt the temple.

[7 : 33] So if you go to Israel today, and you go to Jerusalem, and you go to that, that the last little bit of the temple, which is Lephthah's, Herod's temple that he built, he also built many temples to many of the different ancient gods. He was also known for his excessive cruelty and paranoia, killing at least one wife and several sons, because he thought they were plotting against him. So he was a cold-blooded man. He was not naturally Jewish. He wasn't Jewish, and had no claim to the Jewish throne. He had been appointed by his buddy, the Caesar, as the king of Jerusalem.

And so that's why, as we're going to see in the story, when he hears that the king of the Jews is born, he gets very, very troubled, because, you know, you can only have one king, and so if you want to get rid of one king, you have to kill the other king, and he doesn't want to die. So that's all just the history of the time, but the Magi is where it really gets weird. You see, the Magi are astrologers, sorcerers, practitioners of the occult, and makers of potions, and dream interpreters, and several other types of things. So that's who they are. They're pagan. Now, here's where the story gets a bit complicated to tell in Ottawa in 2024. How is it complicated? Well, just imagine, okay, we use it for a Canadian thing, a Christian couple walk into the room and say, by the way, I go to church on Sunday. I believe the Bible. I trust Jesus as my Savior and my Lord. And another person comes in and says, oh, by the way, I'm a sorcerer. I'm an expert in reading dreams. I practice magic potions.

Who would attract the interested crowd around them? Well, we all know the answer. If you wanted to make sure you didn't talk to anybody at a party, just say, oh, by the way, I'm a devout, very conservative Christian. I believe the Bible is God's word written. I believe that Jesus rose from the dead. And that would be a way to be by yourself at a party, generally speaking, or to get some heated crowds. But saying, by the way, I'm a sorcerer.

Whoa, you're a sorcerer. Especially as in this case, these had to be men of means, because they're going to travel. If they came from Babel, if they came from Persia, they traveled at least 40 days, and they would have had a large entourage. It gets even more. So here's the odd thing, the tension in the story for us. So if you're outside the Christian faith, you probably know that Christians believe that you shouldn't have anything to do with astrology, shouldn't have anything to do with making potions, shouldn't have anything with consulting the dead, shouldn't have anything to do with

anything to do with the occult. That's what you're not supposed to do. So from a Christian perspective, and by the way, from the Jewish perspective, because all of these things are verboten back then, these are not the guys that you'd think that Jesus should be attracting to himself, okay? The Messiah shouldn't be attracting them. And for Canadians, they're looking at it and saying, one moment, do these guys know that when they come to meet Jesus, he's going to completely and utterly change their life and tell them they shouldn't be doing any of that stuff again? Like that would be the odd thing there. It would be as if all of a sudden, you know, the party situation, you know, I mean, Louise and I say, yeah, by the way, we're Christians, you know, we're pro-life. We're, you know, believe the Bible is the word of God, and so people don't want to talk to us. The sorcerer comes in and says, yeah, by the way, I do sorcery. I, you know, I interpret dreams. I know how to make potions that, you know, affect how things work. I talk to the dead, all of that, and you get a big crowd. And then after half an hour, the sorcerer looks and hears that Louise and I are Christians and wants to come and talk to us. And everybody, the party would go, does he, does he know, does he know that George and Louise don't think that anything he's doing is right?

That's what they'd be whispering, right? So there's a double type of tension in the story. The original pagans who would have heard this story, they're going, whoa, does these, what? And the Jewish people hearing this story are going, whoa, they're going, whoa, for two different things, right? Opposite reasons, but they're both going, whoa, these two, these two shouldn't meet together, okay? And, and so, and, and yet it's a story about God bringing the Magi to come to meet Jesus. So you might say, well, George, like, what does it say again? After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the, in the days of Herod the king, behold, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For he saw his star when it rose and had come to worship him. I don't see anything there about God trying them. Well, that comes up here with the star issue, where they saw a star.

[12:26] Now, I don't know if any of you are an amateur astronomers. I think I know of at least one person here who has a powerful enough, a powerful enough telescope that might go off into areas where there's not much light to look at the sky. And there might be more of you. I think there's at least one of you here who would do something like that. But most of us don't really pay much attention to the stars.

But in the ancient world where there's no smog and, and, and light pollution, they would see the stars all the time. But astrologers in particular, obviously, are looking at the stars. But the star in this text, and you can see it if you look at it very closely, the star in this text is not a literal star. It's a vision that comes from God to them. So why do I say that? Well, look at, look again at verse two. Where, where is he who was born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to come to worship him. And if you go later on, when we read the next, the rest of the text, you'll, you'll get the sense that they followed the star. Now, okay, I'm, I'm a dummy when it comes to astronomy and all, but here's what I know. You can't just follow any star because stars move. Would be as if I said to my kids, uh, you know, like, or there's a, a site, you know, like, you know, so many movies from Hollywood nowadays are just dumb. They say the dumbest things in the world. I just watched a movie the other day where a hundred foot high tsunami wave hits a plane on a runway and the two women in the plane who are supposedly the heroes survive. And I'm thinking, really? Like a hundred foot wave. I mean, there's just so many dumb things in movies nowadays. Like, they don't even try to make it even vaguely make any sense. But what I know is if, if somebody said in a movie, by the way, you want to find me, just follow the moon. Well, okay, you wait, you wait till the moon comes up and it goes there and you walk that way. But as you're walking, the moon goes all the way over there. And the next day, it might not start at the same spot. You can't follow the moon. The moon moves. Following the moon means going nowhere. And, and, and so what's, what's going on here is the only star in the sky that doesn't move. And I looked it up in, in, on the internet. So what I'm sitting here has to be true because I read it in the internet. Actually, the North star is the only star that doesn't move, but actually literally it, it moves a very, very, very tiny amount so that it, it doesn't really matter for the point of navigation. So you can use the North star to navigate, but you can't use the other stars to navigate per se because they move, but they follow the star. So I think what happened is the implication is, is that the star appears in the sky and doesn't move.

[15:21] And you can just imagine the chill that goes down the hairs on the back of their neck when they realize, oh, that star didn't move. And then the next night, that star's in the same spot

and it doesn't move. And they'd all know that that's impossible.

And so here's one of the other things about the story that's, that's, that's very interesting. You see, I, I've made the claim time and time again that the gospel of Matthew, it's an eyewitness based biography written when eyewitnesses were still alive. And, and lots and lots of scholars have puzzled over how the Magi went from seeing a star to figuring out they had to come to Jerusalem, to worship the King of the Jews who'd just been born. And, and so one of the things which is really interesting, you see, is the fact that Matthew doesn't tell us that is what would happen if he actually was writing an eyewitness history, because he wouldn't have the vaguest idea in the world. But if he's just making crap up, he would make crap up about that. But how on earth would he possibly know what 35 years ago, the Magi, what their train of thought that led them? Everything that he talks about is just things that would have been part of the public record. Like, like, let's look, if, if you jump ahead a little bit, let's just look verses three and all, and we'll see more about why the star is a vision. When Herod the King heard this, he was troubled, right? Because if the King of the Jews is now been born, that implies, I mean, everybody knows that he's not Jewish and not really the proper King of the Jews. And he's already paranoid. He's killed at least one wife and several sons, because he, he worries that they were conspiring against him. And so, you know, when you have a King like that, he's troubled. Everybody in, in Jerusalem is troubled with him. Imagine, I'm not picking on Trudeau, it could be anybody, could be Biden, just picking politician. If the Prime Minister of Canada gets worried about people in his, in his, in his party trying to conspire against him, somebody can kill them. Everybody's worried if the, if the Prime Minister's worried, right? So they're all worried. And, and, and assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, those are like the experts, like the scholars of the day. He and Herod inquires of them where the Christ was to be born. And they told him, verse five, 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 be a shepherd of my people Israel. And so they, they, they know that there's this prophecy. David was born there, and there's this prophecy in what we now call the Old Testament, and our Jewish friends call the Tanakh, that says the Messiah is, who's going to also be the King of the Jews, he's going to be born there. So seven, Herod summons the Magi secretly, ascertains from them what time the star has appeared. And this is going to be important because we're going to find later on, he's going to kill all the kids in Bethlehem. And he wants to have a good time frame to know what to kill, because he's a cruel man. And in verse eight, he sent, 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. He's lying through his teeth. He knows that if they find out that he's in a murderous rage, looking for the King of Israel, people will hide. And so he uses them. But here's the thing, after listening to the King, verse nine, they went on their way and behold, the star they had seen when it was, it rose, went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. So the implication of the story is this. They see a star that doesn't move and stars move, but that star is not moving. And that is weird.

And that would tremendously grab their attention. And that would lead them to do who knows what, in terms of studying. Maybe there's some ancient thing from Daniel, which is not in the Bible, that they had, because Daniel was from that same part of the world hundreds of years earlier. We don't know what it was. They never told. They embark on a journey that would take at least 40 days and involve quite an entourage, especially as we see later on that they're carrying some real treasure. [19:51] So they want to have some armed guards, guards, they're people of means. And the implication is, is that as they get close to Jerusalem, the star disappears. And so they conclude to themselves, well, I guess Jerusalem's here, it's the capital. Where else would the king of the Jews be? So they go and ask Herod the question. And Herod tells them. And there's no implication in the text that the Herod and all the Jewish leaders say, yeah, yeah, we've been seeing that star too. It really puzzles us. So this is a vision that only they see. Only the Magi see the star. Nobody else sees it. So only the Magi see the star. In other words, it's a vision just for them.

And the vision disappears. They find out that they should be heading towards Bethlehem. That's probably where the king of the Jews is. So they start to go there and they get really happy because all of a sudden the star is there again. And once again, only they see the star. And then the star moves, which stars don't move like towards a house. And then the star settles right over a house. That's not what stars or comets or conjunction of planets do. You see, from start to finish, this is a vision. This is a vision that God gives them.

So once again, if you could put up the first point, that would be very, very helpful. The Lord draws the unlikely close to himself. So our Canadian friends are still gonna, you know, wonder. And all, you know, you know, all I would say to my Canadian friends is this.

If something like this really happened, doesn't it show that God exists? And if God actually exists, shouldn't you want to know him? Isn't it going to be worth it to know him, even if that means that everything in your life is going to change? And if there really is a God, and it's going to become even more important in a moment when I tell you about the significance of the phrase, the King of the Jews. But, you know, if it's just all a matter of, there's just, you know, life is just one dang thing after another, and then you die. Well, then, you know, why on earth would you do any of this type of stuff? In fact, why on earth would you be a Christian? It just cramps your style. Like, why on earth have certain, like, you know, too many excessive moral rules? Why to come to church on a Sunday? Why be financially generous? Why practice the ancient Christian sexual ethic? Like, why do all of those things if life is just one dang thing after another, and then you die? But if, in fact, there is a God that does exist, who has created all things and has entered into human history, and if this God does, in fact, do things to draw unlikely people to himself, wouldn't you want to be drawn to him? Now, just a couple of other things about it is, if you could put up 1A, that would be helpful. As part of this, the Lord drawing the unlikely close to himself. The Lord stoops to speak to you. The Lord stoops to speak to you. My second son, Jesse, when he went to engineering at the [22 : 55] University of Ottawa, I don't think it was quite the same when my son, my youngest son, went to University of Ottawa for engineering, but he would often come home and complain that the teachers had, professors had such strong accents, it was hard to understand anything they said.

And, you know, in a sense, if you go to, at that time, if you went to university to study engineering, it sucks to be you if you don't understand. Like, I'm the professor, you're the student, sucks to be you if you don't understand. That's your problem, not my problem. And that seemed to be, in a sense, the philosophy of the administration. You figure it out. Sucks to be you. But that's not how God is with us when he speaks to us. He stoops. If you go back to verse 2 again for a second, where it says here, 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. Now, remember I said that the story gets even weirder the more you know what the original language is. The term, it rose, is not speaking about the movement of a body. It's speaking about an astrological term. So, in other words, if I said, Andrew rose from his seat because he wanted to stretch his legs, that isn't what this means, that the star rose. It's more like, you know, I don't follow astrology all, but you know, sometimes I've overheard people talking about something's in the ascendance and this and that. The language of rose is astrological language. So, in other words, not only did God, he stoops to the Magi. He doesn't say, I'm going to reveal to you the Tanakh in Hebrew, and you just have to figure it out, and if you can't, it sucks to be you. That's not how God deals with us. He doesn't speak to them like that. He speaks to them with a star that's astrologically significant to them. So, not only does the star not move, it is in a place which is of profound significance to them. We're not explaining what it is, but it just is. It's an astrological term. So, he stoops to speak. He stoops to speak to us. You know, those of you who are outside the Christian faith, you might not know this, but sometimes Christians of a certain type get into big debates about what the best version of the Bible is. And I'm preaching from the ESV, and it has a huge fan club of people saying this is the best version of the Bible.

But the fact of the matter is that most Christians have the identical version of the Bible. It's called the dusty version because they actually never read it. So, the best version of the Bible is to read a version of the Bible that you actually read. Even if the scholars think, well, the NLT is just like a bit of a paraphrase and not very accurate. Well, you know, it's a good version. It's going to lead you to Christ. Read a version which is of the reading level for you. True confession for those of my Reformed friends who are now going to disown me. In my private devotional reading, I read the New Living Translation or the New International Version. I don't read the ESV. I find it hard to read for my devotions. Just read the version that you'll read. God stoops to speak to you. The second thing here, if you could put up 1B, that would be helpful.

This is the thing that we just have to accept the fact that the Lord does weird things. The Lord does weird things. Like, you know, back when the airport vineyard movement was going on in Toronto, and there's all sorts of people bending themselves out of shape about the weird things that were going on. It's as if they said, you know, how dare God do weird things? He has to do only things that we approve. Like, really? How on earth is it going to be God if he can't do weird things?

Things that you think are weird. You know, the world is awash of stories of people from Islam coming to faith because they're having dreams of Jesus. And then they become Christians. You know, the fact of the matter is, you know, obviously, for all of my kids, my prayer for each of my kids was that there would never be a time they didn't know and love and trust Jesus. That's the prayer of every Christian parent for their kids. Some people don't become Christians until they're in their mid-teens or their teens or high school or anything, you know, something like that, or university. And, you know, most people, if you press into them, they might not have something as weird as being stoned on LSD and becoming a Christian. But many people have odd coincidences, things that made them pause, things they overheard, things that made them curious, things that started them on a bit of a quest.

[27 : 34] The fact of the matter is, is that God is drawing people to himself. He draws people who are far from him to himself, and he draws the unlikely to himself, and sometimes he does weird things. And the final thing, if you could put up one C.

You know, I have a love for apologetics, and I have a high respect for anybody who tries to defend the scriptures and all, and this is just the one thing I would say to a lot of apologists and a lot of Christians. Embrace the miracles. Embrace the miracles.

Don't try to say, well, this text of the Magi would be way better if we could account for it with a comet or a planet. Why? Like, why would that be better? Like, why would that be better than a miracle? Like, why? Embrace the miracles. There's nowhere in the Bible does God say that he's decided he would start to create the created order, and then he would lock himself out. Like, you know, like, you know, sometimes I once locked myself, more than once I've locked myself out of the car, you know? It's not as if God somehow left the keys in the car, the keys in the world, and now he can't get back in, you know, and he has to call for help. Like, God never decided anything like that. He, and in fact, the whole story of the incarnation, we looked at that on Christmas Eve, is God breaking, just breaking into the created order in the person of his Son, and the resurrection is a huge miracle. Embrace the miracles. Meditate upon them. Rejoice in them. Pray in light of them. Pray in light of the fact that the Lord draws the unlikely to himself, that the Lord stoops to speak to people, the Lord does weird things, and embrace the miracles. Now, the story, one of the things which is so wonderful about this story is it forms you to accept sort of more complicated ideas. So let's go back to the text.

And we'll see, because here's the point. If you cover up the second point, and then you'll see what I'm talking about. In fact, all of the last two points, two of the last, the next two points, help to show you how the story forms you to accept an idea which is a bit more complicated.

[29 : 48] Talked about in Book of Romans with fancy words, but the stories and the more complicated ideas, they fit together. And even if you can't maybe get your mind around certain types of things like the sovereignty of God, you can get your mind around the story. Like what does the sovereignty of God mean? Oh, the sovereignty of God means is that if God decides that he wants to draw some astrologers involved in the occult to meet Jesus, he can do it. That's all it means. He can do it.

He can have them have a vision of a star, astrologically significant, that launches them on a quest, a quest that will change them. So notice here, like, you know, I already read how, so Herod, he's never heard about this Lord, the King of Israel and the Messiah. He goes and asks the experts. They say, oh, by the way, verse 5, you know, he's in Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet, and they really know their Bible. You know, they probably won sword drills when they were in school, in Sunday school. 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. And then Herod summons the Magi privately and says, you know, go find them. I just want to worship him too. And he's lying through his teeth, all the way through that. And then verse 9, after listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. And when the Magi saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy, verse 11, and going into the house, they saw the child. They saw the baby Jesus with Mary, his mother. And they fell down and worshipped 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. And the next story after this is the story of Herod killing the children in Bethlehem. So here's the thing, is that that beware you can know about the Lord without knowing the Lord. The story shows three different

ways of people knowing about the Lord. Herod learns about the Lord, and the result is he wants to kill him. He hates him. I mean, this is one of the things, is that we can tell people about Jesus, and we can actually get to the point where we make it very, very clear. I've had this one, this one person that I had quite a few conversations with, and I got to the actual point where they asked me, George, you're saying that if I give my life to Christ, every sin I've ever done in the past, and every sin I've ever done in the future has been dealt with by him? And I said yes. And they said, that's an absolutely repulsive idea.

Why would I ever do a good thing again for the rest of my life if I believed that? And they weren't interested in going any further. So you can hear about Jesus and know accurate things about him, but the response is to reject him even more fully. And then you also have the chief priests, all the experts. They hear all about Jesus, and their response is, I wonder what's for lunch.

I wonder if there's, I wonder if that street baker's made some really good pita bread, and they really have fantastic falafel with that spot. I wonder, can we go there? Like they're completely, utterly indifferent about him. And then there's the right way to know him, which is to go to him, and to worship him, to acknowledge who he is, to give him gifts. In a sense, the worship is a position of submissive and trusting offering of yourself to him. You set aside your armor and all of those things to give yourself to him. And that's the challenge for us.

You know, here's the thing, brothers and sisters. I, you know, when I started my first year of theology at St. Paul University, the person who taught the Gospels course, she just did everything she could to help you not believe the Bible. And I could have gotten into an argument with her within one minute of the first class, and every minute of every class.

[34 : 39] And she'd studied at Rome. She was fluent in like five languages. Her IQ was probably double my IQ, but she didn't know the Lord. And she alternated between complete indifference about him and hostility to him. And so, you know what? It's not a matter of IQ. You know? I mean, if it was a matter of IQ, just in relationships in general, people with the highest IQs would have the best marriages.

That's definitely not the case. You know, it's not a matter of being able to be really smart or know a whole pile of things. Don't be intimidated by people who are way smarter than you. It's a matter of knowing Jesus. That's what's going on in the text. It's very important. Now, the other thing I said, you know, I have to watch my time. There's this very interesting little, oh, there's a name for it. I should have asked a younger person what it is. Is it a cookie? I don't know if it's a cookie.

There's a little thing that Matthew puts in his story that's there, by the way. He doesn't just artificially put it. That leads you to an even more profound sense of why Jesus, like why it is that you should want, even if you don't believe that Jesus is the Savior and Lord, you should want him to be the Savior and Lord because of this profound thing that he does. And by the way, I think he is the Savior. I think he is the Lord. I think he did, these things really did happen. I think he really did rise from the dead. I think these are reasonable historical things to believe, and they're life-changing things to believe. But when the Magi come and say to Herod, where is he who, what does it say again, literally in verse 2, it says, where is he who has been born king of the Jews? Now, here's the thing which is really interesting.

Do you know that for the entire rest of the Gospel of Matthew, I hope I wrote this down, for the entire rest of the Gospel of Matthew, you never again hear the phrase, the king of the Jews.

You never hear it once. Not once. Until chapter 27, verse 11 of Matthew.

[36 : 53] Matthew. And in Matthew chapter 27, 11, Jesus has been captured, and it's a couple of hours before his crucifixion, and Pilate asks Jesus, are you the king of the Jews?

And then the next time you see the phrase, in the Gospels, is Matthew's Gospel is verse 29. And now it's when the decision has been made to crucify Jesus.

And the soldiers, in verse 29, kneel before Jesus and mock him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews. And then there's one more time in the Gospel of Matthew where the phrase, the king of the Jews comes. And it's in verse 37. And over his head, he's hanging on the cross, and over his head they put the charge against him which read, This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.

See if you could put the point up. Jesus is the king who dies for people, so as to make a people for himself.

[38 : 14] Herod was willing to kill piles of children to stay the king himself. He was willing to kill his wife to stay the king. He was willing to kill his own sons to stay the king.

And, you know, you look at Assad in Syria, he was willing to kill hundreds of thousands of people for him to stay, in a sense, the king. You look at Putin, he's willing to kill countless numbers of people to stay the king.

And that is the way of the world. And the king of the Jews is Jesus, and he is the complete opposite of all of that. He is the king who dies for ordinary people.

He dies the death that they deserve as their substitute. And when you put your faith and trust in him to accept what he has done for you, you become his people, a citizen of his kingdom.

He becomes your king, and he will never leave you or forsake you. And no one can strip you of your citizenship in his kingdom. And he will be with you every day of your life until you die or until he comes again and you see him.

[39 : 23] And when you see him, he will welcome you into his kingdom. And he will say, I have been longing for you and I to see each other face to face. Welcome. Welcome.

Into my kingdom. Your kingdom. Your true home. When I was in Kenya for the first time, and I went to this church way out in the countryside, and I discovered this is how evangelical Kenyan Anglicans and all, they did a thing.

They asked everybody who was there for the first time to get up and introduce themselves. And, you know, some of them would say, I'm visiting from this country or this country. But all of them, every one of them said, my home is, you know, whatever.

But my true home, my true home is heaven with Jesus. That is my true home. That is my true home. Just one thing in closing.

If you could put up the fourth point, that would be helpful. Knowing the sovereignty of God and the grace of God grows your prayer to him. Knowing the sovereignty of God and the grace of God grows your prayer to him.

[40 : 32] You know, some of us have loved ones who are very, very, very, very far from Christ and seem to be going even farther away from him all the time. And some of us know people who just, there might not be a loved one, they just might be a friend.

Maybe it's somebody that, you know, God's put in your path. Maybe it's your neighbor. Maybe it's your mechanic. Maybe it's your dentist or your doctor or somebody you've met at a grocery store. And they just seem to be so completely and utterly vastly, far gone from God.

And we might, humanly speaking, we think, well, there's no hope for them. We wouldn't even pray for them. But stories like this tell us to pray for them. Because God can make a whole pile of occult astrologers in Persia see a star and lead them to Christ to worship him.

He can do things in other people's lives as well. This is to strengthen our prayers, brothers and sisters. This is a profound encouragement as these stories become more real to our hearts, to know that we can pour out our heart and pray for even the most impossible people.

And pray for them. Pray that they will come to Christ. I invite you to stand at this point in time. Bow our heads in prayer.

[41 : 58] I think Chris will be leading intercession when I finish this. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this beautiful story. And we thank you, Father, that you, throughout history, have drawn very unlikely people to yourself.

Father, we even, I think of Abraham, who was a worshiper of the moon, of all things. A moon worshiper, when you called him to be, in a sense, the father of the faith.

From whose seed, Father, the Messiah would come. And so, Father, we thank and praise you that you draw the unlikely to yourself, those far from you to yourself.

We ask, Father, that the stories of your sovereignty and the wonders of your grace, that those would become more and more real to our heart. And as they become more and more real to our heart, that you would help us, Father, that these would help us to be people of prayer.

To pray for the lost and the lonely and those who are very far from God. Knowing, Father, that you do draw those who are far from you to yourself. Knowing that you drew us.

[43 : 07] Some of us, some of us, Father, are those very unlikely people that others would have said would never become Christians. And yet, here we are. And so, Father, bring this story deeply home to us.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Amen. Take a closer look. Amen. Take a look. Take a look.