

AM Matthew 2:1-18 & Revelation 12:1-6 Joy and Sorrow at the coming of Jesus

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[0 : 00] This evening, both from the New Testament, reading perhaps firstly from Revelation chapter 12 and verses 1 to 6.

So the 12th chapter of Revelation, verse 1, and we'll read the first six verses.

And a great sign appeared in heaven. A woman, clothed with a sun, with a moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven.

Behold, a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and on his head seven diadems.

[1 : 16] His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, that when she bore her child, he might devour it.

She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.

But her child was caught up to God and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

And reading again in the first book of the New Testament, now in Matthew's Gospel, in chapter 2.

And strangely, in God's providence, this will be the third time we've read this chapter in eight days.

[2 : 29] Last Sunday, and Wednesday, and again tonight. A reading in Matthew chapter 2, the first 18 verses.

Now, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men 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. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled.

And all Jerusalem with him. And assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

They told him, 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.

[3 : 52] For from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly, And ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.

And 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.

After listening to the king, They went on their way. And behold, The star that they had seen when it rose, Went before them, Until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, They rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going to the house, They saw the child with Mary his mother, And they fell down and worshipped him.

Then opening their treasures, They offered him gifts, Gold and frankincense and myrrh.

[5 : 26] And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, They departed to their own country by another way. Now when they had departed, Behold, An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Rise, Take the child and his mother, And flee to Egypt, And remain there until I tell you, For Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him.

And he rose, And took the child and his mother by night, And departed to Egypt, And remained there until the death of Herod.

This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, Out of Egypt I called my son. Then Herod, Then Herod, When he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, Became furious.

And he sent, And killed all the male children in Bethlehem, And all that region, Who were two years old or under, According to the time, That he had ascertained from the wise men.

Then was fulfilled, What was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, A voice was heard in Ramah, Weeping, And loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children.

[7 : 20] She refused to be comforted, Because they are no more. Amen, And may God bless his word to us.

And we'll sing together again, Turning over the page, And we have the carol, Who is he? In yonder store, At his feet, The shepherds fall, And the refrain, Tis the Lord.

So we'll sing the whole of this carol, On the back of the sheet, Who is he? In yonder store. Who is he?

In yonder store, At his feet, The shepherds fall, Tis the Lord. A wondrous store.

Well, this evening, we plan to reflect on some of the events. Not going into great detail, But some of the events, Which are recorded for us, By Matthew, In chapter 2, And to verse 18.

[8 : 54] By referring to, Relevant scriptures, Elsewhere, In the Bible. The events, Recorded here, Are, Probably all happened, In a fairly short time sequence.

Perhaps only two or three weeks, Probably less than a month, But a short time, Very probably, Covers these 18 verses.

We just noted, The sudden departure, At night, The angel of God, Spoke to him in a dream, And he left there, And then up, He left, In the dark hours, Not a moment, To lose, To go to Egypt.

As I said, We have thought, On this passage, Immediately, First of all, To my embarrassment, But I was preparing, From this passage, Twice, In the last eight days.

But, There will be some different features, I think, To tonight. We also read, Earlier, As background, From Revelation, Chapter 12, It is a vision, Which, In summary, Covers, The period from, The first coming, Of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, All the way, To, His second coming.

[10 : 23] A few sharp words, It covers the whole, Of that period, From his first, To his second coming. And we'll refer to that again, Shortly.

There's a whole range of characters, Appearing, In this chapter, We have, The wise men, We have, Herod the king, He's been appointed by Rome, Religious leaders, We have the people of Jerusalem, And of course, We have Mary, And Joseph's there, In the background, He hearkens to, The angel's word, And so obedient, Once again, Obedience reflects, The life and character, Of Joseph, But the focus, The focus, In these, These verses, Is always, On one person, It is, The child, The child, That is where, The focus is, And then, We end on the note, Of the, Grieving, Parents, The mothers, Who could not, Be comforted, These events,

In this chapter, Will, Certainly happened, After the events, Which are recorded, In Luke chapter 2, Towards the end, Of Luke chapter 2, We see, The Lord Jesus, In the temple, With Mary, And Joseph, And, Simeon, And Anna, Appear, And then, So all these events, Occurred before, The events, In Matthew chapter 2, And then, Luke just briefly, Goes on, They return to Nazareth, But here, Matthew gives us, Greater detail, And tells us, What happened, After, Those events, In the temple, We had returned, Perhaps for a short time, To Bethlehem, Before, Their plan being, But their plan was upset, Returning north, To Nazareth, We will note, That in this chapter, That they are no longer, In a stable, They're in a house, So,

Their conditions have changed, Perhaps, Perhaps they're, They're in their house, Or the inn, To which their stable belonged, We're not told, That is a, Very likely possibility, But we, We do not know, As I said, The focus of Matthew, Chapter 2, Is always, The Lord Jesus Christ, It's always, The Lord Jesus, Five times in this chapter, We read, Of the child, And the mother, It's never the other way around, It's always the child, And his mother, That's the focus, For Matthew, And it's our focus too, The child, Takes precedence, And we can see, It's apparent, Why in the, In the opening verses, Of the chapter, The, The wise men, From the east, Have come to, To worship, This child, They call him, The king of the Jews, It's been revealed to him, That this is, The king, The king of the Jews, And, And, He's referred to, As, In those of the verses, It's the Christ, Herod, New enough, To know that, This was a reference to the Messiah, The anointed one, The one who had been foretold, So, Herod knew, That well enough, And in the quotation, From, From Micah, We are reminded, That this one is the ruler, And shepherd, The ruler, And the shepherd, The great shepherd, Of his sheep, So, The wise men, Are seeking, This one, This one who was foretold, They had seen his star, In the east, It's quite clear, From the passage, That the wise men, Are not remotely interested, In the so called, King of the Jews, There was already, A king of the

Jews there, Herod, Appointed, By his master, In Rome,
[14 : 37] Caesar Augustus, He'd been king, For some, 30 years, An appointment, Of the Roman emperor, But they're not remotely, Interested in him, Who had, The same title, The king, Of the Jews, This was not the one, By any means, At all, Now we'll note, Three, Three issues, Before we come, To, First of all, To the joy, At the coming, Of Jesus, Because there was great joy, At the coming of Jesus, Amazing joy, Joy which, Cannot, Could not be described, Joy which was, Exuberant, And before, We come to that, We'll note, Three things, These, These, These magi, These wise men, Coming probably, From Persia, Babylon, To the far east, And, We remember, As we think about them, How, Daniel, God's servant, That amazing servant, Of God, In the exile, Taken, Torn from his home,

Never to see his homeland again, Faithful to God, Out in exile, All his years, Daniel, Be made a ruler, And chief, Of the wise men, In Babylon, And then there was, There was, Many decades later, There was Mordecai, Who rose to a very similar position, To, To Daniel, In the succeeding empire, Of the Medes and the Persians, Did these men, Did these men, Instruct the wise men, Not unreasonable, To think about, They had, They had important positions, Mordecai, And Daniel, Did they give instruction, Biblical instruction, To the leading people, It's quite, Quite possible, And then, As Jack referred, On Wednesday, There was that, Strange, Strange, Prophecy, Of that, Devious, Prophet, Balaam, Recorded in Numbers, Chapter 24, Balaam, Who we learn from, Deuteronomy, Was from Mesopotamia, He was from the east, He lived, He lived very near, The river Euphrates, Deuteronomy tells us that, So he came from that area, Balaam, And he made this strange, Strange prophecy, Many, Many centuries before, I see him, But not now, I behold him, But not near, A star, Shall come out of Judah, And a scepter, Shall rise out of Israel, A star, Shall come out of, Judah, Out of Jacob, And, We're just told here, The wise men, Saw, His star, We saw his star, When it arose, In the east, A new star,

And they made, Connections, From, Some knowledge they had, Perhaps the knowledge, We're suggesting, And they went to Jerusalem, With their gifts, And when they see it, They see it again, They saw it, Apparently, Perhaps once, Out in the, Out in the east, They went to Jerusalem, The obvious place to go, For the king of the Jews, And they see it again, After they left, After they leave Jerusalem, On the, That short journey to Bethlehem, Six, Six miles or so, They see the star again, They saw the, They hold the star, That they had seen, When it rose, Went before them, Until it came to rest, Over the place, Where the child, Was, This star, Wasn't like any, Ordinary star, It didn't behave, Like a star, It was, Something from, God's creation, God used, His creation, To make Christ, Known, He used his creation, To make, Christ known, And, He also used man, To make Christ known, Because, Going from the, East to the west, Straight to the west, Far to the west, We come to Rome, The capital of this, Huge empire, Which dominated, All the known world, And there, Caesar, Augustus, Decreed, A census, For the whole empire, And, God worked, Through Caesar, Augustus, Out in the west, And he used him, And so, Joseph, In this, Subjugated territory, Of Judah, Where the Roman legions, Were now, Joseph, Had to, Go to his home city,

[19 : 45] He was of the house, And lineage of David, And Joseph, And Mary, Mary who was great, With child, Had to travel, All the way, From the north, From Nazareth, To Bethlehem, So God used his creation, He used man, And this, Another thing we'll note, Is that the coming of Jesus, Upset people, Disturbed people, This was the impact, Of coming, The coming of Jesus, There were those, Who, Who, Who, Who, Did not want to, Worship this Christ, There were, Those who were indifferent, To him, There was Herod, Elderly now, Strangely worried, About his position, Troubled, He was agitated, This word, Me, He was agitated, Same word, Which is used of, Our Lord Jesus, When he, Said,

That one of you, Will betray me, He was agitated, His heart, Well that's how Herod, Herod was agitated, When he heard this news, About, The king of the Jews, Herod who was known, For a great ability, But also dreadfully known, For his brutality, And atrocities, He was troubled, The people of Jerusalem, Were troubled as well, We read in verse 3, Why were they troubled, Well, Probably because they knew, Of the instability, Of the character, Of Herod, If he was troubled, It could mean trouble for them, You couldn't, You couldn't, Trust what this man, Would do next, He was unpredictable, In his ferocity, And what he might do, And so the people of Jerusalem, Were troubled, Perhaps for that reason, But the religious leaders, Well, They seem to be indifferent, You thought,

You thought that perhaps, One of them would have gone, With the wise men, To keep observations, Of what was happening, You think they might have sent, One of them with them, But no, They were indifferent, They were indifferent, They knew the prophecy, But they're indifferent, As to whether this was, The Christ, Or not, And it's a challenging, Challenging, These are challenging things, You know, Are we troubled, Are we indifferent, How is it, With you and me, Are we troubled, To, Be agitated, In the wrong way, At the coming of Jesus, He comes to us, In different ways, He comes, With something just, Crossing our mind, Some thought, Some remembrance, Some scripture, Crossing our mind, Perhaps sometimes, In the sleepless hours, At night, Perhaps there's some trouble, Some difficulty, And, He pulls us up short, And reminds us, That he is, The one, In whom we must trust, For our salvation, Are we troubled, Do we, Do we, Do we, Do we, Do we, Resist it, The Lord is speaking to you, It's a moment of grace, And glory, And we must hearken, To his voice, It's a dangerous position, To be flinching, And resisting, That, That word, Which comes to you, Secretly, Not known to anybody else, Only you know about it, And you are troubled, It's good to be troubled, By Jesus, It's a blessing, Without being troubled, There is no joy, Well, There was great joy, At the coming of Jesus, They seen the star in the east, They connected its appearance, With the coming of the king of the Jews, Some knowledge, And they got confirmation, When they reached, Reached Jerusalem, They, They may have heard of, Other scriptures, There was, Good contact with all parts of the world then, And they may have, Even heard of some of the later prophecies, Like Zechariah, Speaking about, Our king coming, We do not know, But they somehow made connections, Between what they knew, And what God showed to them, In the sky, And they journeyed, To Bethlehem, A couple of hours journey, Walking, And they see,

[24 : 56] The star, Again, And as I said, It didn't behave like a normal star at all, It guided them, It guided them to rest, Over the very place, We read, Where the child, Was, And, We read, When they saw the star, They had great joy, Such great joy, You couldn't find words, To describe it, There's a triple emphasis here, They rejoiced, Well that would have been enough, But it wasn't enough, They rejoiced, Exceedingly, Was that enough?

It still wasn't enough, They rejoiced, Exceedingly, With great joy, A triple emphasis, Exuberance, They were so overjoyed, When they saw the star, Again, And resting, On a particular, Dwelling, Place, In Bethlehem, As they had been told, The prophet had said, And their joy, Turned to worship, They fell down, When they saw, The child, No mention of the mother, There, They just fell, Down, Before, The child, They worshipped, Him, The baby, Mary and Joseph were there, They worshipped, This infant, Child, And, They fell down, They were on their faces, Prostrate, Before, This child, What faith, Was given to these Gentiles, First Gentiles, To worship, The king, That's a note, Which Matthew will end this gospel on, This gospel is to go to all the Gentiles, The whole world, But these are the first Gentiles, To worship, The king of glory, Is it true of us, Are we worshipping him, The man, Christ Jesus, Seated on the throne, The throne of glory, No longer a child, No longer an infant, But still bearing, And wearing, Our flesh, In heaven's glory itself, The eternal son, Who, Amazingly, Condescended, To, Clothe himself, With our flesh, And who look like us, When we shall see him, We shall see him, In all his glory, And wonder, And grace, And they worshipped him, With great joy, With great exceeding joy, Exuberant joy, And, As evidence, Of their worship, That wasn't enough, They had to do something, They had to give something, And they opened up, They opened up their treasures, One by one, Between them, They had gold, Gold speaking probably, Of his kingship, A frankincense, Speaking of the fact, That his guard, The frankincense would be offered, And the incense to God, In the temple, And myrrh, Speaking about the one, Who was born to die, And they opened up, Their gifts, Their treasures, To present, To the king, Of the Jews, The Christ, The shepherd, The scepter, Who has arisen, Out of Judah, It was evidence, That they were truly, Worshipping, Him, And it's a challenge to us, Do we open up our treasures, For the king, Does our joy, Our worship, Lead to, The opening up of our wallets, To put it plainly, Of all our resources, For the king, For his work, And his ministry, There's something wrong, If that's not true, The worship, Cost them, So, We know already, From Luke, That a multitude, Of angels, Had worshipped him, We know from Luke, That a handful, Of shepherds,

[29 : 42] Believed the word, And went, To worship him, And not satisfied, With that, These poor, Humble shepherds, Testified about him, To all, Whom they met, And here, We have the wise men, These wealthy, Gentiles, Who opened up, Their treasures, For the king, They worshipped, In great

joy, And then, They disappear, They disappear, From history, They turn home, By a different route, They had listened, To the king, But now, They've been warned, In a dream, And they listen, To a higher authority, And obediently, They return, Another way, In joy, And worship, The coming, The coming, Of Jesus, Leads to, Wander, And joy, And worship, Grant that, That is true of us, To, The word, Who as we heard this morning, The word, Amazingly,

Was made flesh, But at the same time, The coming of Jesus, Brings sorrow, And this is how, This section ends, It ends on a dark note, A dark cloud, Overcoming, Overshadowing, Not overcoming, But overshadowing, The joyous coming, Of our saviour, Jesus, With Mary and Joseph, Have to flee for their lives, At a moment's notice, Didn't wait for dawn, Out into the dark, They went, On that long, Weary, Dusty, Journey, To the south, And to the east, And to the west, To Egypt, They, Joseph was obedient, And they went, And we read, That all the baby boys, From Bethlehem, And its environs, Two years and under, Probably Herod, Allowed for a generous calculation, Two years and under, Were slaughtered, By his soldiers, He sent the word, He sent the men, And amazingly, His men were, Did it, And they slaughtered, The babies, He had schemed this, From the beginning, His lying, His lying words, We read, And in verse 8, Of his intention, To come, And worship, And this man, Who had exercised, No self-control, In his life, Gave, Vent to his rage, Yet once again, We read, He became furious, Furious, With rage, Because, The wise men, As he saw it, Had deceived him, They had come back,

A different way, Caesar Augustus, Said about Herod, I would rather, Be Herod's, Pig, Than his son, I would rather, Be Herod's pig, Than son, That was the opinion, Of the man, Who appointed, Herod, To be king, Of the Jews, Earlier we read, From Revelation chapter 12, To see what lies behind, This murderous, Onslaught, And in Revelation chapter 12, We saw, Satan, We saw the evil one, On the attack, Against Messiah, Our promised saviour, The woman in that vision, Represents, The church of God, The church, Of the Old Testament, And Mary, Of course, Was part of that church, But it represents, The church, Of the Old Testament, And, He's there, To, Devour the child, When he was born, He was ready, And waiting, And he launched, His murderous attack, To destroy, The Christ, At his birth, We won't go into, Any further detail, Into that, That vision, Of John, But it is to say, That, The vision, It says, The child, Was snatched up to heaven, And that's probably referring, To his ascension, It just covers all, In one sentence, In one sentence, It covers a whole, A period of his life, And he's snatched up to heaven, To glory, And the church is nourished by God, We read, In the wilderness, It's a wilderness experience, As of 1260 days, Which in Revelation, Speaks of the whole period, From the ascension of Christ, To his return, And so, We are in part of that experience, We are part of that, 1260 days, Today, And we, As Christians, We are living, In a wilderness experience,

[34 : 50] But God is nourishing us, In the wilderness, Well, How do we handle, A passage like this, In Matthew, It is difficult to handle, A passage like this, In Matthew, Very difficult, And I thought to myself, Where do, Similar instances, Occur in scripture, Are there any?

I thought of, Athaliah, The wicked daughter, Of Ahab and Jezebel, Seeking to get at, The messianic line, And slaughtering, All, All on the messianic line, But Joash, Baby Joash, Who escapes, Is hidden, Is hidden for six years, Or think further back, I think of David, Fleeing for his life, And being, Helped by the priest of Himalek, And he gets the sword of Goliath, And flees for his life, And through Doeg, Saul, Launches his attack, And, Some 80 or 90 priests were killed, We read that mothers and fathers, Infants and babies, Were killed along with them, To spare, One person, David, In the light of Christ, Just as Joash was spared,

And I thought again, Of, Perhaps a passage, Which is most, Similar, Back in, Exodus, In chapter one, Where we read, Of Moses, Being spared, As a baby, Moses being raised up, To save his people, From Egypt, And Satan used, Wicked Pharaoh, To have their baby boys, Drowned, In the river Nile, To get at Moses, To get at Moses, Just as he sought to get at the Christ, To destroy God's plan and purpose, Moses was spared, But the other baby boys, Many baby boys, Were destroyed, In the Nile, And Matthew quotes, From, From Jeremiah, Harkening back to, Rachel, When she was dying, And, Delivering, Delivering Benjamin, On the outskirts, Of, Of, Of Bethlehem, Many, Many years ago, But, The context in Jeremiah, Is, Is the Assyrian invasion, And the Babylonian invasion, Is bringing, Trouble and murderous assaults, And so on, And exile, But that, The context in Jeremiah, Is, Is actually, Hope, Because there will be a return, But these verses are extracted here, To remind us, Of what it is, To weep, Without any expectation of comfort, No comfort to be, To be provided, To be assuaged, Because, They are no more, The dark shadow

of Calvary, Is, Is in this chapter, The very terms used, Of the Lord Jesus, The King of the Jews, And the Christ, We see that there, In his trial, Are you the Christ?

What is the placard, Above his head on the cross, The King of the Jews, The shadow of Calvary, Overshadows, These verses, In chapter, Chapter 2, Of Matthew, And what can we say, When Christ comes, Things get bloody, And violent, And violent, Remember how Abraham, Stood before, Solomon, Solomon Gomorrah, Where his nephew was, And he, Pleading with God, He said, Will not the God of all the earth, Do what is right, We trust, That he does right, He knows, What he's doing, He knows, What he understands, And we'll only know, At the glory, And understand these things, How God worked his purposes out, We don't know, Any other person's story, We only really know, Our own stories, In this life, Just like, Peter wanted to know,

[39 : 11] John's story, But Jesus said, That's not your, That's not your position, To know that, I'm just, Speaking to you, Peter, And you're going to suffer, For my sake, We do not understand, Other people's stories, Other people's histories, And we don't understand, The people's histories here, In Bethlehem, These mothers and fathers, Who lost their baby, Boys, John Piper, Bravely attempts, A poem on this subject, He called it, The innkeeper, And he imagines, Jesus visiting Bethlehem, Not long before, His crucifixion, And in the poem, Now meeting, It's a long poem, Now meeting, The elderly innkeeper, Who lost, In the poem, Who lost his wife, And two baby boys, In the massacre, It's difficult to read, The poem I find, It makes me choke up, And, He,

I just read a few, Few, Few lines from the poem, Towards the end of the poem, And his, Innkeeper referred to his sons, Being murdered, And massacred, And how they were killed, And we read, That they sat in silence, And Jacob, The innkeeper, In the poem, Wondered at the stranger's tears, And the stranger says, I am the boy, That Herod wanted to destroy, You gave my parents room, To give me life, And then God let me live, And took your wife, Ask me not why, The one should live, Another die, God's ways are high, And you will know, In time, But I have come, To show you, What the Lord, Prepared, The night,

You made a place, For heaven's light, God's ways are high, And you will know, In time, We must trust, God, In faith, And he goes on, In that poem, To say, At the end, At the end of it, He says, The Lord has given the words, And I, Will place my foot, Upon the head, Of him, Who has the power, Of death, I will place my foot, On the head of him, Who has the power, Of death, For in conclusion, Briefly, As we, Put our trust, In the Lord Jesus Christ, We begin to engage, In the cosmic struggle, With Satan, Begin to participate,

In that, Holy war, And we must put on, The whole armour of God, Paul writes, In Ephesians, About the schemes, Of the devil, The cosmic powers, He writes about, The spiritual forces, Of evil, There is suffering, For God's people, It's a desert experience, Some, Parts of the world, People are suffering, Horrendously, When someone comes, To faith in Christ, They can face death, At the hands, Of their own family, It's not like that, Generally in our country, But I knew a man, Who came to faith, In Christ, And he had to tell me, Confidentially, My marriage, Has become rocky, Because I trusted in Jesus, And there was, A new person in that house, The Lord Jesus,

Things changed, In that case, But his marriage, Was rocky, Because he put his trust, In the Lord Jesus Christ, At the end of his discourse, Following the Lord's Supper, In John's Gospel, Jesus said, In this world, You will have tribulation, You will have pressure, In this world, But he adds, Be of good cheer, Take heart, Be of good cheer, I have overcome, I have overcome the world, And the Lord is applying, Because he has overcome, The world, The flesh, And the devil, Because he has overcome, All these things, And lived a righteous life, Which we couldn't live, And died the death, We couldn't die, Because he has done, These things, We who believe in him, Are united with him, For a time and eternity, And he will give us strength, To endure, The pressure,

[44 : 16] The pressure, Which will come to every one of us, If not today, It was yesterday, If not today, It might be tomorrow, But every one of us, Will face, Tribulation, And pressure in this life, But in Christ, We have overcome, And so as we come to Jesus, We must surely have joy in our heart, And worship him with all our heart, And soul, And strength, And mind, All our being, Worship him, Who has done all things well, And trust that he will give grace, When the times of pressure come, For how long?

Well, Until the day dawns, And the shadows flee away, We will sing, And This is far away, Well, You You