

# Do you worship the Saviour?

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[ 0 : 00 ] We looked on the last Lord's Day evening at the application of God's sovereignty, particularly in the way in which Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt, though the Lord protected and kept them when Herod raged to seek to destroy the Messiah, the Christ.

Joseph submitted and acted out of faith and obedience. He fulfilled the prophecies that had been made over a period of time through the Old Testament.

And this, we said, is to be our attitude, our mindset for 2020. This is one of submissive obedience to the Lord.

And it's vital that we should do this as we go into this new year. The Queen in her speech referred to her bumpy year.

That was a bit of an understatement. But it could well be for us that 2020 will be a bumpy year.

[ 1 : 27 ] It may be so for us as a nation as we face Brexit and IndyRef 2. And that's just to name two problems that are immediately obvious.

As a congregation, it could be bumpy for you in the year, for the church as a whole, especially in the state and condition that we're in.

It could be personally bumpy for any one of us. And we just don't know what the year will bring in terms of its detail.

But we do know, as we reminded ourselves last Lord's Day evening, that the Lord is with us.

And we are to walk in submission to him and in obedience to him. And our submission is to the Sovereign Lord.

[ 2 : 35 ] To the one who not only holds all creation in his hand, but the one who has already planned and already knows how that plan will turn out.

For none can thwart his plan. He is the Sovereign Lord. But we don't know what that plan is. Except we know that it's to bring about the triumph of the church and to present the church as the bride of Christ at his return.

And to assemble together all the saints, both those of the present and those of the past.

And of course those, from our point of view, those who are yet to come. We're to be the bride of Christ. I don't know whether you feel that you're worthy.

But the Lord is making us worthy. He's going to deal with all the pukes and wrinkles and all the imperfections to make us glorious and beautiful as a bride adorned for her husband.

[ 4 : 09 ] And the Lord is doing that. And we have to trust him that he knows what he's doing.

Although for us it seems chaotic and confusing and mysterious, yet it's in his hand.

He's ordered it and is ordering it already. And we saw that in the latter part of this Matthew chapter 2, which we're returning to again this morning.

Because there's another aspect here that is even more important than our submission and obedience in terms of everyday matters and affairs and our life.

And it's that that I want to go back to in the way in which the wise men are presented to us by Matthew in these early verses of chapter 2, which we read just now.

Christmas is past. But do you know when Christmas officially ends? You know that commercially it seems to start just after Easter.

[ 5 : 39 ] But when does it officially finish? If you know the early song, the Christmas song, on the first day of Christmas, you'll know that it ends on the twelfth day of Christmas with twelve drummers drumming.

Well, the twelfth day of Christmas is the 6th of January. And that day in the Christian calendar is called Epiphany. It celebrates the arrival of the wise men in Bethlehem.

In the early church, it was the second most important festival of the Christian year. Easter was the first.

And the third most important was Pentecost. These days were all feast days. And they were thus a focus in the church, in the early church.

Christmas wasn't celebrated until the fourth century, but these other three were celebrated for some 400 years before.

[ 6 : 51 ] And still today, the 6th of January is celebrated in the East as Christmas, remembering the coming of Christ, but related to the wise men.

So, the question we need to ask is, why was Epiphany so important then, but now, why is it so important, unimportant, in our day?

The word Epiphany, by the way, means manifestation or revelation. It's the appearing. And the wise men thus remembers the, sorry, the Epiphany, remembers the wise men appearing.

Because they represent that the Gentiles were quicker to recognize who Jesus was than the Jews. And this same day also celebrates the miracle of Jesus, the first miracle, the changing of water into wine at the wedding of Cana of Galilee.

And it also is the day that recognizes the announcement by the Holy Spirit that Jesus is the Son of God at his baptism.

[ 8 : 11 ] So, Epiphany is revealing who Jesus Christ is. The wise men saw it. It was shown by Jesus in that first miracle, when he turned the water into wine.

And also by the announcement by the Father and by the coming down of the Holy Spirit upon him like a dove at his baptism.

Jesus is God's Son. Jesus is the one who was promised. And so these three things, the wise men, water to wine, and Jesus' baptism, were grouped together to symbolize this revealing of who Jesus Christ is.

And such a revelation is the cause for feasting and for worship. And it's the second aspect that I want us to consider, that of worship.

I think we know how to feast and to celebrate, but sometimes we divorce it from worship. We celebrate that Christ has come, Christ is who he is, but what about worship?

[ 9 : 43 ] Does the celebration overtake our worship of him? And I think that many Christians today have lost the sense of the excitement and expectation of worship.

Now worship is attributing ultimate worth to something. and it's valuing one thing above everything else.

And we can't help worshipping. We all worship because in God's creation we were created to worship him.

but in our fallen condition we have turned our worship to all kinds of other things rather than him. But what we're called to in the gospel and what Matthew brings us to as he talks of the wise men coming and of their coming to worship him, he calls our attention back again.

[ 11 : 12 ] Like calling us back into Genesis chapter 1 and seeing the Lord creating and is worthy of worship, worthy of being the one who we give first place, first worth to.

So it raises the question about whether we give Christ his worth, whether we worship him. When we come to worship the Lord we find him as we worship.

We read in Matthew 2 that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea during the time during the time of King Herod magi or wise men came from the east.

Now I want you to think about that phrase came from the east because this tells us something very important about worship. worship.

And it goes on to tell us that they came to Jerusalem and asked where is the one? Now think about that phrase as well.

[ 12 : 40 ] Where is the one? Because that tells you something about worship, about the one who is to be worshiped.

So then the wise men came from the east. they travelled a great distance. They probably came from Iran and Iraq area.

And they came from there to Judea to Israel. You remember in the Old Testament Israel or Judah was taken to the east to exile in Babylon the same area.

but now these wise men come to little Israel because they were astronomer come astrologers.

They were the scientists of their day and they spent their time watching the moon and the planets and the stars and they did this for years plotting and trying to draw from what they saw some idea of the future.

[ 14 : 03 ] They mapped the design. They calculated the patterns and they analysed it. But they of course didn't view the stars and the planets in the way that we have come to do.

We have come to see that the earth goes round the sun and that there are planets in the solar system and there are stars which are different to planets because the stars appear fixed in the sky where the planets seem to go all over the place.

But if you don't understand that they are in orbits then their movement is rather strange but predictable because of course God had created the universe in order.

It has orderly motions and movements but you have to look at it from the right perspective and they hadn't come to see that. But they believed that these seemingly random movements gave signs and you know about the signs of the zodiac and they believed that the position of the planets which they called stars as well with other stars and which sectors they were in gave certain predictions. What they saw I think was a probably a constellation of several planets with stars and it was almost unique and it heralded the birth of the king.

[ 16 : 13 ] Not just any king but the king the Messiah. I think that they had probably had passed down to them from their grandfathers something that Daniel had told them and other exile Jews had imparted to them that God has promised one to come the one the king the Messiah God's anointed the Christ and it's this sign that they see in the heavens that sets them out in this journey to come with the express purpose of worshipping him.

He's the unique one. Is he the one that you and I worship? Because he's the only one whom God has promised.

He is the Lord and we've looked at his coming. God has come into the world and these wise men saw his sign and they came to worship him and we are to worship him.

So they came guided by this light to the perfect light to the light of the world.

They came across rivers and mountains and deserts to worship him. They didn't count the cost of coming.

[ 18 : 19 ] They came. Incidentally, you've realized, have you, that the Bible doesn't actually tell us how many came. It's usually on your calendars and cards, three wise men.

But we simply don't know how many came. They gave three gifts, but there could have been ten of them, a dozen of them, twenty or two.

Could have been three. We just don't know. But they came. They came to worship. The Bible tells us that they arrived in Jerusalem, asking, where is the newborn king of the Jews?

We've seen his star as it arose, and we've come to worship him. They didn't know anything about it in the palace.

King Herod knew nothing. Nor did anyone else. And they're alarmed. Herod particularly is alarmed because he sees in this king, this one, a rival to himself and to his generations as monarchs imposed upon the people.

[ 19 : 48 ] And he wants rid of this one. He has no intention to worship. though he pretends to the wise men that he will come and worship, but he comes to destroy.

And we've seen that. But these wise men came to worship. worship. When they found that the king was not in the palace, they ended up in Bethlehem because that's where they were told the prophecies said the king would be born.

So they go to Bethlehem and the star or whatever they saw, however it happened, and I don't know, stopped or appeared over the house where Jesus was.

And they came and they saw the child with his mother Mary. They knew that they had found the one.

Do you know that you have found the one? Have you recognized who Jesus Christ is?

[ 21 : 22 ] And do you worship him? And is he the sole object of your worship? there is no other saviour.

It's Jesus Christ alone. There is no other king and lord of all. It is Jesus Christ alone.

It's to him, Paul says in Philippians 2, that every knee will bow before him and acknowledge that he is king.

Every atheist, every agnostic, everyone who's apathetic, everyone who follows another religion, everyone will one day bow the knee before him as king and honour him. But they may not know him as saviour, their saviour, but they will know that he is king. Do you know him as king and lord and also as your saviour?

[ 22 : 47 ] It's important that we start 2020 knowing him and worshipping him. our focus should be in finding him if we haven't found him as our lord and as our saviour.

And the rest of our lives should be spent in serving him and worshipping him. We must hurry on. if you receive him in worship then it brings joy.

When they saw the star they were overjoyed Matthew tells us. The star appeared to them and they were delighted they were full of joy because it was leading them to him.

To the wise men the star highlighted spotlighted Jesus. There were lots of people in Bethlehem they saw the star but they didn't see Jesus.

[ 24 : 30 ] They lived next door but they didn't come and worship him. They lived in the same town but they didn't hear that he had come.

Some shepherds heard and they came and they worshipped but very few came to him.

These Gentiles from way out east they came they worshipped him but not many came to him.

in the gospel he is revealed you have heard of him but have you come to him?

Do you worship him? Is he your Lord? do you serve him?

[ 25 : 39 ] Not many do. Many see many hear but not many come.

But we shouldn't give up on people who don't come at first we should continue to pray for them.

Maybe you have loved ones who have never seen Christ and never come to worship him.

You were born witness and testimony as Christians before them but it's been ineffectual. Don't give up.

Pray that they may come. not many do come comparatively but we are to be light shining for him that they may know where to come that they may find him for we should always lead to him and point to him just as the star the constellations pointed to Jesus and then lastly we must come to praise him these wise men bowed down before him and worshipped him they didn't stand silently in the house and perhaps even reverently bow their heads in prayer but never said a word they expressed their worship by bowing down before him and presenting gifts to him as the expression of their worship of him you see there are some who seem to come to church just to watch worship to watch what goes on and this was something that happened through the

Greek Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church where people watched the priest going about the rituals of worship but that's all they did they watched but the Protestant Reformation restored again an active worship we have sung and we have sung together we have prayed and it hasn't been me that's been praying it's you should have been praying the minister merely leads in prayer not praise for the people we are to participate in worship we are to worship not to watch it happening and these wise men bowed down and offered their gifts as the acts of worship themselves we are to participate in worship we are to praise him and you see we can worship him at home and we are to do that family worship private worship but we also need public worship when we gather together to come before him and worship him together and

[ 30 : 18 ] Jesus has promised especially to be with the two or three or the number that gather together in his name and that's why it's important for us to gather together to worship him together because in a special way he is in the midst of us yes we can worship and should worship at home and in other places but it's especially important for us to gather together to worship together to join together in this humble devotion to him in the Old Testament times and New

Testament times that when the people gathered to worship they would lift up holy hands well we kind of frown on people who do that if you've been into a service where people have lifted their hands up is our expression in perhaps more reserved circumstances than we might but have you seen a child and perhaps a child has come to you a little one and held up their hands to you because they want you to pick them up and to cuddle them and if you've done that how lovely it is when the child nestles into you and crawls into your arms to spend time with you well I think that while we may not literally hold up our hands we should hold up to the

Lord the hands of our hearts as it were that he should gather us up and draw us close to him for we're to be assured that he delights in our coming to him and in our wanting to be close you remember that in the garden of God came to Adam and Eve and they had fellowship together God

has made us for fellowship with him he wants us to draw near and to come and to come to him in worship now in order for this to happen he must have changed our hearts and made us new we cannot come unless we're in Christ unless he has made us his so then as we come at the beginning and go into this new year may we go with worship and continue that worship of him coming from wherever we are even the distance to worship him coming to participate ourselves in him and in his worship and follow the example of these wise gentile men may God grant us his blessing in this year let us pray