

Jesus is the Promised King

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[0 : 00] Crown Him with many crowns. That's what the song we just sang together.! And this morning as we open up our scriptures to Matthew chapter 2,! That's going to be kind of the theme of our time together is Christ the King.

Worship the King. Jesus as the Anointed One, the anticipated and promised King. Here He comes. I don't know if you've been following any of the news this past week, but with the fall of Syria and the fall of Assad and his regime, and now the Jews who are now coming into the Golan Heights and now occupying this space that was kind of the demilitarized zone between Israel and Syria, now there is this anticipation that is this growing anticipation of a coming King.

I was just watching some documentaries this past week, and a rabbi who is speaking about some prophecies that were captured in the Mishnah. The Mishnah, which was an oral tradition that was written down about 2000 years ago.

And in the Mishnah, as this rabbi was indicating, there was a promise, a prophecy, in this Mishnah of the Messiah and his coming that would be aligned with the taking over of the northern part of Israel and the pulling together of Israel in its unified way.

This growing sense of a coming Messiah harkens back to the same kind of enthusiasm and energy that was present in the first century around the coming of the Messiah.

[1 : 58] And of course, that Messiah did come. His name was Jesus Christ, and we're going to learn about Him today. And here we are as believers, looking at the world around us, seeing some things unfold in the Scriptures that would make us wonder if the second coming is right around the corner.

And here are Jews who, because of what's unfolding now in the Middle East, and President Netanyahu, who is communicating not only to the people of Israel, but to the people of the Middle East, this positive message of the fact that in his mind at least, what is unfolding is the unifying of peace in that Middle Eastern region.

Which, by the way, is only possible when the Messiah comes. We are on the cusp, really, of amazing days. And the question that comes to us from this passage perhaps brings that much more force to us, and that is, how will we respond to the King?

Will you receive the King? Matthew, who was an apostle of Jesus Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is writing this gospel account.

The gospel of Matthew that we're studying through the past several weeks and moving on to next week as well. We refer to this as the gospel of Matthew because it is preeminently about the life and ministry of Jesus.

[3 : 35] This good news of what Jesus came to do in terms of leading us to him and making it possible through faith in Christ to be forgiven of sin.

Matthew will demonstrate from the start that his goal is to demonstrate that Jesus is really the focal point of the message.

That Jesus as Savior, but also, and more importantly, Jesus as Christ, Messiah, anointed one, and King. The prominent feature of this genealogy that begins this gospel record captured for us in the first 17 verses draws attention to that very fact.

It begins in verse 1 this way, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Then in verse 16, we find Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Christ.

Then in verse 17, speaking of the generations that existed, the generations from Abram to David were 14 generations. From David to the deportation to Babylon, 14 generations.

[4 : 49] From the deportation of Babylon to Christ, 14 generations. Christ being preeminent, the anointed one, the King. And what is interesting, then, when we turn the page to verse 18, we see this interesting account about how Jesus, in his birth, notice in verse 18, now the birth of Jesus Christ took place this way.

And yet, as you read the account from verses 18 to the end of the chapter, there's almost nothing about the birth itself. The kind of human features that we would want to know.

Those kinds of things that we get from Luke, the gospel of Luke, the account that's there. Of how Joseph and Mary made their way to Bethlehem. Of how Mary was great with child.

And she delivered. And she wrapped this baby in swaddling clothes. She laid him in a manger. Those are the kinds of details we would expect in a birthing account.

But none of that is present in Matthew. Why? Because Matthew wants to draw attention to Christ the King. Jesus as the anointed one.

[6 : 06] Jesus as the preeminent one. Jesus as the promised king. So the focus of Matthew's narrative is squarely and supremely on Jesus Christ.

Son of David. Worthy of worship. And all of this raises the question for us this morning that will come into view is how will we respond to the king?

Jesus is king. How will we respond to the king? What will be the way that you respond and what will be the results of this message on your heart?

As we read through this passage, we're going to find ourselves in one of six groups. These responses that we'll see as we work our way through this passage today.

And I think these six responses kind of help to encompass the breadth of potential responses to Christ as king.

[7 : 09] And we're going to just walk through them together this morning. Beginning with Joseph and Mary. Joseph and Mary's response that begins there in chapter 1, verse 18.

Moving through chapter 2, verse 1. And we see that Joseph and Mary receive the king obediently. Joseph and Mary receive the king obediently.

obediently. That really is and must be the first response of every true follower of Christ. Every true subject of Christ is to receive the king humbly and obediently.

we find in chapter 2, verse 1, it begins this way, now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king. And our scene, it changes drastically from chapter 2, from chapter 1 to chapter 2.

And if you are familiar with this story, you might be asking yourself the question, what in the world just happened here? We were in Nazareth. Joseph received this word from an angel and now what has taken place?

[8 : 15] How in the world did we make our way to Bethlehem? And there's much that happens in transition, but I just want to draw your attention to a few things, both as a reminder and as helping to fill in some of the white spaces so that we can understand the significance of our response to the king that must align with the hearts of Joseph and Mary and a desire to yield and be obedient to the king.

Last week, we saw in verse 19 of chapter 1 that the character of Joseph that's described, it says here that Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put Mary to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

In his heart, there was a desire to align himself with the patterns that he saw in the line, the law, to be consistent with what he knew about who God was and at the same time to echo God's heart.

That heart that we see throughout the Old Testament, this heart of mercy, this heart of compassion, this is the heart that we see and Joseph, he wants to be obedient to God's law, but he wants to show the compassion of God's heart.

So what is he to do? He's conflicted and so an angel shows up to Joseph and gives him a word, a word of confidence, take Mary to be your wife and name the child Jesus because he's going to save his people from their sins.

[9 : 45] And then we find Joseph's response there in verses 24 and 25. Notice, when Joseph woke from his sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

He took his wife. He knew her not until she had given birth to a son and he called his name Jesus. Joseph obeyed and yielded without hesitation.

Joseph obeyed immediately. He obeyed completely. He obeyed uprightly and justly. There was this consistent pattern of his heart to do what he was told.

He followed through. Joseph was a man who's obedient and his obedience to God would mark his life as the adopted father of Jesus Christ.

But several months earlier, Mary would also show her compliant heart as the angel Gabriel will come to her to explain the events that will shortly transpire for her.

[10 : 48] We find that account in Luke chapter 1. I just want to briefly draw your attention to it. Luke chapter 1 verses 30 to 33. It says, the angel said to her, this is Gabriel, do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son. You shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end.

And I'm sure Mary as she's wondering, how in the world is this going to happen? She actually asks that question in the next verse. Mary says to the angel, how will this be since I am a virgin?

And the angel answers her, the Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And then in verse 38, one of my favorites in the Gospel of Luke says, And Mary said, Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word and the angel departed from her.

[12 : 03] I am a servant of the Lord. I am God's subject. I belong to Him. And I will do what God has told me to do.

My heart will yield. I will be submissive. I recognize Him as King. He is in charge. In the heart of every true subject of the King has a compliant heart like Joseph and Mary desire not only to know what the Word of God says, but to follow through and to do it without hesitation.

I will do what God has said. I am a servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word. And that is the testimony of the obedient hearts, the compliant hearts of Mary and Joseph that we find in our account.

And that's how they find their way and make their way to Bethlehem. So when we come to Matthew chapter 2 verse 1, that's what we see. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea.

How? How was he born there? Well, he was born there because there was a decree, those of you who know, in Luke chapter 2, a decree that went out by Caesar Augustus that all the world would be registered.

[13:19] And guess what? Compliant hearts do. Compliant hearts obey. And when compliant hearts obey, compliant hearts find themselves exactly where God wants them to be.

And so they find themselves in Bethlehem, exactly where the scriptures told them to be. But all of the events that got them there happened because of obedience, submission, compliance, recognizing God as king.

He is king today. He wasn't just king 2,000 years ago. Jesus is king. He's Christ, the king. Do we have hearts that are willing to submit, comply, and surrender to God as king, subjects of him?

We make our way then to this second group of individuals who now show up in Bethlehem, excuse me, show up in Jerusalem. These wise men we're going to begin to see in verses 1 and 2 and we're going to find that these wise men seek the king eagerly.

You might use the word earnestly. You might use the word expectantly. Whatever word you want to put there is up to you but there is this eager anticipation, expectancy of the king who is there.

[14:43] Notice it says at the end of verse 1, 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.

Now arriving on the scene is this group of wise men and by the way that title should sound familiar to us having just finished a study in Daniel. There are only two places in the Old Testament where we find reference to wise men.

The first is in the Exodus and wise men that were present in Egypt there with Moses and then in Babylon and Persia wise men were there during the exile.

These wise men are a title that comes to us and it serves to describe this group of individuals who had a priestly function and served as representatives within the context of authority in an empire.

Babylon and Persia being one of the prominent places that we find them. This group was known for their attention to astrological kinds of things and so they already have kind of an awareness of the stars and of constellations and those kinds of things so their hearts are already kind of fascinated by that kind of situation.

[16:08] These are those individuals who in media in Persia already had a sensitivity to the fact that built in to their understanding was that when new kind of stars and constellations would happen it would designate in their minds at least the presence of a new king.

But we also get hints from the Old Testament that there was a considerable group of exiles that remained back in Babylon and back in Persia when those exiles the 50,000 exiles that came in the first return came to Jerusalem.

In that community that remained there was a group of Jews that had copies of the law. We find an example of this in Ezra chapter 7 verse 10 where Ezra will 80 years later bring another group of Jews back from Babylon to Jerusalem and we find this about him in Ezra 7.10 it says Ezra was not only a scribe familiar with the scriptures but it indicates that he knew the scriptures well and he knew them in totality.

Those scriptures those copies of the scriptures that were present there in Babylon and accessible to this community of exiles who remained behind.

We find that Ezra in his return to Jerusalem will send back word to Babylon and will ask for several individuals who can trace their lineage back to Levi so they can actually serve as priests they can serve as Levites and temple servants within the temple setting and they're able to do this because their heritage was still intact even 150 years after the original conquest of Jerusalem so it's likely that these men that are represented in our passage today are Gentiles who have in some way enjoyed or experienced some experience with this community and have exposure to the scriptures and have been called because of the scriptures to celebrate this coming king.

[18 : 39] One prophecy that's captured in the Torah it's in Numbers chapter 24 verse 17 speaks about this star and speaks about this future king it says I see him but not now I behold him but not near a star shall come out of Jacob a scepter shall rise out of Israel it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth perhaps they were reviewing this passage this is actually a prophecy of Balaam he is prophesying over the people of Israel before they make their way into the promised land and yet speaking for God and speaking of this future king perhaps this is the star that they were thinking about familiar with the Old Testament these Gentile strangers these foreigners making their way into Jerusalem their expectant hearts this trip that would have covered anywhere between 700 and 900 miles something that would have been anywhere between four to six months this massive investment of time as long as a year's investment both there and the return trip this was a costly endeavor this was a decision marked by faith and anticipation when they get to Jerusalem they encounter some individuals that's where we get our next response here in verses two and three the people who hear about the king hear about the king anxiously you might also say nervously that's our third point this morning the people who hear about the king anxiously verse two says 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 in all

Jerusalem with him where is he who has been born king of the Jews the wise men they make their way to Jerusalem they begin asking questions here and the result of their questioning around Jerusalem is a trouble trouble which is the word terrified it's the word for turmoil it's the word for great distress that here in first century while there was still this anticipation and enthusiasm and expectation of a coming Messiah the questions of this group raise the minds fear and anxiety and turmoil the Greek construction of this word that they were saying or asking these wise men who come saying or asking it's in the it emphasizes the continual nature of the asking that's taking place you get the impression they make their way to Jerusalem and whoever they meet they are engaging with this question where is he who is born king of the Jews that's on their minds and all of Jerusalem is hearing this question being asked over and over again by this group of wise men we saw his star in the east a great deal of speculation has happened around what was that star was it some angelic body was it planets aligning was it a

Halley's comet and a lot of speculation can happen but what seems clear about the text especially in verse 9 is whatever they saw was a supernatural event notice verse 9 the star that they had seen when it rose before them came until it rested over the place where the child was that light and in the Hebrew and in Greek star is often used synonymously with light whatever that light was seems to have appeared once when they were in the east and now after they have received word we're going to see in just a moment from Herod as to where Jesus was born now all of a sudden this light shows again and it settles over one place which makes it very clear where Jesus was during this time there was widespread expectation of a coming king and yet the people rather than having their hearts enlarged are troubled why?

well the reason why is because you don't come into Jerusalem an occupied place with Roman authority and begin asking questions about a Jewish king that is a recipe for disaster especially when the nation is under this outside authority and the one who is over you Herod the Great we'll see in just a moment was rash and violent and was like a hair trigger ready to go off they knew the temperament of King Herod they knew their life was in danger they knew the violent nature and temperament of this king but the desire of the wise men was to worship their desire was to come we're going to see this throughout our passage today the attention to worship the king and while the people of Jerusalem should have heard this news and wondered and the anticipation in their own hearts should have grown instead they think about the consequences of these outsiders and their hearts are troubled rather than being overjoyed we move our way to Herod in his response in verses 3 to 8 and if you're depending upon the version of the notes that you have the numerical values may be a little off on 4, 5, and 6 so just bear with me and use the notes that we have on the board here

Herod he plots against the king secretly we're going to see that in verses 3 to 8 it says when Herod the king heard this he was troubled and all of Jerusalem with him and assembling all the chief priests and the 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 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 Herod hears the word from the street as it were he hears the cacophony or the chorus of individuals who are now coming to him and bringing him word about these outsiders who are curious about a king so Herod calls these two private meetings the first meeting with the religious leaders and the second secret meeting that will take place with the wise men themselves his goal is ultimately to eliminate the threat his goal is to plot against

[26 : 25] Jesus his goal is to exterminate this future king so there's no threat to his power Herod the Crate was a half Jew and half Edomite there were seasons in his reign where he showed great kindness to the people he was wealthy he was politically gifted he seemed to be loyal he was a good administrator he even during a famine he was superb at building projects and he demonstrated benevolence to the people but he loved power and he loved power especially towards the end of his life and the and the further he got or the closer he got to the end of his life the more paranoid he would become so that the woman that he would marry who was a Jew he married her in order to be in the good graces of the Israelites he felt threatened by her and he killed her he killed two of his sons and then towards the very close proximity of his death he would kill another a third son

Herod was a man who was known for his bloodthirstiness his cruelty distinguished itself among the citizens of Jerusalem so that towards the end of his life he arrested several of the citizens of Israel and he commanded that they be put to death on the day of his death he didn't want people in Jerusalem to celebrate he wanted people in Jerusalem to mourn and so by killing those who were citizens of Jerusalem related to family members in Jerusalem he could ensure that in fact people would sorrow and grieve on that day rather than desire for that day to come so there's no wonder why all of Jerusalem was troubled they knew the rashness they knew the violence of King Herod this was a recipe for disaster and Herod was intent on exterminating his threat and he would do it privately he would do it secretly he would do it deceptively so he calls in these religious leaders we find their response in verses 4 to 6 kind of captured within the greater context of Herod the religious leaders who speak about the king carelessly what I mean by carelessly is without concern they couldn't care less about the information that they were giving

Herod calls for them in verse 6 excuse me verse 4 it says he assembles all the chief priests and the scribes he is interested in making sure that he wasn't leaving anything to chance Herod assembles the best and the brightest he makes sure that they're all present this job description these guardians of the law these who knew the law inside and out they were the experts as it were the Cambridge the Harvard the Yale of the day they were those kinds of mental scholars of the law Herod questions them and they provide a response and the response is telling they quote from Micah chapter 5 verse 2 the response is clear it's direct it's confident it's immediate they speak of that which is according to the law they have certainty in the scriptures they have knowledge of the word of God they follow through they come through with the answer they know the answer they know the chapter they know the verse they can quote it by heart and yet while they know the scriptures there seems to be no follow through in their heart they have all the knowledge of the word of God in their head but it hasn't changed the way they live no follow up no inquiry no trip to Bethlehem no wondering or inquisition and asking questions about these outsiders these strangers who have come for all the knowledge of the scriptures they have there is zero action there is zero interest in this king

Matthew plainly says that Jesus was the Messiah and these wise men that come will express it he who is born king of the Jews not just to become king of the Jews but he was in fact king of the Jews the moment he was born so Herod now summons the wise men those wise men he says in verse 7 come secretly and he ascertains from them what time this star had appeared why would he do that well because Herod has begun to narrow in on the answer he's seeking to focus in on his target he knows that the dawning of this star it will coincide with the birth of Jesus Christ so he calls for these wise men quietly not known publicly his desire is not to create a scene not to spark a movement among the people verse 8 he sent them to

Bethlehem saying go and search diligently for the child and when you have found him bring me word that I may come and worship him of course this is just a ploy to discover the location of Jesus this deceptive coercing of these wise men to gain knowledge to send the wise men to do his bidding and then once the target is identified then he can enact his plan which we'll see next week the next phrase is amazing it says they went on their way and behold the star that they had seen went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was and that leads us to the final response from the wise men the wise men who worship the king joyfully they worship the king joyfully 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 it came to rest over the place where the child was when they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother they fell down and worshipped him then opening their treasures they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh do you find it fascinating that once they receive this news from king herod that now finally the star reappears that now finally that star will shine and will direct them straight to

[33 : 48] Bethlehem and to the precise house where Jesus and his family are staying which means that this trip that would go through Jerusalem was by design it was by design because of the things that we're going to see next week will set in motion the prophecies that will help to confirm that Jesus in fact is the Messiah this flight into Egypt from Joseph and Mary and Jesus this extermination of the children two years and under that's taking place in Bethlehem according to the prophecies that have been written and then finally the movement of the family back to Nazareth all of those things that were set in motion because God had sent them to Jerusalem to start to Herod in particular and that would set in motion all of the other prophecies related to Jesus in the beginnings of his life but when these magi when these wise men see the star they're overwhelmed one commentator says puts it this way he says quote the magi were overwhelmed that the special star appeared to them it seems almost as if

Matthew were at a loss for words to describe their ecstasy and when they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy the original text piles up superlatives to emphasize the extent of their exhilaration they felt thus indicating to us their uniquely strong interest in this great event end quote Matthew helps to capture for us through the inspiration of the spirit the electricity that ignited their hearts that the joy that they experienced was almost too much for words they see this star this confirmation that they had seen in the east the confirmation of both general and special revelation the star that they saw in the sky and the word that they had read from the scriptures and now coupled with this new revelation this word of God this prophecy from Micah and now here again this general revelation of this star standing over the very house where Jesus was

God was in this and when they come to the house it says they fell down and worshipped this expression of devotion to this king this expression of worship that notice it's not to Mary but they bowed down and worshipped him they worshipped Christ they worshipped the king and their worship that has been sacrificial up to this point in terms of their time and the potential risk of this trip now demonstrates itself in this outflow of gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh valuable and costly gifts that were true gifts for a king we find in verse 12 they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod so they departed to their own country by another way God's preserving hand over his son the king we see in our passage this morning a number of responses and I wonder where you might fit yourself in terms of your response to the king back in

Jeremiah chapter 29 we find a word that God gives to the exiles who are in Babylon and while they are experiencing the consequences of their sin and it appears as if that perhaps God may have abandoned them there is a hope that is given by the prophet Jeremiah during this time of how they are to respond to the king for I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord plans for welfare and not for evil to give you a future and a hope then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will hear you you will seek me and find me when you seek with all your heart I will be found by you declares the Lord and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you declares the Lord and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you this is the promise of God to his people if you seek me with all your heart you will find me primarily to those who were of the

Jewish community those who were exiles especially those who were driven out because of their sin the promise of God's forgiving and loyal steadfast love to his people he will keep his promises for those who seek him like these wise men sought after the Lord but what about us most of us in this room perhaps would qualify as outsiders not not a part of the commonwealth of Israel not not a part of the Jewish community what about us well the hope from us is bound up in the wise men and the same anticipation that they had of pursuing the king we find in Isaiah chapter 55 a word to the outsiders when it says in Isaiah 55 verse 3 incline your ear and come to me hear that your soul may live and I will make with you an everlasting covenant my steadfast love sure love for

[39 : 44] David there we are the Davidic covenant the promise of God that extends not only to his people but includes the outsiders notice in verse 5 to 7 behold you shall call a nation that you do not know in a nation that did not know you shall run to you because of the Lord your God and of the Holy One of Israel for he has glorified you seek the Lord while he may be found call upon him while he is near let the wicked forsake their way and the unrighteous man his thoughts let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon that is a word for us a word for us of God who beckons us who calls us as king to enjoy the benefits the benefits of salvation

Jesus as savior it happens as we come to terms with our sin and we come and ask for forgiveness from God himself and we embrace him not only as savior but also as king as lord as master and we worship him we fall before him we have hearts that are inclined to obedience and submission to our king we lay it down and we recognize his authority that is over us and we recognize the wonder and the beauty of his invitation to join with us in fellowship for those who come to him in faith I wonder this morning do you know Jesus and not just know him intellectually like the Pharisees did like the scribes like the religious leaders who knew everything they needed to know about the law but it didn't change their heart oh may

God help us those of us who know the word of God so well and yet it doesn't do anything to change the trajectory of our life may God help us to bow before the king this holiday season and that that bowing before the king would be perpetual and not just for the Christmas season but would go on and continue and that our life would be a beacon of light that would call others to the same kind of worship the same kind of experience and enjoying the benefits of what we see here in Isaiah chapter 55 seek the Lord while he may be found call upon him while he is near may God help us as God's people to see and know and love and worship the king oh God we praise you for the example of the wise men thank you that even with limited knowledge even with a broken view of astrology and looking for signs in the heavens that you by your kindness and your grace still drew them to yourself and gave them the joy the exploding exuberant overflowing joy of seeing and encountering yourself there in

Bethlehem and worshiping the king God may we not have the sterile carefree careless knowledge of the scribes and Pharisees just knowing the answers knowing the scriptures quoting the verses but may the word that we know the scripture itself change our hearts change our affections and may the change that people see in us draw attention to the wonder of our king and may our lives shine as stars as lights as well as we seek to testify to the wonder of the true light the great light the only light God himself we pray in Jesus name amen God bless you have a great week miracle Thank you.