

Wise Men Made Wise

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- [0 : 00] Let us worship God by singing to His praise from Psalm 2, page 2 of the Blue Book.
- Psalm 2, page 2 at verse 7. The king then solemnly declares, I will proclaim the Lord's decree.
- Today your father I have become. You are my son, he said to me. Ask me, and for your heritage I will give you nations near and far.
- You will break them with an iron rod and smash them like a pot or jar. Now therefore, kings, true wisdom find.
- You judges of the earth give ear. With reverence come and serve the Lord. Bow down with joy and trembling fear.
- [1 : 18] Pay homage to the royal son. Lest you and wrath aside are thrust. For swiftly can his anger blaze.
- Blessed are all who in him trust. Let us sing these verses. Psalm 2, page 2 at verse 7. The king then solemnly declares.
- The king then solemnly declares.
- I will proclaim the Lord's decree. To the king then solemnly declares.
- Now let us overwhelm me. Lord, the king then solemnly declares. This king then solemnly declares.
- [2 : 32] I'll give you patience here, my friend.
- You'll leave the wind like I am on board. Not smudged and light upon your sound.
- No bed for kings to his own light. Your judges on the earth in the end.
- With heaven's cup and send the Lord. The God with joy and trembling fear.
- Pay for nature to the royal sun. Bless you in the heart of the Lord.
- [3 : 59] For smithly can his anger be.
- For the one who is set before us as the Supreme King. May we know him as our King. And our Lord.
- And our God. So that there is that element of worship and praise in our lives daily.
- As we acknowledge his supremacy over our hearts. Over the direction of our lives. That our lives might reflect his power and his grace.
- His wisdom and his mercy. As those who have been touched by the power of thy spirit. Lord we pray that thou wouldst come into our gathering this evening.
- [5 : 34] Presence thyself here. That we might know indeed that thou art here. And that thou art with us as we reflect upon a part of thy truth.
- We give thee thanks for the one who came into the world. The one who was in the beginning with God.

Face to face with God. Who is God. And who shone as a light into darkness. So that the darkness.

Could not overcome the light. Could not master the light. We bless thy name that this is so. That the light triumphs over darkness.

And that darkness will ultimately. Be seen to be in subjection. To the power of the light. When that day dawns.

[6 : 40] When Christ comes in the glory. And the majesty. Of his power and his might. Not as he came first of all.

But when he comes again. Every knee shall bow. Every tongue confess. That Christ is the Lord.

O grant most gracious God. That thou wouldst draw souls to thyself. Whilst we are still in a day of grace. And a day of mercy.

For we know from thy truth. That those who were brought into contact with the Lord Jesus. That there were those who bowed down.

And acknowledged his kingship. Even when he was but an infant. As they paid homage. To the one who was born.

[7 : 41] King of the Jews. King of the Jews. We thank thee. That he is not just king of the Jews. But king of the Gentiles also. As one whose message.

Goes throughout the world. So that not only do the Jewish people. Come to benefit. From the power and grace of almighty God.

But that the Gentile nations too. Are brought in. Even every soul. From thou as purpose to redeem. From all eternity.

Brought in. To the fellowship of the king. Into the warmth. Of his love. And his embrace. That they might.

Eternally dwell. In fellowship with him. Bless every home and family. As we are found before thee at this hour.

[8 : 43] Bless those unable to be present. Through thy restraint and providence. Those who may be housebound. Those who may be elderly and frail.

Those who may be desirous of being present. And yet are unable to do so. Although in their minds. They may. Flit towards this place.

Their bodies. Not allowing them. To do what their mind would wish. Grant O Lord. That thou wouldst draw near to them. In the solitude of their homes this evening.

By their firesides. Wherever they are found. O draw near and speak. Graciously and tenderly to their souls.

Bless we pray thee those. Who are grieving the loss of loved ones. Be near to them. In their loss and in their grief. In their loss and in their grief.

[9 : 46] In the desolation. And emptiness. That death inevitably brings. When our homes are visited. By the messenger of death.

Bring comfort. To sorrowing hearts. Bring uplift. To those who may be downcast. Bring peace. To the troubled areas of the world.

And above all we pray. Where there is constant conflict. O that the voice of the gun.

And of ammunition may be silenced. And that peace might break out. That the peace that comes. Through faith in Christ.

May indeed be visited. Upon warring nations. So that they come. To live in subjection to thee.

- [10 : 49] Bless the congregation. As they await. The ordination and induction. Of thy servant.
In their midst. Grant O Lord. That thou wouldst bless him. In his soul. Uphold him. And prepare him for the challenges.
Of the work that lies before him. Grant O Lord. That he be given souls for his hire. Given much encouragement. The ministers.
Amongst the flock here. Bless thy cause. To the ends of the earth. Come with us. As we turn to thy truth. Cleanse in the blood.
In Jesus name we ask it. With forgiveness of sin. Amen. Let us further sing to his praise.
- [11 : 47] From Psalm 118. Page 156. Psalm 118. Page 156. Psalm 118. Page 156. Psalm 118. Page 156. Psalm 118.
Page 156. Psalm 118. At verse 15. Triumphant shouts. Of joy resound. In places where the righteous dwell. The Lord's right hand. Is lifted high. His mighty hand. Does all things well. I shall not die.
But I shall live. The Lord's great works I will proclaim. The Lord's great works I will proclaim. The Lord's severely chastened me. You have clearly chastened me, but rescued me from death's domain.
Throw wide the gates of righteousness. I'll enter and give thanks to God. This is the gate of God, through which the righteous come before the Lord.
You answered me, I will give thanks. Salvation comes from you alone. The storm the builders had refused has now become the cornerstone.
- [13 : 08] Let us sing these verses. Psalm 118, page 156, verse 15. Triumphant shouts of joy resound in places where the righteous dwell.
The Lord's right hand is lifted down. This mighty hand is lifted down.
This mighty hand is lifted down. This mighty hand is lifted down.
This mighty hand is lifted down. The mighty hand gets of these wells. I shall not die, but I shall live.
The mighty hand is lifted down. The mighty hand is lifted down.
- [14 : 27] The mighty hand is lifted down. The mighty hand is lifted down. The mighty hand is lifted down. The mighty hand is lifted down.
The mighty hand is lifted down. The mighty hand is lifted down. The mighty hand is lifted down.
This mighty hand is lifted down. the mighty hand is lifted down. This mighty hand is lifted down. The righteous come before the Lord.
You answered me, I will give thanks. Salvation comes on you, the Lord.
The storm, the weather's trying, refuse. The storm become the cornerstone.
- [15 : 53] Let us now read from the New Testament from the Gospel according to Matthew chapter 2.
The Gospel according to Matthew chapter 2. 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 them. 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.

[17 : 16] 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. 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, a star that they had seen when it rose, went before them, Till 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, And they fell down and worshipped him.

[18 : 34] 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.

Amen. And may God bless to us that reading from His truth.

Let us further sing to His praise from Psalm 119, page 405 of the Psalter.

Psalm 119, page 405. Psalm 119 at verse 59.

I thought upon my former ways, and did my life well try. And to Thy testimonies pure, my feet then turned I.

[19 : 43] I did not stay nor linger long, As those that slothful are, But hastily, Thy laws to keep, Myself I did prepare.

Bands of ill men me robbed, Yet I Thy precepts did not slight. I rise at midnight, Thee to praise, Even for Thy judgments right.

I am companion To all those who fear and Thee obey. O Lord, Thy mercy fills the earth.

Teach me Thy laws, I pray. These verses, Psalm 119, page 405, verse 59. I thought upon my former ways, and did my life well try.

I thought upon my former ways, and did my life well try.

[21 : 02] I do thy best in all these good, My dream then turned I.

I did not stay nor linger long, As those that slothful are, But in sin, I longed to be, My self I will reveal.

I longed to be, My self I will reveal.

My self I will ■endain on me, My lord Loves, My poor God of ill men athletes, And I amaten I leaveoni to forces in court. I amona much more obliged, As those who are afraid of ease. Amongst of deaf people are afraid of cute, And you are afraid, My self I will?? I do not contradict anything. I am Christian. I am Thema King. I am a Christian I am equally particular, I am an bully I am bumble as a fifth all night hot ah ah O Lord, my mercy, help me here. Teach me thy own side here.

Let us now turn to the passage that we read. And we may read again at the beginning of the chapter, the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 2.

[23 : 30] 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.

And I'd like to reflect on that phrase, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. Matthew, in these verses, tells us of an epic journey that was made by these men seeking Christ.

Made by a number of people whom he designates as wise men. And the narrative that we read sets before us some very fascinating truths that are very relevant and applicable to ourselves.

So, in considering this journey to Christ, I'd like to consider four thoughts. First, their identity.

Second, their inquiry. Third, the implementation of their inquiry. And fourth, their illuminating visit.

[25 : 05] First, their identity.

First, their identity. Matthew writes, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king. And you notice how precisely he dates this information.

Wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. Wise men from the east. In some ways it's left kind of open, isn't it?

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, states, For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach, to save those who believe.

And he goes on to write, Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jews, and folly to Gentiles. And then Paul states, For consider your calling, brothers, not many of you were wise according to worldly standards.

[26 : 20] Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. But notice, Paul doesn't say that none who were wise, or none who were powerful, or none of noble birth were called.

He just says, Not many. So, the suggestion is that some who were wise, some who were powerful, some who were of noble birth, were called.

And here Matthew writes of these wise men. He doesn't state in his writing that they were called by God, but just that they were wise men.

Wise men, the culture to which they belonged, were often known as the Magi. Matthew doesn't tell us either how many there were, but merely that wise men came to Jerusalem.

Obviously, more than one, because he doesn't write a wise man. But how many there were, remain shrouded in secrecy.

[27 : 45] I know that in popular thinking, it is considered to be three, probably on account of the fact that three gifts were presented to the infant Lord Jesus.

Matthew doesn't say that there were three. So, are we going to argue with Matthew and say, well, we know there were three, when Matthew doesn't say that there were three?

three. I understand, therefore, that the actual number is not of great significance.

And I think the term wise men to mean, at least, that there were men of learning, educated men, men who studied, amongst other things, astrology and astronomy.

For Matthew tells us, they saw a star. Astrology, as you know, is a pseudoscience that climbs to divine information about human affairs and terrestrial events by studying the movements and relative positions of celestial objects.

[29 : 16] Some people, foolishly in my view, would maintain that they see their life in the stars. The fact that these men came from the east, it is reckoned that they probably came from the Babylon area.

We know that in times past, there were Magi in that area who served as counselors or advisors to the ruler.

Remember how King Nebuchadnezzar consulted them as to his strange dream. And they failed to provide a satisfactory answer.

Wise men, no matter how great their knowledge, do not hold all the answers. to the queries that arise in the world of man.

But remember how there was one individual in Babylon at the time of Nebuchadnezzar who was also a wise man. His name was Daniel.

[30 : 27] He had the mind of the Lord and he provided an accurate interpretation of the dream. He did more than that. He made some wonderful predictions about the birth of a royal deliverer in Israel.

And some would claim that remnants or strands of Daniel's teaching and prophecy would have been handed down in oral tradition so that there is the possibility these wise men had limited biblical knowledge.

others claim that they may have been familiar with the prediction made by a non-Jew like Balaam. Remember he predicted a star shall come out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.

well the presence of these wise men in Jerusalem had caused quite a stir so that even the king became aware of their presence and that makes me believe that it wasn't just a small group but that there was a number of individuals in this group of wise men.

we read when Herod the king heard this he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him their presence but especially the purpose of their journey caused anxiety and worry in the corridors of power but also throughout every level of Jerusalem society because Matthew tells us all Jerusalem were troubled.

[32 : 21] Now Matthew doesn't give a reason for this anxiety it could be that many were worried about the fallout that could ensue from Herod's worry given Herod's known cruelty.

Wise men from the east to sum up an answer to the question who were they? I can state with reasonable certainty that they were an unknown number Gentiles largely anonymous well educated with some familiarity with Old Testament biblical teaching.

And the significance of this is that Matthew's gospel portrays Jesus at the beginning and ending of his gospel as a universal Messiah for the nations not just for the Jews.

Matthew's record then of the first worshippers is that they were court advisors or astrologers wise men not from Israel but from the east possibly from Babylon.

They were Gentiles. In Jewish eyes they would be unclean. The end of Matthew's gospel the last words of Jesus are the great commission all authority in heaven on earth has been given to me go therefore and make disciples of all nations and to encourage them and us in the work the promises made behold I am with you always to the end of the age.

[34 : 15] Well that not only opened the door for us Gentiles to rejoice in the Messiah it was added proof that he was the Messiah because one of the repeated prophecies was that the nations and kings would come to him as the ruler of the world Isaiah chapter 60 verse 3 nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising so Matthew then gives us proof of the Messiahship of Jesus shows that he is Messiah a king a promise fulfiller for all the nations not just Israel for us as Gentiles not just the Jews so that's a little about their identity which brings me to my next point their inquiry what led to their inquiry and I suppose the glib answer would be they saw a star and yet the star is not the focus of

Matthew's writing but the one who is the true king of the Jews he's the true star he's the bright morning star who floods his people with life and light he's the one who ushers in God's eternal day why did they make the journey and I said the glib answer would be they saw a star but then you could argue not all the wise men from the east who may also have studied astrology or astronomy they didn't make this journey the implication is that some wise men from the east made the journey was it merely they alone then who saw the star in my own mind

I'm not convinced that this is why they made this journey remember it wasn't a short trip of a few miles it was a journey of almost a thousand miles possibly travelled on the backs of camels so we're talking of a journey of weeks rather than days thus with many journeys and especially in those days many dangers and many difficulties to be overcome not a journey to be taken lightly or a journey made on an impulse probably more reasons not to set out on this journey than to travel and it is often the case when people are compelled to see Christ you will find that the reasons not to see

Christ seem much more compelling than the reason to persist in seeking Christ so did they travel just because they saw a star I don't think so nor does the Bible state that all the wise men in the east made this long journey what then well remember they had a specific purpose in mind they wanted to worship the king of the Jews you see it wasn't just any star it was his star in other words a star that they associated with the king of the Jews not what Matthew writes 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 they didn't come to have a philosophical discussion about the significance of this star what was significant about the star was that they associated it with the king of the

Jews now how did that come about I'm not sure but I can say that they traveled with a specific purpose in mind they came to worship the king of the Jews over and over the Bible now baffles our curiosity about just how certain things happened how did this star get the magi or the wise men from the east to Jerusalem the Bible doesn't say that it led them or went before them on the journey until they arrived at Jerusalem it only says that they saw his star in the east verse 2 and came to Jerusalem and in my view there is but one explanation for making this journey there was the inner compulsion of the work of the spirit of God in compelling them to make this journey the star was used in the providence of

[40 : 20] God to raise questions that required answers let me put it like this two people sitting side by side under the preaching of the gospel the one person is absorbed in the message totally gripped by the message and the other hears the message that is preached from the pulpit but remains unmoved what accounts for the difference is it not the silent deep operation of the work of the Holy Spirit and here in this passage God is at work in the lives of the wise men and they possibly at the outset of their journey and through their journey unaware of the working of the Lord let me ask you did you understand what was happening to you when the

Holy Spirit began working in your life not asking you do you understand it now or do you understand it better with the benefit of hindsight and spiritual enlightenment but at that time did you understand why you were driven to hear the gospel compelled to read the Bible desirous that someone would speak to you about the Lord Jesus Christ did you recognize that God was at work in your life and you may even be present here this evening and you are experiencing these very symptoms you may even be asking why is this happening to me why did they make this journey their inquiry in my view they were compelled by the secret working of the

Holy Spirit who were there Gentile educated astrologers or those who studied astronomy thirdly the implementation of their inquiry and how did they implement their inquiry well the answer to that question is that they did several things first they set out on their journey and came to Jerusalem remember their mission was a specific one to find the one who has been born king of the Jews what was more logical than to come to the capital of the Jewish people so there we have an example you might say of human wisdom and exercise Jerusalem was where the palace was Jerusalem is where the temple was surely the person born king of the

Jews would be found in Jerusalem but do you remember what the apostle Paul writes regarding the wisdom of man could I remind you again the world did not know God through wisdom wisdom may take us far but it will not of itself take us to Christ and then Paul writes it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe how absolutely foolish in the view of the wisdom of men to believe that a person dying on a cross is the way to eternal salvation and

Paul wrote the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men I think there is something else that comes across here and is this you know we have preconceived notions as to how God should deal with us and how he should come into our lives and I'll give you an example remember Naaman in the Old Testament he came to see the prophet Elijah for healing remember the little girl in the house told him there was one in Israel in her native land who could help him with his leprosy so he came to Elisha went to the king first a missive sent to the king and then to Elisha and remember

[45 : 38] Elisha didn't come out to meet him but he just sent a message go and wash on the Jordan seven times your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean and do you remember Naaman's reaction he was absolutely furious behold he says I thought he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God wave his hand over the place at least over his leprosy and cure the leper are not a ban and far but the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel could I not wash in them and be clean but you see Naaman couldn't be cured in any way except God's way and neither can you or I be saved in any other way except God's appointed way now reflect on that we sometimes think that we know how to be saved and we blank from our minds what

God sets before us but we cannot be saved in any other way except the way God has appointed in his truth and these men possibly I don't know but it's possible that they had a preconceived notion of the king and perhaps we did too and if you're not in Christ tonight perhaps you still do have a preconceived notion they came to Jerusalem they didn't try to hide the purpose of their mission some people try to hide when they're looking for Christ they try to pretend it's otherwise in their life but these men didn't behave in a covert or secret manner in

Jerusalem they weren't trying to hide the purpose of their mission they went about publicly communicating their inquiry regarding the king of the Jews they appear in many ways to be blissfully unaware that they were creating waves in Jerusalem and their presence didn't go unnoticed for their presence and the purpose of their inquiry was communicated to King Herod and Matthew informs us that King Herod wasn't too crazy about their presence and especially the purpose of their quest he consulted with the religious experts the chief priests and the scribes I'm not entirely sure that I should have said he consulted perhaps it would be more accurate if I said it was more of an interrogation on the part of

Herod assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born in other words he kept on pressing the issue Herod was deeply suspicious and very protective of his own status and note that Herod equates their inquiry about the king of the Jews with the coming of the Messiah here is a man he had been king for about 40 years at this time in fact he was coming near the end of his reign and of his life he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born and the upshot of this interrogation was that the religious leaders showed that at least they knew the Old Testament scriptures they directed Herod to the prophecy that is written by the prophet

Micah they told him in Bethlehem of Judea for so it is written by the prophet and you O Bethlehem and 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 now Herod isn't really too interested in the real identity of Messiah he doesn't ask who had he asked who he might have heard you see in the prophecy of Micah his coming forth is from of old from ancient days shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord in the majesty of the name of the Lord is

[51 : 07] God and they shall dwell secured for now shall be great to the ends of the earth and he shall be their peace so this king wasn't just coming into being in the womb of his mother Mary his coming forth is from of old from ancient days and as we saw this morning in John's gospel the beginning was the word the word was with God and the word was God this king wouldn't be limited in Israel and to Israel he shall be greater to the ends of the earth his kingdom not of this world but Herod only wishes to know and when you read of this meeting does it strike you that although the religious leaders had the Old Testament knowledge and knew what it taught how indifferent they were to the teaching of the

Old Testament scriptures they appeared totally unconcerned about the fulfillment of this earth shattering prophecy although they had the Bible they appeared to reject the message unable to see that although they had the Bible what they really needed was Jesus and you know how many are still in possession of the Bible in our communities familiar with what is written in the Bible but totally indifferent to the teaching of the Bible in their individual lives Matthew then informs us of the indifference of the Jewish leaders of the hostility of Herod who wishes to suppress the arrival of the savior of sinners the hope of the world how do we know that's the intention of

Herod because Matthew informs us of a secret meeting verse 7 Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared and so on and he tells them he wants to worship him what a devious person Herod was pretending to be in sympathy with their mission but in actual fact as events showed plotting to thwart the purpose of God and of course that's an impossibility no man his power in this life can thwart the purpose of God book of Psalms Psalms 2 reminds us kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the

Lord and his anointed he who sits in heaven in the heaven laughs the Lord holds them in derision so here is Herod an enemy of Christ and he is used of God to give biblical information to the wise men so they can find the person they are seeking and that to me is a marvelous example of how the providence of God sometimes is outworked in life and so these men continued their journey and we're told that the star went before them now we're not told that from the time they began their journey until now but behold the star they had seen when it rose went before them till it came to rest over the place where the child was how did the star go before them in that little five mile distance approximately from

Jerusalem to Bethlehem how did a star come to rest over the place where the child was well the answer is I don't really know I honestly just don't know and I want to exhort you not to become preoccupied with developing theories that are only tentative in the end and have very little spiritual significance but this is what we are told when they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy there was an overwhelming response on the part of these men the joy of anticipation and so they arrive in Bethlehem to the culmination of a long arduous journey and they are rejoicing

[56 : 32] Matthew gives the impression that they entered the home without hesitation and they have a face-to-face encounter with a child Jesus probably around two years of age at this time going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother note the word order don't you think that is significant they saw the child with Mary his mother here was the culmination of their search they saw the child they hadn't come to see the mother they had come to see the child they had travelled approximately a thousand miles for this they had left families perhaps behind them for this until you now was the object of their search and that brings me to my final point the implementation of their inquiry their inquiry their identity their illuminating visit remember the promise that is given in the Bible seek and you shall find here is the promise been fulfilled in the lives of these men note their first reaction to the real presence of the object of their search they fall down and worshipped him before they did anything else they fell down and worshipped the

Lord Jesus in their quest they had ascribed authority to this person by calling him king of the Jews but now they come into his presence with reverence with adoration with overwhelming joy in other words they are admitting you are exalted and we are humble you have great dignity and we are lowly by comparison and I cannot avoid the impression then that true worship is not just ascribing authority and dignity to Christ it is doing this joyfully it is doing it because you have come to see something about Christ that is so desirable that be near to him to ascribe authority and dignity to him personally so overwhelmingly compelling remember

Simeon spoke about him this morning Lord now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all people a light for revelation to the gentleness for glory to your people Israel remember her she began to give thanks to God to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Israel and the fourth part of the definition of worship here is that we do our ascribing with sacrificial gifts worshiping Jesus means joyfully ascribing authority and dignity to Christ with sacrificial gifts I suppose I could expand on the gifts but let's just leave it tonight at this that the gifts they gave were gifts fit for a king if you remember

I said at the outset that the knowledge of these men was very limited but do you not think that their knowledge was greatly expanded on this encounter with the child Jesus Matthew implies that they stayed the night on what do I base that well verse 12 been warned in a dream not to return to Herod and if they stayed the night would there not have been an exchange of experiences is that not part of Christian fellowship how you encountered the Lord and others telling you how they encountered the Lord would they not tell how they came to make the journey would

Joseph not tell about his own dream with regard to the identity of the child you will call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins would Mary not tell about her visit from the angel could you not also tell of her cousin Elizabeth greeting and how her child leapt in the womb and then the parents could tell of the shepherd's visit they could tell of their going up to the temple when the child was eight days and their meeting with Simeon and Anna and so Matthew tells us the wise men departed to their country by another way and I'm going to suggest that that doesn't merely mean that they took a different route I'm going to suggest from that information that their lives were changed everyone who is brought to faith in

[62 : 34] Christ their lives are altered forever they live in a different way they have different desires and appetites but more than that their plans were disrupted you see and being brought to Christ it doesn't mean that your life will be smooth and without trial it is perhaps then that you face the greatest obstacles obstacles that are at times created by yourselves and you could say that here they had gone to see Herod again by another way may imply how our lives go in different go in ways that are different to what we may have expected if

I can give a personal example when I retired from the active ministry in the middle of 2014 I thought I would ah try to help out with pulpit supply if I were asked but I never foresaw in 2014 that I would become a regular visitor to this congregation in 2021 and 2022 how could I know and as you come towards the end of the year 2022 and look back can you too not see many steps in your own life that have been so different to what you expected and now as you approach 2023 as a congregation and an imminent induction who knows what may yet be but you know however different life might be this is also true

God is working all things together for good in the lives of those who love the Lord who are the called according to his purpose and his purpose is to conform believers to the image of Christ that's what he does and that's what I read into these men returning to their own country by another way changed men different men because they had come in contact with the Lord Jesus Christ here you are this evening and your life has been turned around because you too were brought into contact with the Lord Jesus Christ but what if you're here tonight and that is not true of you another year coming to an end another year coming to a close oh my friend do you not think that too many years have passed and that you need to seek him now that your life may go in a new direction that you may live for

Christ and with Christ their identity wise men from the east Gentiles their inquiry where is the one was born king of the Jews the implementation of their inquiry they set out on a long arduous journey takes them to Jerusalem and ultimately to Bethlehem their illuminating visit they acknowledge him as lord of lord and king of kings they worship him they bow down before him it's not idolatrous they are recognizing his true identity even as a child they stay the night they enjoy fellowship the warmth of Christian fellowship and they return by another way as those whose lives have been turned around let us pray oh eternal

God we thank thee that you are the God of great grace and that despite our limitations and the great ignorance that belongs to us as men and women boys and girls that you are able to draw near to illuminate our sin darkened minds to give us the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that brings us to his feet to bow down and worship him oh may it be true of each and all and the glory shall be thine in Jesus name we ask it amen let