**WORSHIP THE KING OF THE JEWS**

Matthew 2:1-12

Key Verse: 2:2

**“And asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."**

Good morning everyone. It might be a bit early to say this but…Merry Christmas! Today we’ll be looking at the gospel of Matthew chapter 2, verses 1-12. (Showing a picture of 3 wise men) In this passage, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem to worship the king of the Jews. Who is this King of the Jews? And why did they come to worship him? Let us go deep into God’s word this morning to fill our hearts and minds with a better understanding of Christmas, that is, the worship of Jesus, born as Christ, ‘The King of The Jews’

My message today has two parts: **Part 1 - Jesus born as the King of the Jews (1-8)**

**Part 2 - The Worship of the Magi (9-12)**

Part 1 – Jesus, born as the King of the Jews (1-8)

Today’s passage begins after Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea.

Look at verse 1. **“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem”.** The Magi were wise men from "the East," most likely Persia, or modern-day Iran. They came all the way to Jerusalem. Look at verse 2. **“And asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."**

In these two verses, you see two different kings—Herod, the King of Judea and Jesus, the King of the Jews. Herod was born an Edomite (a descendant of Esau) and was the son of a high-ranking official in the Hasmonean dynasty. Herod was granted the title of "King of Judea" by the [Roman Senate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Senate), through his politics. As such, he was also expected to support the interests of his Roman patron. Humanly speaking, he carried out various great projects to revive the economy and the industry, building nation’s infrastructure. He also built the Jerusalem temple to get the Jews’ support. So he was called Herod the Great. However, he mercilessly killed to remove any potential threats to his kingship, even including his own wife and sons.

Look at v3. “When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.” Jesus’ birth as the King of the Jews was not good news of great joy to Herod. Rather, it made him greatly troubled and disturbed, because he was afraid of losing his kingship by the King of the Jews. When he was disturbed, all the people under his rule were also disturbed. Then what did he do?

Look at verse 4. “When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.” He knew the King of the Jews means the Christ, God’s Anointed One, different from a worldly king. However, he used the religious leaders and even the word of God only for his political purpose to protect his throne. And when he found out that Christ would be born in Bethlehem, he called the Magi secretly.

Look at v7 and 8. “Then, Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” He found the exact time the star had appeared to estimate the age of the child. And he ordered the Magi to report back to him about the child, as if he himself would be a worshiper of the Christ. This shows he knew what he supposed to do, that is to worship the Christ, but his desire to keep his throne was too strong to really worship the King of the Jews. He only disguised himself to carry out his plan to remove the King of the Jews instead, gathering all the necessary information from all sources. What did he do finally? Verse 16 shows: “When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.” What a cruel king Herod was! He was a liar and a murderer. But Herod is a miniature of most kings of the world throughout history, as the Bible depicts them as the beasts such as a lion with the wings of an eagle, a bear and leopard. (Dan 7:4-6) Also, Revelation 13 depicts the final king of the whole world as the beast with 10 horns and 7 heads, who would control all people to worship him. No one would escape from the beast, from such a deceptive and cruel king like King Herod.

Look at verse 2 again: Magi asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?”

Contrary to King Herod, Jesus was born as the King of the Jews. Matthew chapter 1 shows his genealogy, as the son of David, the son of Abraham. He was from the kingly line humanly. More than that, his birth was the fulfillment of God’s promise to King David that his descendant would be the eternal King, God’s Anointed King, called Christ. (1:16) He was the Son of God conceived by the Holy Spirit. (1:20) His people will call him Immanuel—which means “God with us.” (1:23) He was born as a human baby, but he was born as the King of the Jews. The King of the Jews extends to be the King of true people of God. Jesus himself said: “My kingdom is not of this world…my kingdom is from another place…You are right in saying I am a king. In fact for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” (John 18:36, 37) Jesus the King of the Jews is the king of the truth, different from Herod king of Judea, who was the king of lie.

Look at 5 and 6. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.” This is the prophecy of Micah, about 700 years before Jesus’ birth. Jesus was born in Bethlehem as the exact fulfilment of this prophecy. Also, this prophecy shows Jesus would be born as a ruler who will be the shepherd of God’s people. Jesus, the King of the Jews, is a shepherd king, who laid down his life for the sheep. In fact, at his death, the title fastened on the cross was: “The King of the Jews.” (Mt 27:37, Mk 15:26, Lk 23:38, Jn 19:19) He died to redeem us from the cruel oppression of the beast king, and to make us his blessed people. Jesus who was born as the King of the Jews, and died as the King of the Jews promised to come again as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. (Rev 19:19) He will destroy the beast and all his worshipers completely. On that day, “the Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD and his name the only name.” (Zech 14:9) Praise and thank God for the birth of Jesus, the King of the Jews, our true and eternal king, the only one worthy of our worship!

Part 2. Magi’s Worship of the King of the Jews

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

These Magi are known traditionally as wise men with noble status in their own country. Humanly, they were people of high achievement with everything many people strive for. But they said, they came all the way to worship a baby born as the King of the Jews. Why did they come to worship him? Before we continue with the worship of the Magi, let’s look at the concept worship and the impact it has on our lives. So, what is worship? The term worship doesn’t mean just singing hymns on Sunday morning. Rather, we worship whatever we love most. Like a magnet it has the greatest pull on our hearts. The reality is that every human being is always worshipping something, whether it’s Jesus, money, sex, power, fame or something else. You and I were made to worship. Christian philosopher James K.A. Smith once wrote, **“At the heart of every person is a kind of ‘love pump’ that can never be turned off,” so that we are always worshiping something.”** For man who was created in the image of God is spiritual being, that is, a worshiper. The question is not whether we worship or not…but what do we worship. The reality is that whatever we worship, whatever becomes the focus of our life, whatever consumes our energies, and our time is what we become like.

The Magi was the seekers for the King of the Jews, the true object of their worship. For nothing of this world could satisfy their soul, which would be truly satisfied through worship of Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews. So, their question, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?” may be the question of all true seekers.

 When they were seeking, they saw his star, while others couldn’t see it. And when they saw the star, they did not just marvel at it for a while, and return to their normal routine, but committed to it and followed it, sacrificing everything else in their lives. Wow, imagine their journey, following the star only in the night time… Jemmie, Abigail and I travel only 18 km by car to worship Jesus each Sunday morning. But they travelled roughly 1,200 to 1,500 kilometres to see the baby. Maybe it took about 2 years to arrive in Judea. But right before their destination, they somehow lost the star. Maybe they might have followed their own common sense instead of the star, heading directly during the daytime to the king Herod’s palace in Jerusalem. Then what happened to them?

Look at v9. “After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.” They re-found the star! And the star led them to the exact place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. This is the pure joy which only the truth seekers can experience. What can be the star to us that leads us to Jesus Christ? It is the word of God that we personally accept in our heart. 2 Peter 1:19 says: “And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” We may pay attention to the word of God, until we receive one word each time like a morning star to a sailor that leads us to Jesus Christ closer and closer.

Look at verse 11. “On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.” In this pandemic world, many do online worship. Then, it is easy for them to just watch the screen like an entertainment, relaxing on a couch in PJ, and even eating snacks. But how about the Magi? Through the Magi’s worship, we learn how we should worship our King Jesus Christ, whether we worship in-person or on-line. They first saw the child, the King of the Jews, though his mother Mary with him, they bowed down before the baby, and worshipped him only. It was the expression of their devotion of heart and mind and body to Jesus Christ. Not only that, they also presented to the baby with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh, which were their most precious treasures. They hadn’t opened that treasure box to use some for their own journey, but kept till now to offer fully to the King.

Look at verse 12: “And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.” After their worship, they didn’t request anything of the King, but returned to their country, obeying God’s instruction in a dream. It means they disobeyed the command of King Herod at the risk of their lives. They are the example of true and pure worshipers of Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews.

In this passage, we see two distinct groups of worshipers. True worshippers of Jesus, who seek the truth and are willing to surrender their lives so that Jesus will be the Lord of their lives and heart. Or, there are the fake worshippers like Herod or the religious leaders, who pretend to worship Christ, but with a selfish motive, by worshiping something else.

Then, how could the Magi become true worshipers? When I first began preparing for this message I was quite impressed by the Magi, their zeal and willingness to travel such a long distance to worship Jesus. However, I made the mistake by focusing my admiration on the wrong person. It’s Jesus “the King of the Jews” whom I must be impressed by, not the Magi. For those who truly find Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews, led by the star of his word, cannot but become true worshipers like the Magi.

I was once a Sunday Christian, living a double life for the rest of the week. I sought and worshiped my own fame as a successful film maker, but in reality, my soul was ruled and oppressed because of my sin of immorality. But God led me to the Bible study, and guided me to find Jesus Christ as my personal King, Christ and Lord, through the star of his word, especially Luke 9:23. I thank God for giving me this grace so that I could find the one worthy of my worship and devotion. But through preparing this message, I examine my heart newly. **what and who rules my heart and life? Is it Jesus?** This year, my worship has not been Jesus but instead achieving success in business. I was distracted from the star of God’s word. Instead, I read and took some many courses about business and entrepreneurship. I’m constantly trying (and failing) at several new business ideas that it probably drives Jemmie crazy. I repent that my worship in 2021 was not Jesus but worldly success. I see why God gave us the command in Exodus 20:3-4: **"You shall have no other gods before me. "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.”** I pray to newly pay attention to the word of God more than such business books, until one word rises in my heart like the morning star and lead me to Jesus Christ. That way, I may come to know Jesus Christ more and more, and purely worship him, day by day in the new year 2022.

 Through today’s passage we see two different kings, Herod King of Judea and Jesus ‘King of the Jews.’ Who is your king? Who or what do you worship? In this pandemic era, people are disturbed, anxious and fearful, just as those under King Herod. But I pray that each and everyone of us may be led by his star through God’s words to find Jesus and worship him as personal King. For he is the only one worthy of our worship, as he was born as the King of the Jews, lived as the shepherd king and the king of the truth, died as the King of the Jews. He will return as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Through worshiping Him, we may all have the Magi’s great joy at this Christmas and throughout the new year, 2022! Merry Christmas again!

Let’s all read verse 2 once more: **“And asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."**