

Matthew 2:1-23 Finding the King

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 have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

Jesus was born in the days when Herod was king of Judaea.

A) Herod was a short man standing only four feet four inches tall,

B) He was a short man who wanted to prove he was a big guy.

1) He became a master builder, Royal palace in Jerusalem – THE Citadel – Rebuilt the temple.

C) He built Masada, - Summer palace - Palace in Caesarea – Theater - Aqueducts;

1) He made monuments of great grandeur to his name and to his legacy.

Herod was an Edomite or Idumean – descendant of Esau – Jacob's brother.

A) He was put into power by the Romans and Caesar was the one who gave him the title King of the Jews.

B) He relished the title: and was willing to kill anyone who opposed of his position or was a threat to his power.

C) The Jewish people hated him because he was cruel – He was a puppet for Rome and because he was not Jewish.

1) He had 10 wives – his favorite was Mariamne – she was of Jewish descent which he hoped would appease the Jewish people – it didn't

But because he was a wicked man and a paranoid man and sought to kill anyone who might even take the kingdom from him,

A) Mariamne – his favorite – he had her strangled.

B) He had his son Alexander killed – **Another son Aristobulus he had drowned.**

1) He killed his mother-in-law, His nieces and nephews

C) When he was dying he got permission from Caesar to have his son Antipater the III killed. - , **"It's safer to be Herod's pig than it is to be his own child."**

It was so bad that when Herod was on his deathbed, he knew he had no time left,

A) he ordered all of the prominent citizens of Jerusalem to be arrested, imprisoned and when he died, the order was,

"As soon as I die, kill all those prominent citizens of Jerusalem."

B) Herod has this rationale, "I know that when I die, nobody will weep for me.

C) So I want to make sure that there is weeping at my death, kill them."

1) After his death – the action wasn't carried through – the people were released.

D) It was during this period when Herod was king that the wise men, or magi, came from the East.

4 Groups in this Story:

- The magi were seeking & worshipping the King;
- Jewish priests were ignoring the King.
- Joseph and Mary fleeing a false King
- Herod was opposing the King;

4 Groups – 5 Lessons from this story

#1 The magi were seeking the King;

A) The word in Greek is magoy.

B) The terms magi - magician and magistrate from it, somebody who adjudicates at law.

C) According to Herodotus, the Greek Historian, they came from Mesopotamia – Babylon –

1) specialized in reading the dreams of people and in studying the stars –

D) they were men of science – prestige – men who advised Kings

1) Recall from reading the Book of Daniel that there were wise men in Babylon during time of Nebuchadnezzar. **Nebuchadnezzar had troubling dreams.**

A) Calls for the wise men to interpret – they can't - Daniel interprets the dreams.

B) Daniel is eventually placed as the chief over all of the magi – over the wise men of Babylon.

1) 70 yrs of service in Babylon and Persia – It is safe to say that he influenced that group.

C) In the seventh chapter of the book that bears his name, Daniel wrote that “**One would come, called the Ancient of Days, to rule and reign upon the earth; and that He would have everlasting dominion.**”

D) In fact, Daniel gave the very date this One would ride into Jerusalem.

1) So these wise men, these magi, were most likely very familiar with Daniel’s writings, prophecies, and teachings.

E) And no doubt they were watching for the Ancient of Days to appear.

1) Perhaps that is how the wise men knew to head toward Jerusalem

V.2 The Magi came to Worship the King!

A) The magi weren’t coming to get something from Jesus. After all, He was only a Child there in Bethlehem.

B) Nor were they coming because of what He had done for them; for at that point, He had done nothing.

C) Lesson: They came to worship Him solely because of who He was.

1) That should be our motivation for worship as well

D) To worship him because of who He is!

So the wise men show up with a great Entourage directed to Herod’s Palace

³ When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

⁵ So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

⁶ *‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.’*

The first mention of Bethlehem in Scripture is in connection with the death of Jacob’s favorite wife, Rachel (Gen. 35:16–20).

A) Rachel died giving birth to a son whom she named Benoni, “son of my sorrow.”

B) Jacob renamed his son to Benjamin, “son of my right hand.”

C) Jacob saw Bethlehem as a place of death, but the birth of Jesus made it a place of life!

1) Jesus came to bring life to those dead....sins

Now, the word Bethlehem is from two Hebrew words "Beth" which means house or place of and "Lehem" which means bread.

A) It means the House of bread because it was the breadbasket of Israel.

B) The wheat was grown in those valleys around Bethlehem.

1) Boaz met Ruth in those fields.

C) It was an appropriate place for Jesus the bread of life to be born.

Bethlehem is also where David grew up - the City of David,

A) Matthew points out that It was a fulfillment of prophecy that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem

B) Because he was of the lineage of King David!

1) Out of Bethlehem would come the Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.”

C) So the wise men came seeking the King – where is he to be born

1) The Scribes and Priest knew the word – they knew where – but the 2nd thing we notice

#2 Jewish priests were ignoring the King.

A) Here’s what blows my mind. – These guys knew the word/they didn’t have to have a meeting - discuss

B) They didn’t have to go look it up – they knew the word. - They could quote chapter and verse.

C) They could pull out of their memory the 8th century B.C. Micah Ch. 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem."

They knew the word – they knew the prophecy.

A) They watched these wise men come all the way from Babylon –

B) Watched them roll into town with their ENTOURAGE

C) You would think they would drop everything and run down to Bethlehem – ONLY 5 MILES

1) But they are indifferent

D) Church that can so easily happen to us

I pray that none of us are like that.

Lesson: Don't grow indifferent to the Word of God.

A) I pray that we would grow in the grace and knowledge of who Jesus is.

B) The more we grow – the more we would be stirred up to action.

1) Stir up one another to LOVE AND GOOD WORKS

C) My biggest fear as a pastor is that **this becomes so routine. – We start playing church –**

1) We start going through the motions

D) AND that what God did – to move heaven and earth to get HIS Son here

1) to pay the price FOR our sins – no longer fills our hearts with wonder – gratitude – AMAZEMENT

E) Devotions – Bible translations

⁷ Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

Now we hear that and we go, "Yeah, right,"

A) Herod doesn't want to worship Jesus

B) He claims to be a worshipper and not everyone who claims to be a worshipper is a worshipper

C) EVERYONE WORSHIPS SOMETHING

The fundamental difference between humanity and animals is that animals don't worship, but people do.

A) God has essentially wired us this way.

B) As [Ecclesiastes 3:11](#) says, He has placed "eternity in our hearts."

1) We sense there is something more, and it causes us to worship.

C) Of course, not everyone worships God.

But when you get down to it, everyone worships.

A) Everyone has built an altar in their lives to someone or something.

B) Herod's problem was he worshipped himself – he doesn't want to acknowledge – Jesus as King

1) He was the king of his own heart

C) But he pretends to be a worshipper – when you find the baby tell me worship him too!

⁹ When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. ¹¹ And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him

Note: This is long after the shepherds.

A) They're now in their own home in Bethlehem

B) And Jesus not called a baby, but He's called the young Child. – over a year old.

C) The wise men enter the house – they see the young child – His mother –

1) Their reaction was startling – THEY FELL DOWN AND WORSHIPPED HIM!

These men of dignity – men who advised kings

A) Bow before this baby - They WORSHIPPED HIM

B) They did not worship Mary and Him. They worshipped only Him.

1) He and He alone was the object of their worship

C) These guys got it – they understood that they were in the presence of someone greater than themselves

D) That little modest home becomes the Holy of Holies - DEITY IN DIAPERS

1) OUR HOMES CAN BECOME THAT TOO!

E) Encourage you and me – Make opportunities to pause – and be filled with wonder

1) Jesus living in our hearts – WORSHIP

THEY worshipped with Humility and reverence by bowing down

A) They worshipped – 2ndly By giving fitting gifts

And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

B) It was always customary to give a superior gift when you're in His presence.

1) They recognized He was royalty. Gold was the king of metals and the metal fit for a king.

C) Typically, you'd never appear before an ancient monarch without some gift of gold

Next gift was frankincense.

A) Frankincense, was a gum resin that was used by the priests.

B) The priests would offer frankincense with the meal offering.

C) Frankincense hardens into these little crystals and it doesn't give off its scent except when you crush it.

1) When you crush it, it gives off a sweet aroma.

D) Interesting – Jesus was crushed that he might become our High Priest –

Final gift was myrrh.

A) Myrrh was a sap that comes from a tree in Saudi Arabia. It was used for perfume. It was a spice.

B) But it was also used as an embalming fluid.

1) When Jesus died, 100 pounds of spice – myrrh it says and aloes was mixed for His burial.

C) So it was typically used as an embalming fluid.

D) Fitting gifts

1) Gold for a Mighty King, Frankincense for a Ministering Priest, Myrrh for a Martyred Prophet.

Lesson: Worship is always costly. It might cost you your so-called dignity.

A) It will cost you time – stop and set aside time Too busy to worship – the Priest –

B) Mary and Martha – One thing is needed

C) It might cost you financially as you learn to tithe and to give.

1) It might cost you your friends or your family, who don't understand why you go to church – miss the game

D) So the wise men are great examples to us of how wise men – wise women – worship the King -

12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

**Wise men seeking & worshipping the King
Priest ignoring the King**

#3 Joseph and Mary fleeing a false King

A) Joseph has the dream ministry – needs to hear from God – takes a nap – GO TO EGYPT

B) Egypt was a type of the world – Their version of Sin city

1) Ladies imagine this: Husband wakes up – I had a dream we are supposed to move to Vegas -

C) Calling Pastor Rob – COUNSELING

No hint in Mary of a fight – arguing –

A) See Mary has come to see Joseph as a man who has a relationship with God – hears from God.

B) Lesson: Joseph set a pattern of being a man who when he hears from God acts in obedience

C) Guys you want to be a man that your wife follows and supports – Be a man of God

1) Be a man of the word – Morning Devos – share

D) Be a man of conviction not compromise – God shows you something act on it! {Flee something?}

Every time God commanded something, Joseph responded with instant, unquestioning obedience.

A) It was the pattern of his life to obey God, even when it wasn't especially convenient.

B) Take Mary as your wife Reputation

B) "Flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you"

C) Joseph could have questioned "Move to Egypt?"

1) 75 miles away - That's a foreign country, Lord! They speak another language down there!

D) How will I make a living? How can I get established in my business?

1) It's a hassle to move a family that far! U-Haul doesn't even have a one-way rental to Egypt!"

Habits of obedience are formed in the everyday mundane aspects of life.

A) Discipline to get into the word – Man of prayer

B) Being a man of integrity – Walmart – get out to your car – realize – too much change – go back

1) What do you do? – Rejoice – lucky – thanks Lord

C) That wasn't God rewarding you – it was a test

1) Will you be a man of integrity

D) Not cut corners in your Business – even when others are doing that?

E) Joseph was a man whose life was marked by immediate obedience

Interesting to look at his sons

A) James was the head of the church in Jerusalem – 1st Bishop

B) Simon was the 2nd Bishop of the church in Jerusalem

1) Jude – wrote the book of Jude that we love

C) Dads you step up to the plate in being the High Priest of your homes –

1) When You take the mantle of leadership and be who you are supposed to be as a servant leader

D) It will have an impact on your sons and daughters

So Joseph and Mary pack up and head for Egypt

A) Egyptian border was about 75 miles away from Bethlehem

B) But they probably journeyed to Alexandria, Egypt, which was about 150 miles from Bethlehem

C) Alexandria Egypt had a large population of Jewish people living there.

D) The city was named after Alexander the great and was established by him as a place where Jewish people could live in protection – during Grecian rule

E) Some estimate that at this time – over 1 million Jews lived there

1) They had synagogues and schools there so they would have felt at home there.

Philo the Great Historian came from Alexandria.

A) It was in Alexandria that The Septuagint, was created

B) The Septuagint – that translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek by those 72 scholars

1) That took place at Alexandria.

C) So many scholars believe that is where they went and lived there until the death of Herod – 3-4 yrs

D) This is what I also find interesting – the day before the wise men showed up – Joseph and Mary probably couldn't afford to take such a trip

E) Now they had gold – to finance the trip – buy a house in Egypt –

1) God orchestrates every aspect of this story up to the point of providing for the needs of Joseph and Mary

Wise men seeking & worshipping the King

Priest ignoring the King

Joseph and Mary fleeing a false King

#4 Herod is opposing the King

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from

two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying:

18 “A voice was heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children,
Refusing to be comforted,
Because they are no more.”

Herod's anger was evidence of his pride; he could not permit anyone to get the best of him, especially some Gentile scholars!

A) This led him to kill the boy babies two years of age and under who were still in Bethlehem.

B) Matthew quotes from Jeremiah 31:15 of an event that took place when the Babylonians invaded Judah in 586 B.C.

1) They carried the Jews captive into Babylon, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

C) Jeremiah 40 tells us that the deportation headquarters were in Ramah,

1) a city five miles north of Bethlehem.

D) The mothers of Israel represented by Rachel who cried give me children or I die

1) The mothers of Israel mourned for their sons taken into captivity

E) **Inspired by the Spirit**, Matthew refers to that event as a picture of its ultimate fulfillment here in the story of JESUS, six hundred years later.

CONSIDER the Angels sang “Peace on earth, goodwill towards men” on the night of Jesus' birth.

A) But there's another side to the Christmas story.

B) No longer, “O Little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie,”

1) but “O little town of Bethlehem, how deep we hear thy cry.”

C) Soldiers marching in the streets replaced shepherds running through the streets.

1) And piercing swords replaced “Peace on earth” when a Silent Night became a screaming night.

D) The scene is representative of the lengths that people will go – to oppose Christ as King

Herod- A picture of government not wanting to be interfered with by Christ

A) Herod a cruel man – an Idumean – Rebekah was told while pregnant – two nations warring inside her.

B) **Jacob and Esau**- The Edomites were the descendants of Esau.

C) Jacob and Esau, who began warring in their mother's womb, continued thru-out history.

1) This war began between the sons of Jacob—Israel versus the sons of Esau—the Edomites.

D) And here we find them still at war in Matthew ch 2

Herod reigned 37 yrs and killed between 6,000 – 8,000 Jewish people in that time

A) He died around the age of 70.

B) He saw a woman that reminded him of his favorite wife Mar/ammah – the wife he strangled to death.

He saw this woman and had to have her so he slept with her.

C) She happened to be a prostitute and he got an infection.

That infection spread through his whole system –

A) His ankles swelled to 9 inches across – he had sores all over his body.

B) Worms were eating him from the inside out

C) His guards could only handle being with him for an hour at a time because the stench was so bad –

1) but even in that condition he still had his son Antipater the III killed.

After his death his son Archelaus took the throne.

A) He hated his father – the night his father died he was not at his bed side –

B) He was out partying with friends – His heart was filled with hatred and bitterness toward his dad –

1) He never got past it – he ended up becoming the very thing he hated

After he took the throne one of the first things he did was kill 3,000 Jews on the Passover because they had been complaining about the Atrocities of his father

A) Archelaus was mean and brutal – he reigned for 9 yrs before – Caesar had him banished to Vienna

Lesson in this: You allow hatred and bitterness and un-forgiveness to fester in your heart and you will become the very thing that you hate.

A) Contrast Archelaus with Joseph – Joseph was abused by his brothers – but he gave it to the Lord – he was able to forgive

B) When he finally sees them again – he says – you meant it for evil but God meant it for Good.

C) God brings these men before us as examples

²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.

²³ And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Another tough decision

A) It was remarkable that Joseph came back to Nazareth.

B) Nazareth was an *unremarkable* town,
1) Nazareth was an un-walled, unprotected town with a somewhat bad reputation;

C) Nathaniel wondered if anything good could come from Nazareth (John 1:46).

D) But most of all it was where everyone knew Mary and Joseph and the strange circumstances surrounding the birth of their son.

But it was a part of God’s plan that Jesus would come from a small, insignificant place that,

A) A place that if it had any reputation, it was a bad one.

B) This is where Jesus grew up and matured into adulthood.

C) Jesus would be identified with that Place – Jesus of Nazareth

Jesus identified himself with this place and these people.

A) Growing up in Santa Ana - Santa Ana had a bad reputation –
People would say – From Orange County

B) CCCM is in Santa Ana – identified

C) Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brethren – he is not ashamed to identify himself with the worst of us.