

Matthew 2:1-12 | 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, <sup>2</sup> 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.” <sup>3</sup> When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:  
<sup>6</sup> “ ‘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.’ ”  
<sup>7</sup> Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> 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.” <sup>9</sup> After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. <sup>11</sup> And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

## Christmas Eve | Advent 2025

The wise men coming from the east to give gifts to the newborn Christ is one of the most wonderful and strange parts of the Christmas story. They're shrouded in mystery, from a far away land, nameless, and other than this brief encounter we hear nothing of them. They're mystery has compounded throughout time. We don't know how many there were, but since there were three gifts, we typically think of them as three wise men. They're often spoken of as kings although we don't know if they were kings. They certainly did bring prestigious gifts. And of course there is that star.

But what I hope to show you is that this story is an outline of how the world comes to know Jesus. For all its far away exoticism you might notice that this story is yours, and if its not yours it could be.

### 1. The Sign

Matthew 2:1-2 | 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, <sup>2</sup> 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 they are called wise men. It's a translation of Magi. It's a tough word to pin down, but wise men is pretty good. They're scholars, philosophers, astronomers, scientists, although they likely wouldn't have separated these disciplines like we do. They arrive on the scene in Jerusalem having discerned a particular star in the sky, which they believe is a sign that the king of the Jews has been born. Perhaps they were from Babylon and have heard the prophecies of Daniel, perhaps they had heard the prophecy of that other gentile Balaam in Numbers 24 who spoke of the *star coming out of Jacob*.

What happens is they catch a glimpse of a light in the heavens of which they have a hint of its meaning. Some astronomers point to a planetary conjunction between Saturn and Jupiter which took place around this time. Saturn representing the west, and Jupiter representing royalty. There is this great line in the Chronicles of Narnia, when the kids meet a retired star on an island in the far east. Eustace explains to the star, "In our world... a star is a huge ball of flaming gas." And the star replies, "Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of." This is true you know, stars mean things.

Genesis 1:14 | And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years,

The stars were placed in the heavens to be signs, and to rule over seasons and for days and years. Do you know what Saturn and Jupiter mean?

## 2. The Word

Matthew 2:2-4 | When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

Now when the wise men show up in Jerusalem asking about the newborn king of the Jews, King Herod catches word of this and he along with all of Jerusalem becomes troubled. He becomes troubled because, he is the king. And all of Jerusalem becomes troubled because Herod is troubled. Likely not the reception the Wise Men expected. But it prompts Herod to summon the chief priests and scribes to inquire where the Christ is to be born. They inform him as it is written in Micah 5:2, he is to be born in Bethlehem.

Having gained this information from the scriptures, Herod, desires to use the wise men to uncover this threat to this dynasty. He summons the wise men to a secret meeting, and explains to them the prophecy he was shown in the scriptures, and learned from them the timing in which the star had appeared.

Matthew 2:8 | 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.”

It is a deception, because the true intention of Herod would be shortly exposed. He desired to put the newborn king to death. In fact he would put all the newborn male children in the region to death. But the wise men had received the direction they needed. It was the missing link which guided them directly to the home of the newborn king. They had the light in the sky, but the key that unlocked their insight could only be found in the scriptures. The true interpretation of the world is only found in the scriptures.

Matthew 2:9-10 | After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

The star returns and guides them on their way towards Bethlehem. But now the star is no mere hint, it is made sure by the scriptures. To look at the star and not what it means, there response is to rejoice exceedingly with great joy.

## 2. Worship

Matthew 2:11 | And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

They find the precise house and they see the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down to worship him. They give to them their treasures which they had brought for this purpose. Gifts worthy of a king and given to the true king. All of the scriptures now ring true in their hearts. Imagine the stories they had heard from Mary and Joseph. Imagine when they learned of the virgin conception, of Joseph's dreams and Mary's visitation. The wise men from a world away become the first worshipers of Christ the Lord. The ones with the word, did not value it. But those who were far off, see their king.

It's a wonderful story. Almost like a fairy tale. But its not so far off. Its how we come to worship Christ. You catch a glimpse of the world, and it seems to have a meaning beyond what you would allow. Maybe it is the birth of your child. The glory of the mountains. A longing for a home you've never been to. An encounter with a Christian friend. Perhaps you share this inclination with some friends and they are merely troubled by it. “You think God is calling you to himself?” And then you encounter the scriptures, you hear the word of Christ. You realize the glimmer of light you've seen has been about him the whole time. Then you lay down the most valuable things you have in worship of him, as you realize, you didn't find him, he came to find you.