

Matthew 2:1-12  
Irony of the Wise Men  
Image Church // Perfect Hope Week 2

---

Intro

Good morning Image Family, Happy Thanksgiving! Hope you were able to enjoy some good food and time with family!

I am excited to be with you all this morning, my name is Bryson Moon and I am the College Pastor here at Image!

before we continue in our series “Perfect Hope” this morning.

**We just wrapped up the “Abide and Abound” Initiative... If you have not had the opportunity to drop off your commitment card, there are cards in the Lobby and you can drop it in the offering box right next to it!**

Ok, so last week we kicked off our new series “**Perfect Hope**” where we are doing a deep dive into the first 4 chapters of Matthew and looking at how Jesus is our perfect hope.

Matthew has so much to offer us on why and how Jesus is our perfect hope!

So if you will turn with me to Matthew 2:1-12

Let me first say, how thankful I am that I did not have to do the genealogy of Christ and list off those names... but it was probably the greatest sermon I have heard in which the passage pretty much only listed names

I found such encouragement and hope in how God has been orchestrating this redemptive story since the beginning and how God used imperfect people to bring about his perfect plan

The fact I am standing before you this morning is evidence that **God loves using crooked sticks to hit straight licks**

So if you missed last week's message please go back and check that out... preferably later today or this week... I would appreciate it if you did not pop in your airpods and start listening to it now!

But if you do... I will understand! It will hurt my feelings, but I will understand

Ok...

So this morning we are going to look at Matthew chapter 2, the first 12 verses...

We are obviously now in the Christmas season... right, Thanksgiving has passed and so Friday officially marked the Christmas season

Its such a wonderful time of year... the lights, the decorations, the Christmas tree, time with family and friends, the Christmas parties, the presents.

For as long as I can remember, I have loved Christmas. Waking up early to run down stairs and see what presents I got??

Right, we all have memories of Christmas as a kid... yet all of those memories, all of the things I just described actually have nothing to do with the reason we celebrate this time of year, like not even a little bit!

I'm not a grinch, like I'm really not, I love Christmas and I love all of those things... but I am more and more convinced that we miss it... we miss the real reason we should be celebrating...

The birth of King Jesus. The hope of the world has been born.

We are going to see exactly that this morning in our text....

## Matthew 2:1-12

**After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem,**

So we don't know exactly where they are from... Babylon? Persia? Arabia? But they have traveled very far to get here... speculation is Babylon and potentially influenced by the teachings of Daniel from the OT

Also, interesting to note that Jesus is somewhere around 2 years of age, so all of your nativity decorations are historically inaccurate, you don't need to throw it out but maybe, as Pastor Greear suggest, just set the “wise men” on the opposite side of the room as if they are still traveling!<sup>1</sup>

**2 saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him.”[a]**

They have seen a star, and they seem to have some knowledge of what the star is leading them to or who it is leading to. They have determined that this “king” is worth the journey

**3 When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.**

Herod is bothered by this news, he feels threatened by this “new king”... See Herod is a political ruler<sup>2</sup> but remember from last week Jesus is the lineage of David, and Herod would understand bloodlines

He feels threatened by anyone who could take his power and authority from him, the rumor is that he even had family members killed because he thought they were after his throne! Needless to say, this dude is very sensitive and threatened by almost everyone

---

<sup>1</sup> Joke adapted from JD Greear’s notes

<sup>2</sup> BECNT “Matthew” by Turner, L. David (2008)

So now there are men from the east claiming a new king has been born?? Herod is about to lose his mind

**4 So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah would be born.**

**5 “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they told him, “because this is what was written by the prophet:**

**6**

**And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah: Because out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”[b]**

This right here is an extremely important part of our passage this morning and where will spend a good bit of our time so we will jump back in just a moment to fully understand what is happening here.

**7 Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him.”[c]**

This is clearly a lie... he has no intentions of worshipping Jesus and wants to know so he can eliminate the threat to his power and position.

**9 After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was—the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him.[d] Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.**

The magi, find Jesus they are filled with joy and they fall to their knees to worship. God intervenes and warns them to not return to Herod but to go back home by another way.

Image family I believe the Lord has something for us this morning as we examine this text and understand exactly what is happening here.

You may have read this story many, many times and at first glance this is a common passage to read around this time of the year. And at first glance this may seem as just a historical account of what happened

**But there are some crucial things for us to understand, to grasp this morning from this text.**

See we are heading into this time of year in which we do all of these things

- parties
- time with family
- decorating and putting up trees
- presents
- etc

And we can go through the whole month of December and miss the point of it all

We see this in our text... The wise men come looking for Jesus and they inquire from Herod where this king might be

Herod goes to his chief priest and scribes to ask where this Messiah might be born

They immediately respond with "In Bethlehem of Judea" ... why??

Because it was written by the prophets and then they quote Micah! These religious leaders know the Scriptures inside and out, they have spent a lifetime learning and studying

They have all of this knowledge but their knowledge led them nowhere. These are the guys with seminary PHD's and so they have years and years of studying the Scriptures

Yet their knowledge never led them to belief and so it does not lead them to seek out the messiah, **their knowledge never leads them to worship**

I know a guy, I've known a few like this... but one in particular comes to mind

The dude loves theology, and knowing and understanding the Bible. Can talk circles around me when it comes to doctrine and theology. He has all of this knowledge.

Can debate on almost anything when it comes to Christianity yet all his knowledge has yet to lead him to be a disciple who makes disciples, to live on mission?

Now I am not saying that knowledge and learning and studying the Scriptures are a bad thing not in the slightest or am I making a statement about my mans salvation

But **knowledge and understanding should lead us to worship**... the more we understand who God is and what he has done... it should cause us to worship and our worship should lead us to actively living for the kingdom of God

We have these scribes and chief priests who knew exactly what the Scriptures say, all this knowledge but their knowledge never led to worship.

The magi, most likely very little knowledge but they came and they worshipped... what knowledge they did have led them to believe that Jesus was worthy of their worship and their gifts!

How many of us can identify??

We have knowledge, we grew up in the church, spent most of our lives in and around Christianity

Maybe you even call Image Church home... **but has your knowledge led to belief and your belief led you to worship?**

**One author puts it this way** “Increased knowledge doesn’t necessarily translate into increased worship.”

**But then again we see this same narrative all throughout the gospels...**

Jesus will constantly reveal who he is, he will show himself to have power over sin, and sickness and even death and yet all of this does not cause the religious leaders of the day to repent and believe

Jesus is right in front of them and they continually miss him!!! Sound familiar? It should we spent 28 weeks in Luke this year talking about this same thing!!

They miss him... but I can’t help but think that that seems more like us... we like to think if we had been alive then we would be one of the disciples... one who followed Jesus

That we would be one who believed and who shouted “let him go” but would we though???

Or would we be more likely to find ourselves on the side of shouting “crucify him” “crucify him”

Here’s what I am getting at especially in our current context - 2021 American Christianity

**INDIFFERENCE** or **APATHY**...<sup>3</sup> this is what we see with the scribes and the chief priest

Jesus, the Messiah being born did not change anything for them! They knew why and where to find him but they did not go

**Why? Well as Pastor JD Greear points out... a baby being born in a manger is not the messiah they were looking for!**

They are expecting a political or military leader to deliver them, Greear notes, so what significance to them is a baby in a manger???

**How many find yourself indifferent or apathetic towards Jesus?** We say “oh no, we love Jesus”

But our belief in Jesus has not led us to surrender every area of our life and a life that us unsundered is not a life that is fully in pursuit of God and the things of God.

Jesus has yet to become worthy because if he was then we would gladly surrender everything, we would gladly count the cost of following Jesus

And choose him every time!

When i say indifference or apathy I don't necessarily mean, although it could mean, but I don't necessarily mean you sit there consciously thinking

“man I just don't really care about Jesus or love him” I actually think most of us want to love and follow Jesus... we do

our indifference and apathy comes in when it comes to doing the things that orient our hearts towards Jesus... the things we look in Scripture and see God has ordained

That he has put in place to help us fix our eyes on Jesus, we don’t necessarily prioritize those things

Or some just don’t really at all...

The list is long but I want to highlight a few that I believe are of utmost importance...

---

<sup>3</sup> David Platt “Exalting Jesus in Matthew” pg 34

## The Church

Why does the church exist? Why does Hebrews tell us not to forsake the gathering?

What is the purpose? **The ultimate purpose of the church is for God and his glory**

- **which means it is for you but not about you**

The church exist to bring glory to God - this is its purpose

- we gather to glorify our God

As we do that, we are pointed to the glorious gospel, We gather and we remember the goodness of God, who he is and what he has done for us

We are encouraged, we are challenged and convicted of our sin, we are equipped for the work of the ministry (2 Timothy 3:17)

We come together to reorient our hearts around the truths of who God is and to worship him

We must not underestimate the importance of the church in our lives, it is one of the primary means that God has given us to pursue him and to do so within a biblical, gospel centered community.

Meaning we are not alone in this pursuit of knowing God and making him known.

The church exist to make much of Jesus and in so doing we are spurred on in our faith, to keep the faith, to run after Jesus, to remember him, to remember our salvation

To remember the great things he has done... and we desperately need it.  
**Because we so easily forget**

We are so quick to forget the goodness of God, so quick to forget the faithfulness of God

We forget the gospel, and we need to be reminded often, we need to be reminded daily, moment by moment of each day

We are broken sinners in need of God's grace and God has lavished it upon us, he has poured out his love, his mercy, his grace and forgiveness from the cross

And yet in all of this, we still forget... we forget

**And yet, the average church goer finds themselves gathering with the body about 1-2 times a month**

So the very thing in which God has given us to bring glory to himself and to be the primary vehicle for our discipleship, our primary means of community

Where we sit under the teaching of His Word we neglect...

Look this is not to say that if you ever miss church I am saying you aren't committed or it automatically means you are neglecting it

But what I am doing is **proposing the question before you so that we evaluate where we are at, where our hearts are at...**

Why? **Because we forget** - life happens and we get busy and we want to take this trip and go do this thing over here and our kids have sports games or competitions

I know all too well how easy it is to get distracted by life and to get bogged down in my own world and look up and wonder how did I even get here??

Family, we desperately need the body of Christ, we desperately need to faithfully gather together and to come expectant to hear from the Lord

You need the body and the body needs you! We need each other!

In addition to being deeply connected to the Body of Christ

## God's Word

God's Word is vital to our walk with the Lord. God has revealed himself to us through His Word

How do we know truth, how do we know God, how do we understand how we are to live this life... **it is through His Word**

The Word of God, *encourages us, challenges us, corrects us, equips us* - to pursue God is to be in his Word. We can't know God, apart from it.

The call for the Christian is to pursue holiness and to grow in Christlikeness and one of the primary means in which this is accomplished in us is through His Word.

Look, a very small percentage of Americans read their Bible - pew research found that about 63% of evangelicals read their Bible at least once a week

While you might say "oh thats not as bad as I thought it would be" don't worry it breaks down...

The largest percentage is made up of people over the age of 65 who read their Bible consistently

The numbers get worse actually based upon how much money you make and the amount of education that you have

**So basically if you have lived some life you read your Bible most likely because you have lived and you know how much you need the Lord**

And the more money you make and the higher your education the less likely you are to read your Bible?? That's interesting

Almost as if you believe you are capable on your own and you got this??? But as a believer you should understand your sinfulness and how easy it is to wander... it seems as though we would want to stay connected as much as we can to God?<sup>4</sup>

## Paul Tripp makes some helpful points about time in the word...

- Time in the word makes us more aware of who God is and what he has done
- time in the word makes us more aware of our own sinfulness and brokenness
- time in the word pulls us out of our own little worlds and makes us more aware of the kingdom of God and how we are to live for God's kingdom and not our own
- time in the word helps us to grow in holiness and Christ-likeness
- Time in the word helps to see the world through a gospel lens
- time in the word helps to direct and guide us in our everyday lives
- "Time in the word will remind us that we have not been called just to be recipients of his grace, but instruments of that same grace in the lives of others."<sup>5</sup>
- Time in the word helps us to grow a deeper love for Jesus <sup>6</sup>

Family, listen knowledge does not equal worship

**Our knowledge should lead us to worship but just because we know something, does not mean that the knowledge we have is leading us to worship.**

God has given us the Church and His Word as means of grace in our lives to point us

- to the King of Kings
- to the Lord of Lords

---

<sup>4</sup> [Pew Research Forum](#)

<sup>5</sup> Paul Tripp "8 Blessings of Studying Your Bible"

<sup>6</sup> Paul Tripp "8 Blessings of Studying Your Bible"

- to creator and maker of heaven and earth
- to the sustainer of life

Church we can't miss him.... don't let us find ourselves full of knowledge and doctrine and truth, and church polity and history

**But miss the Saviour of the World in which all of that knowledge and truth point to**

You can have 12 seminary degrees, a lifetime in the church and never have an encounter with Jesus that fundamentally changes everything

in which you surrender every aspect of your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and give everything to him!

The scribes and chief priests were full of knowledge **but their knowledge never led to worship**

The magi travel a great distance to find the new born king of the Jews and their immediate response is to worship, it says they were **overwhelmed with great joy!!!**

The response we should have in encountering Jesus is worship. At the name of Jesus, are we overwhelmed with great joy?

Is it with great joy that we gladly lay everything down at the feet of Jesus?

**We also see in our text this morning that...**

**The Gospel is for all people**

With the arrival of the magi, we see the gospel is for all people... that even in the beginning of Jesus life, that "God's redemptive purposes extend beyond the nation of Israel"<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> BECNT "Matthew" by Turner, L. David (2008)

Jesus will point to this throughout his life and earthly ministry that the gospel is both for Jew and Gentile

The gospel is for all people, the kingdom of God is for all people and the invitation to follow Jesus is for all people

We see this all fully realized in **Revelation 7:9-10**

**9 After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:**

**Salvation belongs to our God,**

**who is seated on the throne,**

**and to the Lamb!**

**The gospel is for all people, the kingdom of God is for all people!!**

So what does this mean for us? Well the book of Matthew starts with pointing to the fact that the gospel is for all and Matthew ends his gospel with **Matthew 28:18-20<sup>8</sup>**

**18 Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of[e] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember,[f] I am with you always,[g] to the end of the age."**

While the purpose of the church is to glorify God one of the means by which we do this is fulfilling the call of the church to live on mission

<sup>8</sup> David Platt "Exalting Jesus in Matthew" pg 39

Matthew 28 is a mandate for all believers to be apart of making disciples to be about missions. To see the gospel go forth unto the ends of the earth

This is echoed by Jesus in **Acts 1:8**

**8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

**Out of our worship for God, we respond by living our lives on mission and being his witnesses to a lost and dying world.**

To live on mission is a tangible expression of our worship, and our worship should lead us to live on mission!

Our knowledge and understanding of who God is and what he has done leads us to worship and out of our worship of God, we respond by giving our lives to the mission of God and the kingdom of God!

**God is bringing the nations to himself and he wants to use the church. He wants to use this church!**

**Something we also see in our text...**

**We Gladly Give Our Treasure**

I believe this to be timely coming out of our Abide and Abound Initiative... we see the Magi give of their treasure

“and falling to their knees they worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh”

- gold: obviously know what this is
- frankincense - was a kind of perfume
- Myrrh: an anointing oil

All three very expensive and very valuable gifts - they give generous gifts to the newborn king... gifts fit for a king

**I love what Piper says, about the significance of them giving gifts.**

*“I have not come to you for your things, but for yourself. And this desire I now intensify and demonstrate by giving up things, in the hope of enjoying you more, not things. By giving to you what you do not need, and what I might enjoy, I am saying more earnestly and more authentically, ‘You are my treasure, not these things.’”*

The magi recognize Jesus is worthy and so they come and worship and lay their gifts down at his feet.

They recognize that Jesus is the far better treasure... is that how we see him?

Do we gladly lay down our treasure and by doing so declare **we gladly give what we have to declare Jesus a far more precious treasure**

Do we like the man who found a treasure go and sell all that we have to obtain something far more infinitely more valuable???

Encountering Jesus means we gladly give up all that we have and we do so with JOY

**Conclusion \*\*\* Vamp\*\*\***

So Image Family, what do we do with all of this? What do we do with this story about men from the east who come in search of the new king of the Jews?

There is so much truth packed into these 12 verses... i have read and heard this story so many times but if I am being honest I have missed much of what we see here...

If I had to narrow it down to one thing... one thing I want to stress to you and that is of utmost importance

It would be this...

**Don't Miss Jesus!**



Don't miss him! You can spend your life being in and around the church and christianity and miss Jesus

You can allow indifference and apathy keep you from seeing Jesus

You can allow the the distractions that are all around you... good things, things that on the surface look like they are good

but if any good thing distracts and pulls you away from knowing and seeing Jesus it is no longer a good thing

**Our response to the the king of kings must be worship...** we respond to the good news of the gospel by falling to our knees in worship!

**A worshipper is someone who is growing in their love for God through right beliefs, affections, practices**

How we grow as a worshipper is in many ways centered around the body of Christ and His Word

Which is why we can neither neglect the gathering together nor neglect our time in the Word

Both are and should be of utmost importance in our lives and when neglected it is to the detriment of our own spiritual lives... two things that God has given and we can be quick to say

"I'll catch it next week or I will read tomorrow... church I am guilty. I have gone days without cracking my Bible which is why I know all too well how I need to be reminded constantly of my need for both His word and his church

Fam, I forget... I am quick to forget the goodness of God, the faithfulness of God, I am quick to forget the gospel and my need for it daily

**I need to be reminded... I need you here... I need you present and committed to the body because I need you to remind me and point me back to our incredible Savior**

**You need to be reminded and pointed back to our incredible Savior!**

Our Savior who was born in a lowly manger, who would live a perfect life, the life I could not live and who would be beaten and bruised for my sin,

who would go to the cross for you, for me

Jesus who bore the wrath of the father and in one act would make a way... who because of the cross grace and forgiveness and mercy are now extended to us

**Who rose victorious on the third day...** and life, life to the fullest is now offered to us

If we would only believe!! **Please don't miss him, don't miss Jesus!**

**I think what David Platt has to say** in the conclusion of Exalting Jesus in Matthew is very fitting and so I want to share a bit of it with you as we close this morning

He says this,

***"The invitation is clear, come and see the king.** He invites the magi and he invites you to see His Son and to joyfully offer your life as a worshipper. The people of God should, regardless of personality, should smile and sing and lift their hands*

***They should get excited for the King has come! Worship involves joyful affectionate, uninhibited praise.***

*Like these powerful, influential men in Mathew 2, we should be overwhelmed, bowing down in homage and humble worship*

*We give to Christ The extravagant offering of our lives, everything we have and everything we are.*

**We lay it down before Jesus, and we do it joyfully.** He is the King, and as we see His royalty, His deity, His humanity, we're compelled to shout and sing about His great worth

After God sends Christ, then, He sends the church. Much of what Matthew is setting up in these opening chapters will find resolution towards the end of the Gospel.

At the beginning of Matthew the message to the nations is clearly **come and see the King**. And at the end of Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples to go and spread the kingdom to the nations.

More specifically, **Go... and make disciples of all nations**. Joyfully offer your life as worshipper, and then passionately spend your life as a witness

The God who two thousand years ago sovereignly arranged the stars in the sky, the God who sovereignly directed these magi to the Messiah,

is **the God who sovereignly arranged your life and every detail in it - your family, your job, your school, your background and your relationships**.

This God wants to use your life to make the glad praise of Christ known among people everywhere.

Whether you're leading coworkers to joyfully worship Christ or you're a student leading other students on your campus to be glad in Him. God wants to use you. Every believer has the responsibility and the privilege of spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth.

**Live for this purpose. Die for this purpose. Give your life and your possessions and your plans and your dreams for the cosmic, global purpose of God -**

the glad praise of Christ among all the peoples of the world. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy”<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> David Platt “Exalting Jesus in Matthew” pg 39

This morning maybe you are here and all you know is how to stay busy... it might even be in service to Christ... me? I am a doer... I want to serve and like to serve

**But I forget to rest at the feet of Jesus... I forget to find my rest in the gospel**

Others of you are consumed with knowledge and knowing truth and doctrine but your knowledge hasn't made it to your heart and it doesn't cause you to worship

**Others are apathetic:** you know the right things and Jesus is right in front of you and your missing him

Maybe you're here and you have yet to believe... would you trust in Jesus this morning??

Image Family will we see Jesus for who He is and will we respond by giving of our lives to complete surrender and total worship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...

A big reason we can be indifferent or apathetic towards Jesus is because we fail to see how Jesus even really matters to our lives!!

Church... don't miss him... dont miss Jesus!

See Jesus for who He is, see is his glory, his beauty and his majesty

Recognize the reason we celebrate this time of year is because the Savior of the World was born - he came to save us from our sin and that church is good news

that church is why we should fall to our knees and worship! **Jesus is in fact our perfect hope!**

**Jesus is our hope in this life and the one to come...**

**Lets Pray...**

our knowledge of Christ, the Bible, and the church may turn out to be a snare in the end.”

African Bible Commentary

Increased knowledge doesn't necessarily translate into increased worship.

- [David Mathis](#)

“the only real and lasting source of true joy, both in this life and in the next,

comes from beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ([2](#)

[Corinthians 3:18](#))." - [Mark Jones "Gold, Frankincense, and Bliss"](#)

There are at least five truths that Matthew wants us to see in this story about Christ and worship 1) Jesus is the Messiah, the King of the Jews, and should be honored as such. 2) Jesus is to be worshiped not just by Jews, but by all the nations of the world, as represented by the wise men from the east. 3) God wields the universe to make his Son known and worshiped. This is his great goal in all things - that his Son be known and worshiped. 4) Jesus is troubling to people who do not want to worship him and brings out opposition for those who do. 5) Worshiping Jesus means joyfully ascribing authority and dignity to Christ with sacrificial gifts.

- John Piper "We Have Come to Worship Him"

Notes and Quotes:

*“The most knowledgeable church people often include those who take Jesus for granted. It is a dangerous situation to be in. It is no less a sin than the outright hatred of Herod, for in the end it leads to the same destiny (where Herod failed to kill the baby Jesus, the chief priests succeeded). Our pride in*

I have not come to you for your *things*, but for *yourself*. And this desire I now intensify and demonstrate by giving up *things*, in the hope of enjoying you more, not things. By giving to you what you do not need, and what I might enjoy, I am saying more earnestly and more authentically, ‘You are my treasure, not these things.’”

- John Piper “Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh”

But what do we see here?

- 1. Religious leaders full of knowledge of the Scriptures but miss the Messiah**
- 2. The gospel is for all people**
- 3. Worship is the only right response**
- 4. Worship leads to generosity**

*The gospel turns the world’s values upside-down by making the basis of our acceptance before God his grace and not our merits.*

- *JD Gear “The Gospel According to the Wise Men”*

“it is a dangerous thing to know the Word and fail to respond”

- David Platt “Exalting Jesus in Matthew” pg. 34