

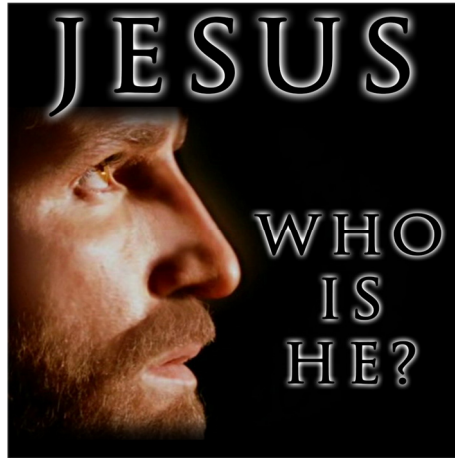
Matthew 2:1-12, Jesus: Who is He? “King: Worthy of Worship”

5.10.15

Scripture Readers: Clara Brown, Avery Aiken

Last Song: “My Heart is Yours” Invitation: “Here I Am to Worship”

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 2. This morning, we continue in our series: Jesus: Who is He?



Today we are going to investigate the familiar account of the visit of the “Wise Men,” who came to worship Jesus. Today we will see another attribute of Jesus: Who is He? He is “King, Worthy of Worship.”

Today we are going to look at several kings and we’re going to talk about worship. We’re going to look at “Kings from the East,” we are going to look at man who was appointed King of Judea, “King Herod,” and the “King of the Jews,” Jesus Christ.

As we begin this morning it’s important that we have a proper understanding of what it means to worship a king. In fact, as we read through Matthew’s account of the visit of the Kings of the East, we see the Greek word for worship used three times.

Worship (Greek: proskyneō)

1. to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence
 2. among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence
 3. in the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (Source: blueletterbible.org)
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What does it mean to really worship? I believe we’ll gain some wonderful insights this morning.

Matthew 2:1

1 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.

Let’s set the scene. Bethlehem is shown on this map.



Bethlehem is located in the territory of Judea about 6 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It's a tiny little town, who's name Bethlehem means "house of bread." And it's here that the "Bread of life" had been born.

Matthew notes that Jesus' birth occurred in the days of King Herod. Here is a likeness of him:



Herod was a crazy, jealous, paranoid, wicked man. He was known as "Herod the Great." Interestingly, Herod was not a Jew. He was instead an Idumean, meaning he was from the line of Esau, not Jacob. Let me show you Idumea...



He was appointed King via the Roman Senate and a man named Mark Anthony. (You might remember Mark Anthony from Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" from your high school days. Herod would take over after Julius Caesar was assassinated.) Herod was quite simply nothing more than a puppet of Rome with no power except that which given him by Rome. Many historians record Herod actually bought the kingship by bribing Mark Anthony.

Herod loved himself. He was a forerunner of the narcissism that would embody the Roman Emperor Nero. Herod built theaters and palaces to honor himself. He built fortresses and cities and he even restored this...



That's Herod's Temple (named after himself). He said the Temple, which had been restored by Nehemiah and Zerubbabel wasn't grand enough.

Herod was so paranoid and ruthless that he had several sons killed and his own wife because he feared they may overtake him and take his throne. Ultimately, according to the Jewish Historian Josephus, (Antiquities 17.6.5) he would die in a palace he had built for himself in Jericho of a disease that caused a "burning fever, ulcerated entrails, foul discharges, convulsions, and a great stench." Yikes!

We know Herod was so ruthless and so heartless so paranoid, he would ultimately have all the male babies under 2 years of age in Bethlehem killed to secure his kingdom. So, Matthew records some men from the east...the orient...would come to visit King Herod. These men were called "wise men" or in the Greek: "magi" and they are often pictured like this:



Do you have a manger scene that looks like this? They are pictured as three of them because of the three gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh that were brought to Jesus. Yet, we know this is most probably not true. This is a better depiction of the wise men.



They would have travelled many miles and would have travelled with servants, helpers, attendants and many camels carrying their supplies. Matthew records they were from the “east.” Scholars believe they were likely from Persia. They were men who were astrologers. They studied the stars. They were scholars and it’s because of their understanding of Hebrew Scriptures that they even knew to come to Jerusalem in search of the King of the Jews when His star appeared. It’s likely these men had obtained ancient scrolls of the Old Testament writings during the days of Daniel, when the Babylonians carried off the people of God to Babylonia.

Here’s something very important that we need to understand about these men. These men wanted to know more about Christ and because of this desire; they made a huge investment of time and money to go find Him. How about us? Do we make much of an investment to seek Jesus? Do we invest our time and money and make sacrifices so that we can worship Him? These men did and they arrived into Jerusalem and asked Herod...

Matthew 2:2

2 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 there is much that can be said about this star. There have been movies and documentaries made about the star...books written about the star...even songs written about the star and what it was and where it came from. Here’s the deal... I’m not going to get into all of the “what if’s” about this star. I’m perfectly fine in believing that this star was a miracle of God. I am convinced this star appeared on behalf of Joseph and Mary.

Why? What are you talking about?

They needed money. They were broke. They couldn’t go back to Nazareth after Jesus was born

because they were seen as despicable sinners. To the people of Nazareth, Joseph had gotten Mary pregnant out of wedlock and there was no way he could make a living as a carpenter there. So, I'm sure he tried to make a go in Bethlehem, **but times were hard** and this was a very small town. These wise men would bring gifts that were very expensive and would provide for the King of Kings to escape this ruthless, false King, Herod, who would try to have Jesus killed.

Isn't that awesome? When we get down to the end of our rope, God ties a knot in the rope and He always comes through for His children. You can rest in that fact today. Joseph and Mary would use the gifts to finance their trip to Egypt to escape Herod. The Lord always provides when we trust in Him. When we seek His kingdom first, all we need will be added to us.

Matthew 2:3-6

3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; **4** and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. **5** They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: **6** "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."

You know these men came into Jerusalem expecting to find all Jerusalem worshipping their king, but they weren't. Surely the chief priest and scribes (religious people) would be seeking the Messiah? Well they weren't. Matthew Henry says:

"Many people who we think should direct us to Christ are themselves strangers to him and do not know him." Matthew Henry, Bible Commentator and Scholar

Oh don't let that be said of you...being religious has nothing to do with knowing Jesus. Just look at those scribes and teachers of the law. So, the wise men would go to Bethlehem alone. The Jews, the Scribes, the teachers of the Law wouldn't go. They ignored the very prophecy they had used to tell Herod where the Messiah would be born. Oh the blindness of so many "religious" people to the true knowledge of Jesus. Sadly, many can become so accustomed to religion that they miss a relationship with Jesus altogether. Sad.

By the way...you understand dear Christian, sometimes we, like the wise men...must be okay with going to worship Jesus, even if it means we go alone. Just like the old song says, "Though none go with me...I still will follow."

Matthew 2:7-8

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. **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."

Do you really think Herod wanted to worship Jesus? No way. It's been said, "The greatest evil often conceals itself under a cloak of godliness." Herod was a fake. He was a false worshipper. He wasn't sincere and that can easily happen to any of us. We have ulterior motives for coming to church and we are deceitful in how we are living our lives. Well God knows. He's knows our hearts and He knew Herod's heart and He wouldn't let Herod win!

Something really awesome happens in verse 9. It appears the star had disappeared when the wise men got to Jerusalem...

Matthew 2:9-10

9 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. **10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

The star appeared again and they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy!



They would track it the home in Bethlehem and you know what this makes me think? Sometimes it seems that we have come to the end of the light (like these wise men) and it just disappears. And then we don't know exactly which way to go or which way to turn.

But listen, when we seek to follow and worship the Lord Jesus, at exactly the right time, the light will appear again to show the way. That light for us today is the Word of God. We don't need a star. We have the Bible:

Psalms 119:105

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Listen, Christian, when you don't know what to do, read the Bible. Go to the word of God. It's a lamp to your feet and light to your path. Seek a word from the Word.

Well, they rejoiced with great joy and they came to the house...

Matthew 2:11-12

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. **12** And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Did you see in verse 11 that they came to a **house**? It doesn't say a stable. Jesus wasn't a baby when they got there. It took months to make the journey that they made and we know Herod would kill all the boys under the age of two.

Therefore, this is how Jesus most likely would have looked when the wise men showed up at the house...



He was a toddler. By the way, when the wise men got to the house...did you catch what they did first? Did they sit down and eat? Did they take a nap? Did they give Jesus the gifts? No! They fell down and worshipped Him. And this brings us back to worship.

What is worship? I want to ask you to turn to Psalm 96.

Church family, we call what we've been doing today: "The Worship Service," but what does that mean? Do we have to come to this building to worship? What does it mean to worship Jesus? How do we worship Jesus with our lives? Surely worshipping Jesus is more than coming to a building and singing a few songs and listening to a preacher on Sunday mornings?

Well I believe it is. I believe I've found a wonderful definition for worship. It comes by way of Noah Webster, the dictionary man from 1828.

Worship: *to honor with extravagant love and extreme submission* (Webster's Dictionary, 1828)

Listen carefully, you can worship when you are washing dishes or mowing the yard. You can worship when you are brushing your teeth or doing homework. By God's design, we are to be worshippers 24/7/365 days a year. He wants us to see our daily work as an act of worship. We worship him in our marriages when we choose to love and not be annoyed. We choose to worship at work when the deadlines are looming and the pressure is building.

No matter how small or insignificant you think your daily activities might be, they aren't to Jesus. "Sunday worship" should just be a continuation of what we've already been doing throughout the week. What we do here on Sunday mornings should be just a tiny fragment of the worship we offer to the Lord. Worship is our daily privilege.

Yes, I believe Webster had it right. True worship of Jesus is extravagant and extreme. It means we are willing to take up our crosses daily, deny ourselves to follow Him. That's worship! And that's extravagant love and extreme submission.

Let me show you worship...

Psalm 96:1-13

1 Oh sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth!

2 Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.

3 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!
4 For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be feared above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.
6 Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
7 Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!
8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts!
9 Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth!
10 Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity."
11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
12 let the field exult, and everything in it!
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
13 before the Lord, for he comes,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness,
and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Oh church family, He is worthy of our worship simply because of who He is. Who is He? He is King! King of Kings and Lord of Lords! He is the Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent One. He is worthy of our worship not just because He blesses us and gives us stuff and meets our needs by answering our prayers. He is worthy of our worship simply because He is God! Our worship should never be dependent upon the abundance of His blessings in our lives. We should never worship Him only for what he can do for us. That's too shallow and that's too cheap.

No...we worship our thrice Holy God because He is God and He is worthy to be praised because He is the Creator and Sustainer and Master of the Universe!

May we NOT come today to worship Him with false motives, like King Herod. May we not neglect to worship Him because we are blinded in our religious routine like the scribes and teachers of the Law who wouldn't even go to Bethlehem. But instead, may we be like the wise men, who fell on their faces before the King. May we come to our King and say, "Lord...inspect my heart...show me of any unconfessed sin...and then help me to confess and repent of those sins so that I may adore you and worship you with a clean heart..." Because you deserve that kind of worship.

For you see, when we offer God our true, genuine, extravagant love and extreme submission, then we will live our lives day by day in honor and praise in humble righteousness before our King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

I want to ask you to stand to your feet with me. I want to show you the words we are going to sing as our invitation. You know this song:

"Here I Am To Worship"

Light of the world, You stepped down into darkness.

Opened my eyes let me see.

Beauty that made this heart adore you, hope of a life spent with you.

[Chorus]

Here I am to worship,

Here I am to bow down,

Here I am to say that you're my God,

You're altogether lovely,

Altogether worthy,

Altogether wonderful to me.