

Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 2:2-12 | The Magi & The King
 February 6, 2022

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 2:1-12
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

Last week, we studied Matthew chapter 2:1-12...but only got through one verse.

However, it was a big verse.

Matthew 2:1—After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem,

We learned a little history about the village of Bethlehem.

We met King Herod the Great—a man that overflows with humility.

And then we also met the Magi—these wise men from the east.

We took a long detour in the OT book of Daniel to learn why these men are so vital in the story of Jesus' birth.

And we asked this question last Sunday:

Is God big enough to ordain a Hebrew slave to rise up through the Babylonian ranks and lead a pagan group of priestly elites called the Magi for the sole purpose of sending them as Gentile king makers 600 years later to worship a baby named Jesus?

Is our God that big?

It's been said that history is His-story.

How true that statement is.

Because the Kingdom of God doesn't involve coincidence.

Dear friend, if you are a child of God, your life has meaning—similar to that of the Magi.

Your life has purpose—like theirs.

God has created you for such a time as this.

He has taken your shame, your guilt, your worst decision, and your darkest day and paid for all of it with His blood on a Roman cross.

And because of His sacrifice, He has gifted you to minister to those who don't know Him.

If you're a child of God, God is preparing, shaping, and molding you for your next assignment.

As we found out last week, sometimes that preparation takes 600 years through many generations of Magi.

The longer the preparation and the harder the season, the bigger the assignment.

We saw that with the Magi, but can you see it in your own life?

The Magi walked 900 miles to complete their ^{Mission} assignment.

Are you, at this moment, on mission with God?

Are you willing to trust Jesus even though you don't understand Him ^{At times?}

I hope so, because having the illusion of control over your life is quite dull.

INTRO
Today, we're going to see how the people of Jerusalem respond to these Babylonian kingmakers, called the Magi.

We'll also see how their response— is our response.

It may be 2,000 years later, but the heart of humanity hasn't changed.

Jesus, the King of Kings and the Savior of the world, has been born.

How does the world respond?

Let's find out.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 2:1-12 CSB

Matthew 2:1—After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem,

Matthew 2:2— 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."

Matthew 2:3— When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

Matthew 2:4— So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah would be born.

Matthew 2:5— "In Bethlehem of Judea," they told him, "because this is what was written by the prophet:

Matthew 2:6— 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."

Matthew 2:7— Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared.

Matthew 2:8— 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.",

Matthew 2:9— 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.

Matthew 2:10— When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy.

Matthew 2:11— Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 2:12— And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

PRAY:

*I have sought your favor with all my heart;
be gracious to me according to your promise.
(Psalm 119:58)*

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 2:1 — After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem,

So these wise men—these Magi, arrive in Jerusalem.

Obviously, there is a time-lapse in verse one.

Many theologians believe that Herod died around the end of March or April 4 B.C.

So it is possible that these Magi show up anywhere from four to six months after Jesus' birth.

Some people think that the Magi arrived a year or even two years after Jesus' birth.

They have a verse for this—Matthew 2:16.

They believe that because Herod killed all the male children under the age of two, that Herod believed Jesus to be around that age as well.

We'll get to that story in the next several weeks.

But, I'm not so sure about that.

Remember now, King Herod is a lunatic.

He killed his favorite wife, three brothers, and his High Priest.

He's insane. *He kills people for no reason AT ALL.*

So I'm not sure that's a trustworthy proof text for when these Magi arrive, but Scripture doesn't say for sure.

Matthew 2:2— 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."

Notice here that the Magi did not go directly to Bethlehem. Secondly, take note that Matthew doesn't say that the star led the wise men anywhere at this point.

Scripture simply says that they *saw the star at its rising*.

The Magi assumed the same thing we would—that the King of the Jews would be living in Jerusalem.

That's a no-brainer.

When they arrived, they started asking questions that nobody else was asking.

Matthew 2:2— "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?"

The context is that they were going around the city asking anyone and everyone this question.

They continuously asked this question.

The Magi must have been a little surprised to find out that no one seemed to know or even care what they were talking about.

Secondly, the city must have also been shocked with these foreigners asking these kinds of questions.

Remember now, the Magi are kingmakers.

There is no way in the world they are traveling by themselves.

These men are rich, powerful politicians.

They most likely have dozens or even hundreds of people in their entourage.

They probably have soldiers.

They most likely have servants.

These Magi themselves, most certainly, looked like kings by the way they dressed.

This is why people have assumed that they themselves were kings from the Orient.

Now, as we'll find out, news travels fast, especially when you're talking about a new king within the city walls of Jerusalem.

Lastly, notice how they asked the question:

Where is he born king of the Jews?

Last Sunday, we learned that King Herod bought that title.

The Magi are not looking for a self-proclaimed king.

Matthew 2:2— For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him."

People have speculated about this star as much as the wise men themselves.

Some people say it was a real cosmological star.

Some say it was Jupiter, the "king of the planets,"

Other's believe that this star was the simultaneous overlapping of Jupiter and Saturn.

Some say it was an unpredictable, inconsistent and erratic comet.

Others believe that it was a low-hanging meteor.

My favorite, some believe that it was the star of destiny— which lives in the heart of mankind.

Do you know what all that's called in Greek? Buh-lone-I-E.

Please note here that Scripture doesn't identify or explain the star.

Planets, comets, and meteorites don't usually behave as this star behaves.

What's going on?

Could God have used any of these methods?

Yes...But did He?

One of the best ways to find things out like this is to use Scripture to interrupt Scripture.

The Bible has a lot to say about itself.

So the first question we want to ask ourselves is, "do stars or planets ^{behave} do something like this anywhere else in Scripture?"

And when you do this, always start with the NT.

There are 31 verses that talk about stars.

But we're looking for a specific action from this star.

There are only three verses that grab our attention.

Matthew 24:29—“Immediately after the distress of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Revelation 6:13—the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a high wind;

Revelation 8:10—The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from heaven.

These stars are falling, but we don't have any stars in the NT behaving like this one in Matthew 2.

What about OT? 59 verses that grab our attention.

We have three to make note of.

Isaiah 34:4—All the stars in the sky will dissolve.
The sky will roll up like a scroll,
and its stars will all wither
as leaves wither on the vine,
and foliage on the fig tree.

Joel 2:10—The earth quakes before them;
the sky shakes.
The sun and moon grow dark,
and the stars cease their shining.

Joshua 10:13— And the sun stood still
and the moon stopped
until the nation took vengeance on its enemies.

Stars withering, ceasing to shine and stopping for a short time.

That's not exactly the context that we were looking for either.

So with that simple word study, we can conclude that this star is not a cosmological type of star.

So what is it? How do we find out?

Our next question would be, "what's a star do?"

Answer: it shines somehow—it reflects light.

So if we do the same kind of word study with light or shine, we run into the Gospel of Luke.

✦ *And this text happens probably 4-6 months prior to the Magi Arriving*
Luke 2:8— *In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock.*

✦ **Luke 2:9**— *Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.*

Question: What was shining in the sky when the shepherds saw it?

Answer: "***The glory of the Lord.***"

This "glory of the Lord" manifesting Himself in light is nothing new.

We see this time and time again throughout Scripture.

When Moses met YHWH, he appeared in a burning bush of light.

During the Exodus, God revealed Himself in a cloud of light during the day and a pillar of fire at night.

When Moses talked to God ^{one on one} face to face, Moses' face lit up.

During Jesus' transfiguration, Peter, James, and John were blinded by the light.

And when Jesus comes back the second time, the entire cosmos will go dark, and Jesus will come in blazing light for everyone to see His glory.

All that to say that God's glory is revealed in light.

This star is better explained as a unique manifestation known as the *Shekinah*.

The *Shekinah* is the glory of God.

In other words, the "star" behaves much more like a theophany than a planet.

Theophany— *An appearance of God in a supernatural and visible form.*

Theo = God,

Phany = To appear.

As God appeared to the Israelites in a cloud, God appears to the Magi in what resembles a star.

The importance of this star is the presence of God.

Notice that the Magi call this star "His."

They personalize this star to be the King's star.

Evidently, what they saw illuminated itself with a supernatural appearance.

But, Matthew is not really interested in the star.

Nor is he focused on the Magi who saw it.

What Matt is intrigued with is that outsiders come to worship Jesus.

Matthew 2:3— When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

Notice Herod's response.

It's the opposite of the Magi.

Herod is deeply disturbed—he is fearful.

This is the same kind of fear that the disciples had when they saw Jesus walk on the water. (Matt. 14:26)

The picture here is that ^{Herod's} his life is now filled with turbulence.

Why is Herod so emotionally stressed out when he hears about the Magi asking questions?

Herod may be crazy but not necessarily dumb.

He knows exactly who the Magi are and where they're from.

The Babylonians and the Medo-Persian empires are massive.

They are so powerful that they literally control the rest of the world.

Forty years prior, the ~~Parthians~~ Parthians/Persians/Medes started a civil war and attacked Palestine in certain areas.

That's a little too close for comfort.

We would all be a little nervous if a civil war broke out in Pnx.
Herod knows he's in trouble.

Not only that, most of his army is away on mission at this time.

He is so vulnerable.

So what's Herod do?

Matthew 2:4— So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah would be born.

Even though Herod is not religious (he's not even a Jew), he calls all the professional religious people together.

The picture here is that Herod repeatedly asks religious men religious questions.

Herod is a shrewd man.

He pulls together the conservatives, who are the scribes and Pharisees,

Along with the Chief Priests, who are the liberal politicians.

Why did he pull everyone together?

Because He knew that he would get his answer when these guys agreed on something.

When is the last time the republicans & democrats agreed on anything in the Senate?
So what's the answer to Herod's question

Matthew 2:5— "In Bethlehem of Judea," they told him, "because this is what was written by the prophet:"

In other words, good news Herod, He's right down the street.

The Messiah is in our own backyard!

And then, the religious leaders give Herod their proof text from the OT.

They refer to the prophet, Micah.

Matthew 2:6— 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."*

Now get this, Bethlehem is only five miles away from Jerusalem.

That's like saying Jesus is in Clarkdale.

Matthew 2:7— Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared.

Herod now
 He calls the wise men in for a secret meeting to ask them questions.

Herod, out of fear, starts to plan, scheme and plot.

After ^{His} conversation ^{with} the Magi

Matthew 2:8— 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."

Do you guys smell something? Rat?!

In all seriousness...
 How wicked is that?

To tell people that you want to worship the Messianic King of the Jews, but in truth, you want to murder Him.

Matthew 2:9— After hearing the king, they went on their way.

If Herod truly wanted to worship Jesus with the Magi, he could have gone with them, correct?

Finding out that the Messianic King has been born in your backyard is a pretty good reason to clear your schedule, don't you think?

So let's do a quick review:

- The Magi are seeking the King of the Jews to worship Him.
- Herod is opposing the King of the Jews and wants to murder Him.
- ~~The religious leaders~~ ignore the King of the Jews and are indifferent to Him. *others*

—The rest of Jerusalem
King Herod and all the religious leaders were *five miles* from the very Son of God, yet they did not want to see Him!

How's that conversation play out?

The Magi say, "King, aren't you coming with us?"

"Naa...I'd rather stay home and watch Wheel of Fortune."

Regardless, the Magi get directions...

It's like a two-hour journey.

It's off the main road; it's not hard to find.

It's like giving directions to Clarkdale, taking 89a, and turning right on Clarkdale Parkway.

So the Magi can't believe that not one person cares about the Messianic King in all of Jerusalem.

Not one person.

So the Magi leave the city with their entourage.

Matthew 2:9— 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.

Only ~~something like~~ the Shekinah (God's glory ^{demonstrated} manifested in light) could have:

1. Appeared to the Magi to get them started on their journey towards Jerusalem.
2. Reappeared after they met with King Herod, - coincidence
3. Guided them to Bethlehem
4. Then "stopped over the place where the child was."

God is leading His people where He wants them to go.

And you thought your GPS was cool!

Matthew 2:10— When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy.

Matthew is at a loss for words in verse ten.

The Magi are so elated that Matt is stumbling over his words.

Verse 10 has bad English grammar—*overwhelmed with joy*. - stating the star thing twice

But when you find bad grammar in Scripture—you can bank on good theology.

The Magi are so excited that they can't contain themselves.

So they follow the "glory of God that resembles a star, and He leads them directly to the house of Mary and Joseph.

Matthew 2:11— Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him.

Three things, take note of who is mentioned first—the child—the child is always mentioned first.

Secondly, notice that the Magi worship Jesus, not Mary, not Joseph, not the family.

Thirdly, the wise men choose to worship the King.

They don't simply show honor or respect—they express ^{deep} reverence and adoration for God.

To worship God means that we submit our lives to this ^{one} divine King.

The very concept of worship is expressed by serving.

Matthew 2:11— ... Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

^{the Magi} They brought their earthly treasures to give to the Divine King.

These men brought their riches and valuables as a gift.

Each gift is highly symbolic of spiritual truth.

Gold is a sign of Jesus' royalty, **frankincense** for His deity, and **myrrh** for His humanity.

These men gave gifts to Jesus as an expression of worship.

Let me start backward:

Myrrh was used for several things.

It was used as a narcotic with wine. We see that in the Passion of the Christ.

But in this context, Myrrh was used to anoint a dead body.

It's a symbol of Christ's death—His humanity.

The second gift ~~presented to Jesus~~ was frankincense.

Incense represents worship. ^{our} to A Divine King.

It symbolizes the offering up of our lives—as the smoke rises its an offering — because our life is not our own. (1 Co. 6:19)

Our life was purchased by the blood of Jesus (1 Co. 6:20)

Finally, we see how the wise men brought their gold.

How you can tell the difference between a Christian and a Disciple?

two ways:

There's nothing more telling than a person's pocketbook and calendar.

How we spend our money and time proves who we worship.

So the Magi, in a way are Disciples.

Matthew 2:12— *And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.*

So the wise men avoided **Herod**, and they traveled back home a different way.

Traveling home a different way was not easy, especially if they had a large entourage.

IT made this trip even more difficult
Nothing about this trip was easy for them.

PREACH:

ONE MAJOR POINT OF THIS NARRATIVE

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and yet, so few people cared. (John 1:14)

In fact, John's Gospels tells us precisely that.

John 1:10— *He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*

IN OUR STORY WE SEE 5 DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEOPLE
The first group of people are the Jewish People.

They not only didn't recognize Jesus—their lives are too busy to care.

They are pre-occupied with themselves and their world.

The second group of people respond like King Herod.

AS THE ONE BORN KING OF THE JEWS.
 They recognize Jesus, but the very thought of being accountable to a holy God throws them into a rage.

The third group of people are the religious people.

The priests and scribes of Jesus' day are apathetic and detached from reality.

They know the God's Word in their head, but it hasn't made it to their heart.

They have not allowed God to change them.

They are unteachable.

They don't read or study God's Word to know God, they use God's Word to beat people down with their own agenda.

As long as religious people act like God, they will never experience God.

The forth group are the Magi—they are obedient.

The Magi didn't attend Jerusalem Theological Seminary.

They are not members of the First Baptist Church of Jerusalem.

The Magi knew that they were supernaturally compelled to go on a mission.

They made plans, took the risk, and trusted God would provide—and He did!

They completed the mission that God ordained.

They finished life well.

As the Church, we all have the same mission—to worship Jesus like the Magi.

More specifically, our mission is to share the Good News of Jesus with those in the Verde Valley.

Jesus gave the Church one mission—the Great Co/mission.

We all have different roles and responsibilities within this mission, and that's the beauty of the Church.

That's how a healthy church functions—all the different parts working together in a rhythm.

God is inviting us to walk this journey out with Him.

Yes, there is fear and doubt along the way—but that’s all part of the journey—that’s how we grow into maturity.

How weird would it be, if Amy and I invited you over for dinner and we served baby food?

Isn’t that how we act spiritually many times?

God is growing us up trying to give us some prime rib, and yet, we say, “no thanks God, I’d rather suck on my binkie.

Life’s tough at times, so what? *Aren't we tired of making excuses?*

Do you think it was a walk in the park for the Magi to worship Jesus?

Walking from ~~here~~ to Dallas, Tx is a walk in the park compared to what those men endured.

Do you believe the lie that life’s going to give you a pass on pain?

It’s only pain.

Most of the time, it’s not going to kill you--it only feels that way.

Fifth Group

Lastly, others want to be on mission, but we don’t know what the next step is.
we don't see this last group in the text but we have you in church today.
 If you’re in that place, engage in the conversation.

Don’t try to figure this stuff out on your own.

The Magi didn’t travel alone.

Jesus didn’t travel alone either.

Christ died for His Church so you wouldn't have to be alone either.

Dear friends, if you are isolated and alone, today is a good day to do something different.

We have prayer after service. Please come join us and let's finish this mission together.

Let's follow the example of the Magi today.

PRAY:

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

PREACHING BIBLE:

Christian Standard Bible. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020.

BIBLES:

The Apostolic Bible Polygot. edited by Charles Van der Pool. Newport, OR: The Apostolic Press, 2013.

American Standard Version. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016.

The Holy Bible: King James Version. Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version. Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009.

Legacy Standard Bible. Irvine, Ca: Steadfast Bibles, 2021.

New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

The New King James Version. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982.

PARAPHRASE BIBLES: (Used as Commentaries)

Biblical Studies Press. The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible. Biblical Studies Press, 2005.

Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005.

The New International Version. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

The Everyday Bible: New Century Version. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005.

Tyndale House Publishers. *Holy Bible: New Living Translation*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015.

GOD'S WORD Translation. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 1995.

COMMENTARIES:

Blum, Edwin A., and Trevin Wax, eds. 2017. *CSB Study Bible: Notes*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Boice, James Montgomery. 2001. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Brown, Jeannine K. 2015. *Matthew*. Edited by Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton. Teach the Text Commentary Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Crossway Bibles. 2008. *The ESV Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Dorioni, Daniel M., Hans F. Bayer, and Thomas R. Schreiner. 2021. *Matthew–Luke*. Edited by Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar. Vol. VIII. ESV Expository Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*. Vol. 1. San Antonio, TX: Ariel, 2017.

Gaebelein, Frank E., D. A. Carson, Walter W. Wessel, and Walter L. Liefeld. 1984. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*. Vol. 8. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Geisler, Norman L., "Virgin Birth of Christ," *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 760.

Lenski, R. C. H. 1961. *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1985. *Matthew*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Chicago: Moody Press.

MacArthur, John F., Jr. 2013. *One Perfect Life: The Complete Story of the Lord Jesus*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

O'Donnell, Douglas Sean. 2013. *Matthew: All Authority in Heaven and on Earth*. Edited by R. Kent Hughes. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

Kasdan, Barney. 2011. *Matthew Presents Yeshua, King Messiah: A Messianic Commentary*. Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers.

Sproul, Robert Charles. 2013. *Matthew*. St. Andrew's Expository Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

Wiersbe, Warren W. 1996. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

DICTIONARIES | ENCYCLOPEDIAS:

Achtemeier, Paul J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. 1985. In *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Elwell, Walter A., and Barry J. Beitzel. 1988. "Worship." In *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 2:2164–66. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

McCaulley, Esau. 2014. "Worship." In *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, edited by Douglas Mangum, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, and Rebekah Hurst. Lexham Bible Reference Series. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

MEDIA | SERMONS:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/shekinah-glory.html>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/all-Jews-return-Jerusalem.html>

<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2183/fools-and-wise-men-part-1>

<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2184/fools-and-wise-men-part-2>

<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2182/who-were-the-wise-men>

Tommy Nelson, Matthew 2:1-12. Denton Bible Church

