

The King is Here

Christmas

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew 2, a passage we read a little bit earlier we're going to read again this morning for our message. I wanted to preach some messages on Christmas. I don't always stop for many weeks from a series but I thought like we were at a good stopping place in James and so we're going to come back to James, Lord willing, after the new year, but we are going to look this morning at Matthew 2:1-12 and the title of the message is "The King is Here," the same title as the musical this Friday night, "The King is Here."

So let's read God's word together, a familiar passage. I'm going to read it again and we're going to be focusing in on the message that the magi brought. Matthew 2:1,

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, 2 "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: 6 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.'" 7 Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him." 9 After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we ask that You might open the eyes of our hearts, that You might help us to see wonderful things from Your word, that we might see more clearly the glory and majesty of Your Son and we might bow down to Him in a more complete way. We pray this in His name. Amen.

The King is here, that's essentially the message that is brought to Jerusalem by the magi. The King is here, that's essentially the message of Christmas. The King has come. The King of kings has truly arrived. So I want us to consider this text under three headings this morning as we look at this message, "The King is Here." We're going to look, first of all, at the messengers, unlikely messengers; and secondly, we're going to look at the message itself more carefully and unpack it, it's a surprisingly relevant message; and then thirdly, we're going to look at the response. So the messengers, the message, the response. That's the outline this morning.

Now, first of all, the messengers. It's important especially when we look at a passage that is so familiar to us, that we have heard many times, we've read many times, to try to step back from it and ask the Lord to help us see it with fresh eyes; to see it as he really has given it to us, not to just automatically kind of let our brains go on automatic pilot, "Yeah, I know this," but look at it again and when we read the Bible, we need to always be challenging ourselves to do this, ask the Lord to give us a sense of the freshness of the text to really let it speak to us and to not just automatically assume, "I already know this," basically. No, "Lord, what do you have for me here? Let me see something new, not something different that's not there, not to invent, but to see what you have said in your word with greater clarity."

So when we come to this passage, one of the things that we need to step back from it and say is, "Wow, these messengers, the fact that magi are bringing this message to Jerusalem is absolutely astonishing." Think about it, the King of the Jews has been born and no one in the capital city of the Jews knows about it, but instead some guys from the Far East, as it were, from Israel, probably 800-1,000 miles away have come to announce it. Now they don't even know they've come to announce it. They don't think they're bearing a message. They think they've received a message but they think, "Surely, we're probably the last guys to find out about it," because when they come, they ask the question, "Hey, you know, where is he who has been born King of the Jews? We've also learned about this. You guys all must know about it, where is he?" I mean, it's like you go into a town and you ask directions. You expect that the people, you're from out of town, you're not from this state, you come in and you see people there and they've got, say you're from out of town and you see a Georgia tag and you may even know, "Hey, they've got a Gwinnett County tag and here I am in Gwinnett County and I need to find where this particular place is," and you ask them and have you had that experience, like, you ask somebody something that should be really obvious and they have no idea? "I don't know. I don't know where the Gwinnett Arena is or the Infinite Energy Arena." That's more complicated, isn't it? People talk about Infinite Energy, I don't know what that is. That's

the Gwinnett Arena, by the way, just for your information. I hate it when they change names of things, you know? What's wrong with the Gwinnett Arena? There's not as much money in it, apparently, huh?

Well, anyway, so you ask directions and you expect the people there to know. They know, "Surely you know," and that's what the magi are expecting. "We have learned about the birth of the King of the Jews and we're here to see him. Point the way." They talk to one person, they talk to another person, they talk to another person and nobody knows. In fact, this gets spread around that no one knows and the message gets all the way to the king of the Jews, to Herod the king. Now he's not called the king of the Jews in the text but the Romans called him that and had given him that title and it's interesting to note the contrast of the way that Matthew records it. "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.'" Look what he says next, "When Herod the king heard this." Do you see that? We already know he's the king, you already told us that in verse 1, why is Matthew reminding us? He's pointing out the contrast. There is a pretender on the throne and this guy's not going to like the fact that he has a rival.

But the magi innocently come assuming everybody must be celebrating the birth of the King and in reality these guys are almost the only people that know about it. Now if we were to really find out, we would know that there are some people in Bethlehem that know about it, there are some shepherds that have already found out about it, right? But basically this message is unknown and so these messengers are quite unlikely.

Now who are they? Let's think about them a little bit. The text says magi from the east. These are Gentiles, non-Jews. Magi is a term translated "wise men" in the King James but it's a caste of basically scientific philosophers or you could say scientists/philosophers who are in the courts of the rulers of the kings of the east. These were people who would advise the Babylonian kings, the Persian kings. They had wise men, in fact, if you remember the book of Daniel, Daniel after he's taken from Israel, remember when Israel is taken captive by the Babylonians, they're carried from Jerusalem to Babylon, Daniel and his three friends enter into the school basically of the wise men, of the magi. You read about it in Daniel 1. Well, what these magi were basically, they were guys who were skilled in astronomy and natural science and also in astrology, that is, that they believed there was a connection between the movements of the planetary bodies and history and theirs was a more, not quite as fanciful as astrology today but that there was some sense of that going on.

So they are astronomers/scientists/theologians/philosophers. They're all that in one. In fact, it's interesting, the magi were people who believed that science didn't need to be divorced from faith; that you didn't have to check your mind at the door when you entered into the realm of religion and that's exactly the way the Bible sees it, by the way. You don't check your mind at the door when you come in to read the Bible or to come to Christ. Our faith is a reasonable faith. It is the most reasonable and those who truly want knowledge and are open to knowledge, God will speak to them. In fact, it's really striking

that God has chosen to speak to them through the stars. I mean, as Christians, as followers of God, we're not supposed to be listening to the stars. Astrology is not for us. Divination is not for us. We're not to try to divine the future, to figure out the future. God holds the future, we figure out how to walk faithfully. And the reason that we are not to do that is because we have the word of God. Why would we need to know what the stars have to say? We have the more sure prophetic word and so the people of God are to follow the word of God. The word of God is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. It tells us what we need to know so we don't need to have astrology.

So the wise men, though, were basically, they were scientists but who had this sort of spiritual view and were looking to the stars and God met them where they were and gave them a sign in the heavens. I think what we see here is just the amazing kindness of God. We have a God, the God of the Bible is a God who is not stingy with truth. It's interesting, we as sinners, we think about God completely wrongly and we think about ourselves completely wrongly. We come into the world as sinners, we come into the world with a disposition to think entirely wrongly about God and about ourselves. We have naturally a very high view of self. We ought to have a low view of self but we have a high view of self. I mean, the baby has the highest view of self and it continues. We just learn how to cover it up better and an infant thinks he's the most important person in the universe, and a small child thinks he knows everything he needs to know basically. It's amazing. Then teenagers, boy, they think they know everything, right? You guys don't. I'm telling you, you don't. You don't listen. You say, "Sure. Yeah, we really do." I thought the same thing. We all did at some point.

We have a high view of self and a low view of God and so we tend to accuse God of things and people tend to think God is stingy with truth. "Why doesn't he make things more clear," people say. "If God would just be more clear. The problem is he's not clear enough." Listen, the Bible pictures it in exactly the opposite way. The Bible says God has been abundantly clear in every way. He has made himself known, according to Romans 1, in the very fabric of creation. He's made known his eternal power, his divine nature are clearly seen through what has been made and he's made it evident not just in the creation but he's made it evident in our own souls. He's wired into our DNA, as it were, the sense of right and wrong, justice and injustice, and that's from God.

All of these things testify to who God is and so Psalm 19:1-3, I think, is something that applies especially to what these guys experienced. The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament pours forth his speech. Day after day they pour forth knowledge. There is no place where their voice is not heard. The idea is God is pouring out truth every day. He's just unloading the proof of who he is and how good he is and everyone, it's evident to everyone. The problem is not a lack of generosity with God, the problem is a lack of openness with us. Romans 1:18 says sinners "suppress the truth in unrighteous." Though he's made it evident everywhere, we suppress the truth. We hold it down. We don't want to receive it. Then we have the audacity to accuse him of not being more clear.

Here we see another example of this kindness. Here he is speaking and speaking. Alistair Begg writes about, I heard him, I actually heard him. I'm sure he said this in one of his

sermons, he said something to the effect of what you have in the wise men is genuine seekers. Now God has to make someone a genuine seeker but he's made these people who were really open to the truth, they want to find the truth and they're willing to follow the truth wherever it leads. That's the key condition. Are you a seeker of truth? Do you fancy yourself to be a seeker of truth? Do you really seek to be a person who's open? "If I just knew the truth, I would follow it." That's what these men are. They're like that and they prove they're willing to follow it because they take a journey of over 800 miles to find the truth.

If you're open to receive the truth, God is a God who will speak to you. He will be known by you. He will make himself known to you. He promises that he gives wisdom to any man who asks him. If you really want to have the truth, he will give it to you but you must be willing to have it and to submit to it. If you won't submit to it, he won't give you anything. He'd just be adding judgment to you if he's going to reveal things to you that you're going to reject.

So we see in the messengers that these unlikely messengers, the fact that these guys would have the knowledge they have is astonishing and in it, we have, I think Matthew includes this story for a number of reasons because, remember, the Gospel writers if they had written as John said, if they wrote everything about Jesus, it would be hard for the world to contain all the books that could be written about what Jesus did, but they selectively choose certain events. Matthew chooses this event for the particular reason, I believe, of showing that Jesus is the fulfillment of a prophecy made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, that through the seed of Abraham all the families of the earth will be blessed; that God is going to send a Savior through Abraham that is going to save everyone, not just Israel. That's Genesis 12:3. Well, when you read this in context, Matthew 1 begins with the genealogy that starts with Abraham. He's proving in Genesis 1:1-18 that Jesus is the son, the seed of Abraham and he's also the son of David, and now he says, "Look here, here's proof, the Gentiles are streaming to him." He is as Isaiah 49:6 says, God says, "My servant will be a light to the nations. When I send My Savior, He will be a light to the nations. I'm dealing with you, Israel, but when My Savior comes, when the Messiah comes, He will be a light to the nations."

It's really something to think about this too, this message, this astonishingly important message that the Israelites have no idea about. I mean, the whole Old Testament has been anticipating the Messiah, the Messiah is coming and the Messiah has arrived. That's the message. The King is here. The one about whom all of the Old Testament prophets have been prophesying, he's here, and at this point the Jews don't know it, the magi do.

So the messengers, unlikely messengers. That's the first thing, now let's look at the message, the second point, a surprisingly relevant message. When you look at the message again and you step back from it and you forget that you know the whole story already, then it helps you to really see how surprising it is. I mean, what is the content of their message that they're bringing? Like I said, they don't know they're bringing a message but they have some truth they've found and it happens to be a message for all of the Jews in Jerusalem and the message is, essentially, the King is here. The King of the

Jews has been born. Now they think they already know about it but they're bringing that message, right?

Now think about that. Their message is essentially, "We know the King of the Jews has been born. Where is he?" The question is why do these magi from the east care that the King of the Jews has been born? That's why I say you have to step back from it. They're from Babylonia or from Persia, why do they care that the King of a little-bitty area near the Mediterranean nearly 1,000 miles away, why do they care that the King is born? Why should it matter? Why do you care? Why should you care? Most of you were born in America, "What's it got to do with me that 2,000 years ago a King was born in Israel?" Well, it matters a lot to them because they say, "We saw His star in the east and we have come not just to see Him, we've come to worship Him." The King is born and the King deserves to be worshiped. That's essentially their message. The King is here and the King must be worshiped.

Now to understand this and how could they possibly get all of this from a star? I think that's one of the reasons that we're told that they're the magi from the east. By the way, isn't it interesting he doesn't tell us there are three like the three wise men, you know? "We three kings of Orient are." It doesn't tell us that. It doesn't tell us their names. It's not really important how many there are or what their names are. We tend to get three from the fact that there are three gifts. There's no reason to assume there are just three. There could be two. There could be seven. We don't know. It's not important. We shouldn't speculate about it. What we should focus on is what he is telling us. It's magi, it's wise men, it's guys from the Babylonian or Persian area who have been trained in these things. They see the star. They come.

I mentioned earlier to help put it in context, I mentioned that where we see magi in the Old Testament is particularly in the book of Daniel. Daniel was trained as basically one of these guys, or at least alongside the magi. He trained in the school of the Chaldeans, another name for Babylonian magi. Anyway, when you look at Daniel's prophecy, we studied this a number of years ago, I preached through the whole book of Daniel. Those of you who were here, that's like in '08, '09, a long time ago, and when we went through it, one of the things that we saw was there was something really unique about the prophecy of Daniel that sets it apart from almost every other book, it really does in the sense of how much this is true of Daniel. It's unique in this sense, Daniel is written as all the Old Testament is written in Hebrew. Chapter 1 is written in Hebrew. Chapters 8 through 12 are written in Hebrew, the language of the Jews. In chapter 2, verse 4, through chapter 7, verse 28, the language changes to Aramaic. Daniel wrote his prophecy partly in Hebrew and the heart of it he wrote in Aramaic. Aramaic was the language of the Babylonians.

Now think about that. I say that, think about what this would be like. First of all, as I'm preaching right now, if I just went off into French for the next 15 minutes because I knew there were a couple of French people here. I don't think we have any. Anybody speak French well? Well, I don't so worry about it. It's not going to happen unless something miraculous happens. It's not going to happen. But imagine that I went off into another

language. You know, that would be really odd, wouldn't it? Well now, in this case, the Jews who were in Babylon could speak Aramaic because they had to. They had been forced to move over there and they weren't as accommodating as English speakers are to other languages here where you can push a button and get Spanish or get French or whatever. No, back then it was, like, "You'd better learn Aramaic or you're not going to get anywhere."

So they had to learn Aramaic and so the Jews learned Aramaic as well. So they could speak Aramaic and they could speak Hebrew but when Daniel is writing to them, the way the whole Old Testament is, God speaks in the native tongue. So he's speaking to his people in chapter 1 and then he turns, as it were. So imagine we are a group of people who have been taken captive, let's just say for the sake of imagination, the Chinese have come over and captured us and they take us back to China and in China somehow we get the opportunity to talk and I get up and we're going to have a little service like this, though we don't have a building, of course, so we're going to do it out in the public square in China. We all gather together and I'm preaching to you in English and then about 15 minutes into the service, I go into Chinese because there are Chinese people all outside around us and I want the Chinese people to understand what you're also going to understand because we've all learned Chinese because we had to. That would be a tough thing to do so I hope that doesn't happen. But anyway, if it were, you would understand what I'm saying and they would understand what I'm saying but the fact that I said it in Chinese tells you it's even more important that they understand it than that you understand it. Do you see that?

That's what's happening in Daniel. He said, "I want you guys out there to understand something." Now what's going on? In Daniel, it opens up with the conquest by Nebuchadnezzar of Jerusalem and we're told something important in the first couple of verses in Daniel 1 that Nebuchadnezzar conquers Jerusalem, he destroys the temple, he plunders the temple. He doesn't destroy the temple, he plunders the temple. He takes things out of the temple of Yahweh from Israel, from Jerusalem, and he takes them back to Babylon and he puts them in the temple of his god. What's going on there? This is basic theology in the polytheistic world in which Daniel lived. Israel and all these other nations had their gods. Israel worshiped Yahweh. Babylon had Marduk and a number of other deities. They had a pantheon. The Egyptians had a pantheon. The Philistines worshiped their gods. Everybody had their god and so what they believed is when you beat someone in a war, you conquered them, your god had conquered their god. This is what he was doing, he was taking the jewels and the treasures of Yahweh and offering them to Marduk, "Marduk, you have triumphed over Yahweh." This was the basic working theology of every person alive basically at that time.

So what God is doing in chapters 2 to 7 is saying, "Your theology is all wrong. It may appear that Marduk is greater than Yahweh, but I'm here to tell you that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is God Most High. He alone rules over all the affairs of mankind." It's essentially what's happening in chapters 2 to 7. There is this wonderful chiasm going on there and I encourage you to read it. You'll see chapter 2 matches up with chapter 7. Chapter 3 matches up with chapter 6. Chapter 4 matches up with chapter 5. He's telling

real events that happened but he's presenting it in a way that draws attention to this contrast.

Chapters 4 and 5 in the middle of the chiasm, chapter 4 is Nebuchadnezzar being humbled before Yahweh. Amazing story. He's exalting himself, God humbles him, makes him like an animal for seven years until he finally acknowledges that the Lord, God of the Jews whom he conquered, he thought, that God rules over all. And when he finally acknowledges that, his glory is restored to him. Chapter 5, parallel to that is his grandson won't honor Yahweh. Belshazzar is destroyed in a moment. He sees the handwriting on the wall and the kingdom is snatched from him. Message: Yahweh reigns and rules.

Chapters 3 and 6, moving out from the chiasm, chapter 3 is the story, the familiar story that many of us have learned when we were children, the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the three men who would, Daniel's three friends who would not bow down to the idol that Nebuchadnezzar set up. They were thrown into the fiery furnace and they survived and there was a fourth one in there with them, one like a Son of God. Chapter 6 parallels that. Daniel as an old man is thrown into the lions' den because he, again, will not dishonor Yahweh. So you have that going on.

Then you have 2 and 7 are parallel as well. Chapter 2 is a dream that Nebuchadnezzar has. Way before he gets humbled, he has a dream and he dreams about a statue and this statue is a magnificent statue. It's got a gold head. It has silver shoulders and a chest. It has bronze thighs. And it has iron legs and feet mixed with clay on the toes. He sees this magnificent statue and he sees a stone that is taken out of like a mountain carved without hands and this small stone is thrown at the base of the statue. It hits the feet of the statue and the statue, this magnificent statue shatters. He has this dream and he has a sense this dream means something. He's so perplexed by it that he calls in his wise men, he calls in his magi and all the other guys that are in his court and he says, "Listen guys, I need you to interpret a dream for me." Nebuchadnezzar is a pretty shrewd guy and he says, "If you're really going to give me an interpretation from the gods, I know it will be from the gods if you can tell me not only an interpretation but if you can tell me the dream itself. I'm not going to tell you the dream. Tell me the interpretation. Tell me now!" They're like, "Hey, no king has ever asked his wise men to give him the dream and the interpretation. You give us the dream, we give you the interpretation." "No, I will not and if you guys don't," he was really upset, "if you guys don't do it, I'm gonna kill you," and basically he goes, "I'm gonna kill you, I'm gonna kill your families and I'm gonna tear your houses down." He really wants an interpretation of the dream.

Daniel finds out about it, now Daniel is still in school. He's still in seminary, their kind of seminary, and he hears that Nebuchadnezzar is about to kill all the wise men and all the guys in training. He's going to kill the seminarians just for good measure. He didn't give them an opportunity yet and Daniel is like, "Man, I've got to pray." So he prays and he tells the captain of the bodyguard, "Listen, give me some time. The Lord will give us the answer to this." He prays and he gets the interpretation and he tells the captain, "I have the dream and interpretation." He goes into Nebuchadnezzar and he recounts for him with precise detail the dream itself. "You saw the statue, head of gold, silver, bronze, iron

mixed with clay. A stone cut out without hands was thrown against that. It shattered and that little stone that seemed so inconsequential grew to fill up," this was a part I didn't tell you about the dream earlier that Nebuchadnezzar saw, "it grew to fill the whole earth. You saw that and I'm here to tell you what it means, King. You, King, are the head of gold. After you, Babylon the great will be replaced by another kingdom which will be not quite as glorious," the Medes and the Persians. "After that will come another kingdom, the bronze," that is, the Greek. "Then after that will come another kingdom, the iron and the clay," that is the Romans. "In the days of those kings, God will take an unimpressive rock and he's going to throw it at those feet and it's going to shatter and that little rock is going to grow into a kingdom that fills the whole earth."

That's chapter 2. Chapter 7 I said the chiasmic balance, remember this is all in Aramaic. Chapter 7, the last thing God says to the Babylonians is, listen, Daniel has a vision and Daniel recounts this and he puts this in Aramaic. He has a vision of four beasts. Remember four metals? He has four beasts. The first is a lion with wings. The second is a bear. The third is a four-headed leopard. And the fourth is a beast that is so terrifying he doesn't attempt to make an association with anything that he knows, he calls it the dreadful and terrifying beast and this beast is so terrifying that it's trampling down all the other beasts. This thing really catches his attention. He can't get away from it but in the midst of that as this beast is doing its terrible damage, he sees the courts of heaven and the Ancient of Days, he sees God himself, Daniel sees God on his throne and he sees one like a Son of Man come into the very presence of the throne of God. A man. A Son of Man and that Son of Man is given all the authority over all the kingdoms. He destroys the beasts and rids them and he sets up a kingdom that will be forever and ever.

That is what God says to the Babylonians. "You think that Israel is inconsequential. You think that Yahweh is just," I mean, it's an out-of-the-way place, who even wants to live there. "You think Yahweh is no big deal because you conquered Him. I'm telling you that that little country is the people of the Most High God. Out of all the kingdoms of the earth, He chose the most inconsequential in line with that little stone." And in fact, that little stone appears to be the most inconsequential. If you saw his birthplace, you would see a stable. If you looked at him, you would see someone who was not that outwardly impressive. Isaiah had prophesied about him and said he has no stately form or majesty that we should be drawn to him. He's just a man. He's the Son of Man but when this Son of Man comes, he will not only be the Son of Man, he will be the Son of God.

That passage Ted read earlier from Micah 5 at the beginning, you know, it's interesting when the Jews gave Herod the quote from Micah 5, they left out one key part of it, they left out more than one key part but the main key part they left out, they said, "You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah for out of you shall come forth a Ruler whose goings forth are from eternity." They left that part out. That's what Micah had said. There is going to come forth a Ruler born in Bethlehem but he's not just a man, his goings forth are from eternity.

So the reality that these magi understood was they put this in context. They said, "Wait a minute, the King of the Jews is not just the King of the Jews, the King of the Jews is the

King of every nation and people and tribe and kindred. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords and, therefore, He is my king and so I will celebrate His birth and I will worship Him." That's why they went basically a one-way journey of over a month. Think about that, on a camel across difficult territory to see this King. In fact, I wonder if Daniel had also shared with them, being a wise man, if he had actually shared with his friends or maybe it got handed down a prophecy from the Hebrew Bible, Numbers 24:17. Listen to this. I think they surely must have known about this verse. "I see him," this is the prophecy of Balaam about the people of Israel, "I see him but not now; I behold him, but not near." I see someone off in the future, Balaam says, I see him but I can't really see him. I uphold him but I can't see him clearly. He's not near. "A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth." He will take over everything. So he sees a star rising and the star is the scepter so when the star rises, the scepter has come. I think they put those things together. The star is telling us that the Messiah is here. The one that is going to rule over all the nations has come.

Now, that's the message. "We're here to tell you that the King is here. The King is here and the King deserves to be worshiped." But the third thing is what is your response? The response. Quite a contrast in responses. We've alluded to them a little bit already but look at how the various people respond to this message that the King is born. We mentioned the magi, they have taken a journey, if they're from Babylon it's 800 miles, if they're from Persia, it's more. They've come from more than a month away and they've come to worship God. They've come bringing gifts to honor his kingship, to honor even his priesthood, to honor his messiahship.

The Jews, though, the Jews had no idea and then when they hear it, what's their response? They're troubled. Verse 3, "When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Herod is troubled and the Jews are troubled. It's really interesting that he puts them together with Herod because look at Herod's response. Herod finally shows his cards. He says, "Hey, go find him and I want to have a secret meeting with you. I don't want anybody else to hear what I'm going to tell you, you go and find him because I want to come and worship him. Report to me where he is. I want to come and worship him." What do we know Herod wants to do? He wants to kill him. That's why he told them secretly. He inquires, the word for "inquired from them when the star occurred," he wants to know when the star occurred so he can figure out how old this child is because he's going to kill him.

Now he's troubled when he hears it because the King of the Jews means he has a rival. He can no longer be in his position of authority if the true King has come and he sees that as a threat to his reign, and apparently something of that is going on with the people of Jerusalem. Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. Why would they be troubled? This is the news they had been waiting for. They should be, even if they're a little skeptical because they might say, "Why would this be coming from the magi?" I mean, I can understand that. Really? "Why wouldn't we have heard this from a prophet or something? Why would it be coming from the magi?" They might have been a little

skeptical but, wait a minute, you should be open. They saw the star in the east, Numbers 24:17. Somebody should have been able to bring that up. They could bring up Micah 5:2.

Why does no one go with them? Isn't it interesting, they come to Jerusalem because they assume if the King of the Jews is born, the place to find out where he is is in Jerusalem. I'm sure he's in a palace in Jerusalem. So they come to Jerusalem and they ask, like, "We know nothing about this. Herod, we need to find out where is the Messiah supposed to be born? Where is the King supposed to be born?" He's supposed to be born in Bethlehem. "Okay, let's get together a group and go to Bethlehem and find Him so we can all worship Him." Isn't that what you would expect? "No, you guys go on because you really care and you want to worship and you go on and then tell me." But the other people aren't going as well.

It's really something if you think about that. It's only six miles for them, six or seven miles. The magi have already come 800 and they're going to go six more but the people of Jerusalem are not willing to go to see the King. What you see is at least just apathy. "Probably there's nothing to it. Not a big deal." Really? "Yeah, I'm interested. You know, I believe in Jesus but it's not that big a deal." I mean, the heart that is apathetic about the things of God is not where it needs to be with the Lord. If these things are really true, if the King of kings has been born, everything, it requires everything from us. In fact, it is the best news that could ever be heard because the King being here, he comes to deliver us and to bring us out of slavery into the joy of his kingship. He comes to deliver us from our sins. He comes to deliver us from our guilt, deliver us from the wrath of God, to break the power of evil in the world, all that is wrong with the world, the curse that is everywhere. This King comes to reverse the curse and to break everything, to break the rule of Satan and sin.

So they're troubled but look at the wise men. We have even more about their response. Look at verse 9, "After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." Now they had seen the star from the east and they know to come, they come and now the Lord does something supernatural and makes the star even lead them from Bethlehem to exactly the place where Christ now is. He's not in the stable anymore. It's probably been 35-40 days since he was born. He's in a house, the text says that. They come to a house.

Well, look at their response emotionally. They rejoiced exceedingly with great joy when they see the star leading them on. Matthew, he uses every language tool at his disposal to convey to us how happy they were. The first thing, he uses a Hebraism. Literally the text says, "He rejoiced with joy." It says more than that but it starts off saying he rejoiced with joy. This is a Hebraism. They would often say this to try to say, "He was so very joyful. Rejoiced with joy." Well, Matthew says that in the Greek, "Rejoiced with joy," but then he adds two more words to it. That's not enough. "They rejoiced with joy that was great. They rejoiced with great joy." That's still not enough. "They rejoiced with exceedingly great joy." They were so very happy they were overflowing with joy. Their hearts were overwhelmed, overcome by the kindness of God in revealing this truth to

them. I think they're marveling at the fact that, "Why did he make it known to us? Who are we?"

The wonderful joy of when you come to see that God has made known to you things that other people don't see and it's not a pride against them, it should be amazement and gratitude for the grace of God that has opened your eyes and that's true happiness. That's the only place that true happiness is found. In fact, it's interesting in the Greek language the word for "grace, charis," which we know means "unmerited favor; God's kindness," right? But did you know that the etymology of the word "charis" comes from another word, "chara" which means "joy"? That the real etymology of charis is "that which gives joy."

So what is it that makes you happy? You need to be happy, you're depressed, the thing that makes happy, makes you happy is the grace of God. When God shows his favor to you, this is what makes us happy. So what we need to do is celebrate his grace and we need to understand his grace and we need to bask in his grace and understand that we stand in his grace, those who have repented and placed their faith in Christ. That's where true happiness comes.

It's interesting, back to Genesis 12:3, remember I said the first prophecy or one of the first prophecies, it's not the first prophecy of salvation, there's one previous to this, but Genesis 12:3 says through your descendants, through your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed. The Hebrew word for "blessed" is just like the Greek word for "blessed," it means "all the families of the earth will be made extraordinarily happy." Joy is found in this, the birth of this King and the reign of this King. When this King reigns in your life, you will have joy. It's one of the marks of the true believer.

Now we wrestle with it. We forget and so we find ourselves miserable a lot because we're not walking in grace and standing in grace and that makes you miserable when you're not but joy is a mark of the believer. Think about this, what's the fruit of the Spirit? Love, joy. Right after love, "they shall know you're My disciples by your love," that's the mark of a believer but right after that, joy, and joy comes when you submit to the reign of Christ. When you turn from sin, when you let go of whatever you're holding onto and you surrender to him and say, "King Jesus, I need You to be King in this area. I want to surrender this. I don't want to hold back anything from You. I want Your reign to be supreme in my life. I worship You by laying down this idol and I want You to be my everything." That's the beginning of joy.

These folks know that, in contrast to those who should have, the ones who were closest have missed it and the ones who were far away God has brought near. This is a warning to all of us especially who grew up in Christian homes, who grew up in America where the Gospel has been made widely known. Be careful that we not treat these things lightly with apathy but that we press on, press into the grace of God, receiving his grace, seeking his grace, trusting in him by faith and loving him. John 1:11-13 is fulfilled in this passage. "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him." But to those who believed in him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of

God, who were born not of flesh or of the will of man or of the will of flesh but were born of God.

The message the King is here, is the King who has come your King? Are you submitted to him today? Or have you just heard about him from a distance and you haven't been willing to go to him? Are you going to bow to him? To let him have everything? He won't receive you unless you surrender. You have to do what they did, they came in and they fell down at his feet and worshiped him. That's what we must do, lay down everything, lay down ourselves and there's no greater joy. When we do that, we find, when we lose everything for him which is what we're called to do, let go of everything, "Lord, you can have anything in my life. You take it away. I will worship You. Anything that You don't want to be there, I give to You." When you let go of everything, you find that you've gained everything. When you hold onto anything, you find you will lose everything. "He who loves his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

Let's pray together.

Our Father, how grateful we are for the wonder, the salvation that You've made known and the riches of the grace that You've made known to us in Jesus Christ. Our Father, we pray that You would search all of our hearts. Lord, for those who are wondering if they're truly Yours or those who know they are not Yours, help them even now to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus as their King. Such a worthy Master. Such a kind Lord. He says, "Come to Me you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me for I am gentle and lowly of heart and you will find rest." And Father, for those who belong to You, may we continually lay down everything and be more broken and keep losing everything in the sense that we can keep finding that we have everything in Christ. We pray this in His name. Amen.