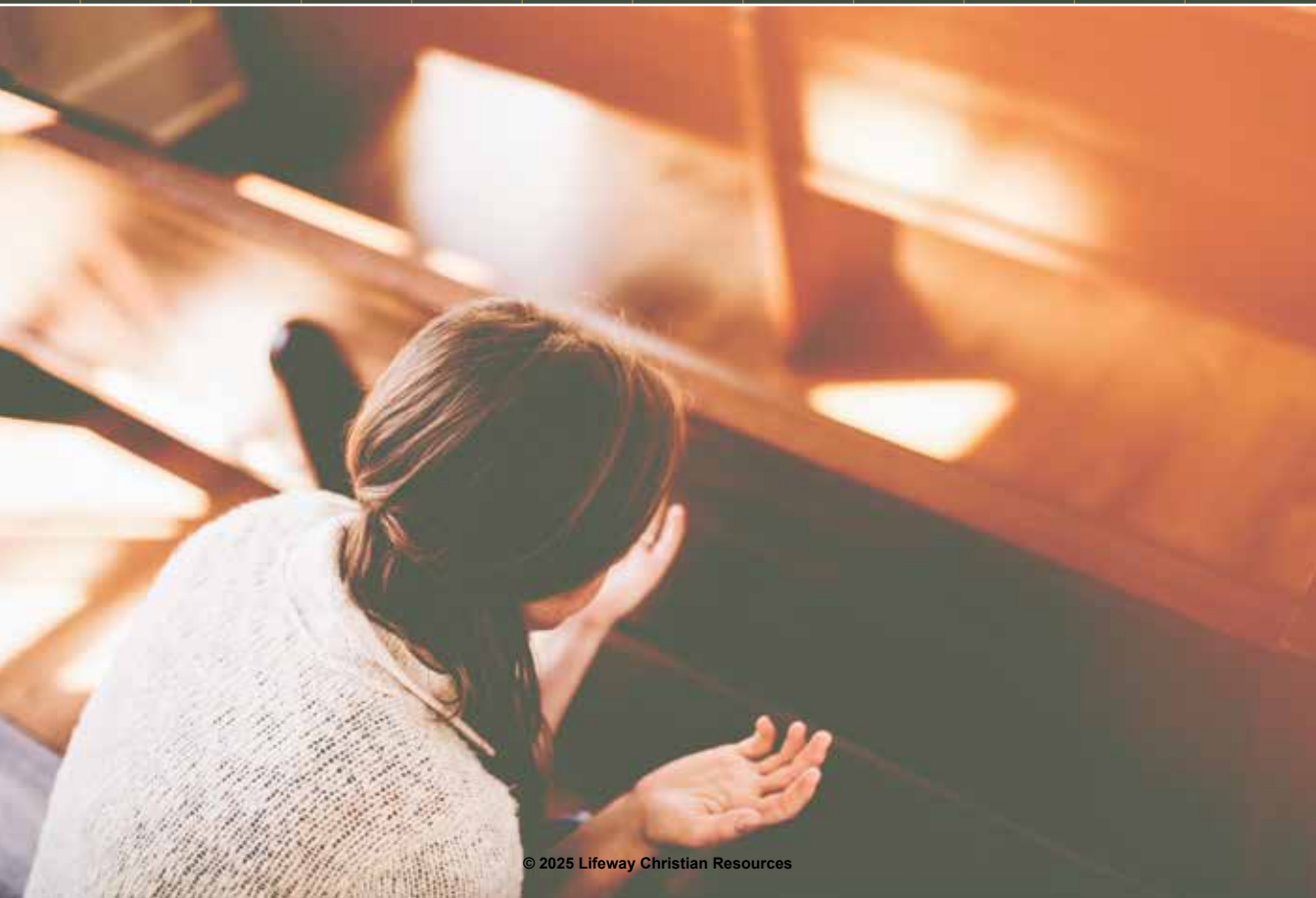


SESSION 3

Worship the King

MATTHEW 2:1-12

JESUS THE SAVIOR IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP.



Much of life is driven by value. We want to know, “Is it worth it?” Advertising will speak of activities that are worth the time and of possessions that retain their worth. We speak of a person being “worthy” of a certain honor. An athlete plays for “all he’s worth,” meaning to the full extent of his ability. Our challenge is to identify and pursue that which is most worthy.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT YOU CAN BUY OR ACTIVITIES THAT YOU CAN DO THAT ARE “WORTH IT”? HOW DO YOU THINK THE WORTH OF SOMETHING IS DETERMINED?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

One of the subtle differences between Matthew, Mark, and Luke is the audience targeted by each writer. Mark most likely wrote his Gospel to Gentiles in Rome. He took great effort to explain Jewish customs and translate Aramaic words. Luke also wrote to share the good news of Jesus with a Gentile world. Matthew, on the other hand, wrote primarily to a Jewish audience. His purpose was to provide irrefutable proofs that Jesus was the long-promised Messiah.

Matthew incorporated numerous Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus. Two of these Old Testament prophecies are found in the context for this week’s study. Matthew began his Gospel account by tracing the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, who was engaged to Mary. He noted how an angel appeared to Joseph to explain the supernatural birth of Jesus. This was a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 (see Matt. 1:23).

The next Old Testament prophecy fulfilled was the location of Jesus’s birth found in Micah 5:2. This quotation concerning Bethlehem occurs in the story of the visit by the wise men who came from the east to see the Christ child (Matt. 2:6).

Following the visit by the wise men, Joseph was warned by an angel of Herod’s plan to kill the baby. Taking Mary and the baby, Joseph fled for the land of Egypt, a journey of over four hundred miles. Herod’s plot to kill all the male children in Bethlehem two years old and under was his solution to keep his throne from being stolen by this newborn “King of the Jews.” Matthew quoted a third Old Testament passage, Jeremiah 31:15, which prophesied about the death of the children of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:18).

After Herod’s death in 4 BC, Joseph brought his family back from Egypt and settled in Nazareth, the hometown of Mary and Joseph.



1 After Jesus was born in **Bethlehem of Judea** **A** in the days of **King Herod**, **B** **wise men** **C** from the east arrived in Jerusalem, **2** saying, “Where is he who has been born **king of the Jews**? **D** For we saw his **star** **E** at its rising and have come to worship him.” **3** When King Herod heard this, he was **deeply disturbed**, **F** and all Jerusalem with him. **4** So he assembled all the **chief priests and scribes** **G** 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.” **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** **H** for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him.” **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. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: **gold, frankincense, and myrrh**. **I** **12** And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

A. Village just south of Jerusalem. Known as the home of David, it was also prophesied as the home of the Messiah (vv. 5-6; Mic. 5:2).

B. Herod the Great, who reigned as “king of the Jews” by Roman decree from 37 BC until 4 BC.

C. “Magi” (NIV; NASB). Likely, astrologers from Persia or Babylon. Their mission highlights the universal scope of the gospel.

D. The same title granted to Herod by Rome. However, the wise men sought one “born” a king, suggesting Herod’s claim was not genuine.

E. The wise men viewed the star as a divine guide on their mission.

F. The Greek word implies being stirred from the inside. Something that should be at peace is agitated. The context suggests Herod’s inner turmoil was intense.

G. If Herod had been a true Jew and held a legitimate right to the throne, he would have known the prophecies about the Messiah. Instead, he had to rely on the religious leaders.

H. Diligent investigation. Herod wanted exact details about this threat to his throne.

I. Gold symbolized royalty and majesty, affirming Jesus as King. Frankincense was used in the temple, highlighting His role as priest. Myrrh was a burial spice, foreshadowing His death.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Seeking the King

(Matt. 2:1-3)

We can recognize Jesus as the one, true King.

- **How did Herod respond to the wise men's inquiries? Why?**
- **In what ways is Jesus a King?**

2. Finding the King

(Matt. 2:4-8)

We can know that Jesus is King because His birth fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.

- **Why would prophecy be important to understanding who Jesus is both then and now?**
- **How can you help people come to know Jesus as their King?**

3. Worshiping the King

(Matt. 2:9-12)

We acknowledge Jesus as King through our worship.

- **What motivated the wise men's incredible sense of joy?**
- **What gifts can you offer to Jesus as an act of worship?**

Apply the Text

- **This is a time of year when it is easy to focus on anything but Jesus. There is one thing worthy of our attention: Jesus. How can your group help each other to keep your focus on Him during this season?**

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. (See Luke 1:35; Hebrews 1:1-3.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use a concordance and/or Bible dictionary to help understand a passage.

Use a concordance to find references in Scripture to “myrrh” and “frankincense.” (See Gen. 37:25; Ex. 30:23,34-37; Esth. 2:12; Ps. 45:8; John 19:39.) Read about “myrrh” and “frankincense” in a Bible dictionary. Make a list of the various ways these spices were used in biblical times.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Matthew 2:11. What tangible objects do you consider your “treasures”?

The wise men followed the star toward Bethlehem. When they found the house where Jesus and His family were staying and saw Jesus, they fell to their knees and worshiped Him, presenting Him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Falling to one’s knees or lying prostrate on the ground were and are physical ways of expressing worship. These men were the first non-Jews (Gentiles) to worship Jesus as the King.

What do the star, the journey of the wise men, and their gifts reveal about Jesus?

As Gentiles, the wise men represented God’s universal offer of salvation to all people. Jesus the Savior is worthy of our worship. Through our worship, we acknowledge Him as King.

What is the “gold, frankincense, and myrrh” you can offer to Jesus?

For the next seven days, make “falling to their knees, they worshiped him” a repeating event on your phone.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Matthew 2:1-2

Reflect on the significance of Jesus being “born king.”

The “wise men from the east” were astronomers and astrologers who played prominent political and religious roles in eastern countries, most notably Persia. The region of Persia once was under the rule of the Babylonians. The Jewish people had been exiled to this area after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/586 BC. It might be that through contact with Daniel and other Jewish people living in Babylon that a messianic expectation arose in the area. These wise men might have been influenced by Jewish prophetic writings concerning the Messiah, especially the writings of Daniel.

They were alerted to the Messiah’s birth by a “star at its rising.” This was interpreted as the herald of the birth of someone significant in the region where the star appeared. They proceeded to Judea because of prophecies they had studied. After they learned of the prophecy of Bethlehem, the star reappeared and then lead them to Bethlehem and the house where the Christ child was.

The wise men asked, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?” They were searching for the legitimate claimant to the throne. That certainly wasn’t Herod. Herod was a usurper to the throne. He was Idumean and came to power through Roman appointment.

In what way is Jesus your King?



Day 2: Matthew 2:3-4

Consider why all of Jerusalem would be disturbed with Herod.

Herod was known for his insane fear of losing his throne. He exhibited constant paranoia that someone was going to steal it. To satisfy this fear, Herod had his wife, three sons, brother-in-law, and mother-in-law killed because he thought they were trying to take over his throne. It is reported that as he approached death, he had leading citizens of Jerusalem imprisoned with the instruction that, upon his death, they were to be killed. His reasoning was no one would weep when he died, but at least when these prominent Jews died, there would be weeping on the day of his death. News from the wise men of a new claimant to the throne sent Herod into a panic.

Herod was the Roman appointed king of the Jews and a convert to Judaism. Yet, he had no clue of Jewish prophecy concerning the Messiah. Such was his limited knowledge of Scripture. The chief priests and scribes were called in. The term refers to the leaders among the priests. “Scribes” made handwritten copies of the Scriptures. More importantly, they were considered authorities on the law of Moses. Herod “asked them where the Messiah would be born.” As we will see, he wanted more than an answer to give the wise men.

Why might the news that only Jesus is King and worthy of worship disturb some people today?



Day 3: Matthew 2:5-6

Compare Matthew 2:6 to Micah 5:1-2.

The religious leaders reported that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea. To verify this report, the religious leaders cited the announcement of the prophet Micah (Mic. 5:1-2). In his prophecy, Micah set up a contrast between the capture of Judah's king by the Babylonians (Mic. 5:1) and the birth of God's coming Messiah in Micah 5:2. Clearly this One who would be born in Bethlehem was the Messiah because the verse goes on to speak of His eternal nature: "His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times" (Mic. 5:2b).

Jesus was always God's plan of salvation. We can know this is true because of the many Old Testament prophecies He fulfilled. After His resurrection, Jesus explained to His disciples how all of the Old Testament pointed to Him (Luke 24:25-27).

Matthew also picked up wording from 2 Samuel 5:2, "who will shepherd my people Israel." This phrase spoke of a familiar Old Testament concept and indicated the kind of ruler Jesus would be—tender-hearted and kind. This phrase also linked Jesus to David's throne as the Shepherd of God's people.

Notice that the scribes and priests knew the prophetic text concerning where the long-awaited Messiah would be born, but they showed no interest in finding Him.

Why does it matter that the Old Testament foretold many details about Jesus?



Day 4: Matthew 2:7-8

Take note of Herod's deceitfulness.

In light of this revelation of the birthplace of this expected King, Herod hatched a murderous plot. To execute his plan, he quietly enlisted the help of the wise men, who unknowingly became his spies. Herod inquired of the wise men "the exact time the star appeared." His desire was to ascertain the approximate age of the child. This would prove useful when he issued a death warrant for every male child two years and under living in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16).

Based on Ezra's journey four centuries earlier, a trip from Babylon could have taken four months. A trip originating in Persia would have been even longer (Ezra 7:9). The star probably appeared even earlier than that, allowing time for them to prepare for their journey. So, Jesus may have been born at least a year before the wise man arrived in Jerusalem.

Herod told the wise men to search carefully for the King in Bethlehem and then report back to him. True to his deceitful nature, Herod told them he wanted to worship the child. But he certainly had no intentions of joining the wise men in worshiping the Christ child.

In what ways do people misrepresent their intentions toward Jesus today?



Day 5: Matthew 2:9-12

Identify the responses of the wise men upon finding Jesus.

The wise men were overwhelmed with joy. All the weeks and months of anticipation were complete; they had reached their goal. The joy they experienced, no doubt, was brought about by the fact that the star pinpointed the very house in which Joseph, Mary, and the Christ child were living.

The phrase “entering the house” indicates that some time had passed since the manger scene portrayed in Luke 2. Once the wise men entered the house, they immediately knelt before the child and worshiped Him. As a part of their worship, they opened their treasures and presented luxurious gifts to the child. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh were gifts typically given to royalty. Gold was a precious metal of great value in the ancient world as it is today. Frankincense and myrrh were costly fragrant perfumes or spices used in worship and adoration. It is possible that Joseph and Mary sold these gifts to finance their trip to Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15).

In verse 12, the wise men were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod. While they had not perceived Herod’s wicked scheme, God knew and warned them to avoid Herod. Once again, the wise men were obedient to God’s leading. God had led them to leave their home and travel to Bethlehem to see the Christ child. Now He led them back to their home along a different route.

What gifts can you offer to Jesus as an act of worship?

APPLY THE TEXT

Make a list of things in your life that have value or worth. Hopefully you will list your faith in Jesus Christ. What order would you rank each item as to its value today and for the future?

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