

# Worship the King

JESUS THE SAVIOR IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP.

## Matthew 2:1-12

1 After Jesus was born in **Bethlehem of Judea** <sup>A</sup> in the days of **King Herod**, <sup>B</sup> **wise men** <sup>C</sup> from the east arrived in Jerusalem, **2** saying, “Where is he who has been born **king of the Jews**? <sup>D</sup> For we saw his **star** <sup>E</sup> at its rising and have come to worship him.” **3** When King Herod heard this, he was **deeply disturbed**, <sup>F</sup> and all Jerusalem with him. **4** So he assembled all the **chief priests and scribes** <sup>G</sup> 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** <sup>H</sup> 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** <sup>I</sup> 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**. <sup>J</sup> **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**. <sup>K</sup> **12** And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

### Exploring Key Words

- 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** “Troubled” (KJV; ESV). The Greek word *tarasso* implies being stirred from the inside. Something that should be at peace is agitated. The context suggests Herod’s inner turmoil was intense.
- G** Despite claiming to be “king of the Jews,” Herod was not familiar with scriptural prophecies about the Messiah. Instead, he relied on the religious leaders.
- H** The image of a king as a shepherd was common in Israel. It affirmed the leader’s role in nurturing and protecting, not just ruling. The Messiah would be the ultimate shepherd-king.
- I** Diligent investigation. Herod wanted exact details about this threat to His throne.
- J** “Exceeding great joy” (KJV); “overjoyed” (NIV). This word also describes the joy produced by the Holy Spirit in believers (Gal. 5:22). This led the wise men to worship (v. 11).
- K** While some scholars see great symbolism in the gifts, this is speculation based on ancient tradition. However, they were valuable and fitting offerings for a King.



### NOTES

### Seeking the King (Matt. 2:1-3)

- The birth of Jesus occurred in Bethlehem during the reign of Herod the Great.
- An unidentified number of wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem seeking to worship the newborn King of the Jews. They had been following a special star.
- As the reigning “king of the Jews,” this turn of events deeply disturbed Herod. His uneasiness spread throughout Jerusalem.

### Finding the King (Matt. 2:4-8)

- Herod sought the specific birthplace of this rival king. The religious leaders shared that the prophet Micah predicted the King (Messiah) would be born in nearby Bethlehem.
- After determining when the wise men first became aware of the star, Herod ordered them to come back when they had found Him. He deceptively claimed an interest in worshipping the King himself.

### Worshipping the King (Matt. 2:9-12)

- The wise men continued to follow the star toward Bethlehem. When they found the house where Jesus and His family were staying, they worshiped Him and presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- After receiving a warning to avoid Herod, they returned to their homeland by another way.

### Summary Statements

#### *Jesus the Savior is worthy of worship.*

- We can recognize Jesus as the one, true King.
- We can know that Jesus is King because His birth fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.
- We acknowledge Jesus as King through our worship.

### Memory Verse

#### *Matthew 2:11*

### 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.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](http://goExploreTheBible.com).

## ENGAGE

**How do you think the worth of something is determined? (PSG, p. 30)**

- 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”? (PSG, p. 30)**

## EXPLORE

### SEEKING THE KING (MATT. 2:1-3)

**Bonus: What do you think of when you imagine the wise men? How much is based on the Bible and how much is based on tradition?**

- Scholars have placed Jesus’s birth around 6 BC, based on the death of King Herod in 4 BC. The visit by the wise men happened sometime in this window between 6–4 BC.
- The wise men were astronomers and astrologers who played prominent political and religious roles in eastern countries, most notably Persia. Despite our traditions, they were not kings, and we don’t know how many there were.
- They were looking for the one “born king of the Jews.” In other words, they sought one with a legitimate claim to Israel’s throne. In contrast, Herod was not Jewish by birth and was appointed to his position by Rome.
- Herod was known for his paranoia and violence. So, the wise men’s arrival sent him into a deep panic. Thanks to his murderous reputation, all of Jerusalem was also on edge.

**In what ways is Jesus a king? (PSG, p. 34)**

### FINDING THE KING (MATT. 2:4-8)

**Bonus: How do you know something is true? What sources do you rely on?**

- Herod was a religious convert to Judaism, but he had no clue about the prophecies concerning the Messiah. So, he called in the “chief priests and scribes” for help.
- The leaders quoted Micah 5:2 to verify that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Located five miles south of Jerusalem along the main road to Egypt, Bethlehem also had been the hometown of King David.
- With this revelation, Herod hatched a murderous plot and quietly enlisted the wise men as his unwitting spies. Herod wanted to know exactly when the star appeared so he could approximate the new king’s age (see Matt. 2:16).

- Herod added to his dishonesty by claiming a desire to follow the wise men in worshiping the Child. He disguised his treachery under a cloak of spirituality.

**How can you help people come to know Jesus as their King? (PSG, p. 36)**

### WORSHIPING THE KING (MATT. 2:9-12)

**Bonus: How do you feel when you reach the end of a long trip? Why?**

- The wise men were overwhelmed with joy as they set out from Jerusalem. All the weeks and months of anticipation were complete; they had reached their goal.
- The Greek wording indicates that time had passed since the manger experience in Luke 2. Any portrayal of the wise men arriving on the night Jesus was born is a sentimental portrayal but not biblically accurate.
- The wise men did worship Jesus, bowing down to Him and presenting lavish gifts. Gold was a precious metal, just as it is today. Frankincense and myrrh were expensive perfumes or spices used in worship. Some scholars suggest that Joseph and Mary sold these gifts to finance their trip to Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15).
- The wise men were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod. While they initially did not perceive Herod’s wicked scheme, God warned them to go home another way. Once again, they were obedient to God’s leading.

**What gifts can you offer to Jesus as an act of worship? (PSG, p. 38)**

## CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss how adults can use Christmas to pay more attention to Jesus.

**How can your group help each other to keep your focus on Him during this season? (PSG, p. 39)**

Challenge individuals to list things they feel have value and worth in life. Urge them to consider where Jesus truly falls on their list.

**What order would you rank each item as to its value today and for the future? (PSG, p. 39)**

## FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.

### BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 38)

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.

Direct adults to complete the Bible Skill on page 38 of the PSG. After a few minutes, encourage them to share what they discovered in their work. Lead a brief discussion about why these gifts were important and how they might symbolize the life and mission of Jesus. Point out that the key takeaway is that these gifts were presented in worship. Challenge adults to consider that gifts they could use to worship Jesus.

### OBJECT LESSON: COLLECTIBLES

Prior to the session, do some research on the price some valuable collectibles draw online. (*Examples: vinyl albums, toys, paintings, and so forth*)

During the session, show the group some photos of valuable items. Encourage volunteers to share things they may collect. Be prepared to share your own responses. Ask: **How much do you think each of these is worth?** Discuss responses. Share the asking prices. Note that something’s value may be inherent or may depend on what someone is willing to pay. Note that other items might have sentimental value.

Emphasize that Jesus’s value is inestimable and that He is inherently worthy of our worship. Say: *His value is not based on any amount we could pay, but on the price He paid for us.* Challenge adults to consider the “value” they find in Jesus and in their relationship with Him. Urge them to use this Christmas season as a chance to renew their commitment to Him.

### HEROD: POWER AND PARANOIA

Herod the Great is remembered for his architectural achievements, political cunning, brutality, and unrelenting ambition. He rose to power through his alliances with Roman leaders, including Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, and later Octavian (Augustus). The Roman Senate appointed him King of Judea in 37 BC.

Herod’s reign began with bloodshed, as he eliminated the remnants of the Hasmonean dynasty to secure his throne. Plagued by paranoia, Herod ordered the execution of his wife, Mariamne I, suspecting her of betrayal. He also killed Mariamne’s mother, along with his sons, Alexander, Aristobulus, and Antipater.

Herod’s legacy is associated with the Massacre of the Innocents (Matt. 2:16-18) to eliminate the prophesied “King of the Jews.” Further, he reportedly arranged for notable Jewish leaders to be killed upon his death to ensure national mourning, though this order was not carried out. According to one account, Augustus, after hearing that Herod had murdered his own son during the Massacre of the Innocents, noted that it was better to be Herod’s pig than his child.

Herod is recognized for his ambitious building projects that reshaped Judea. His most celebrated accomplishment was the reconstruction of the second temple in Jerusalem, turning it into a magnificent structure that became a centerpiece of Jewish worship. Herod also fortified cities and built impressive structures, including the fortress at Masada, the port city of Caesarea Maritima, and the Herodium, his lavish palace and burial site.

In death, Herod left a divided kingdom and a mixed legacy. His kingdom was divided among his surviving sons, leading to political fragmentation and increased Roman intervention. King Herod is a paradoxical figure—a cutting-edge builder and a brutal tyrant, whose reign characterized the complex power dynamics in the ancient world.