

I Saw...the King

12.10.17

I Saw Part 2

The story of Jesus' birth is full of God showing people his love through his Son Jesus.

This week, we hope to see Jesus through the eyes of the Magi.

Matthew 2:1-12 (NIV)

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We **saw** his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶ " 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and **search** carefully for the child. As soon as you **find** him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, **they saw the child** with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and

presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

1. The Magi were, again, unlikely candidates for an invitation to worship Jesus.

A. Magi (or Wise-Men) were men from a middle-Eastern priestly class.

1. They were from either Arabia, Persia, or Babylonia (modern day Iraq).

2. What makes them unlikely candidates for an invitation to worship Jesus was that they were not Jewish.

a. First, they refer to Jesus not as their king but as "King of the Jews".

b. Second, they didn't know where the "Messiah" was prophesied to be born, while any good Jew would have known that the answer was Bethlehem.

B. The Jewish people were very nationalistic at this point in their history.

1. A self-respecting Jew would not have invited men like the Magi to come and worship their king.

2. As we will see, the religious leaders were indifferent to the birth of Jesus.

3. Knowing this ahead of time, God sent His star to guide these Gentiles from another land in order to give Jesus the worship He was due.

4. The purpose of God's plan was never to have just one group or nation to give praise to God, but for all the people and nations of the world to worship him.

5. From the very beginning of Jesus' life and ministry on Earth, we see God calling and using all kinds and sorts of people to worship Him.

6. The most dangerous thing the church can do today is to write off the people that Jesus loves.

Let's turn to our passage this morning.

2. The Magi were led from their homes to worship the King of the Jews.

A. God miraculously announced the birth of Jesus to the Magi by a star.

1. Many have debated the nature of this star.

a. Was it two planets that aligned?

b. Some have previously believed it was Haley's Comet, although research shows this happened too early in history.

c. My suggestion is that God miraculously created or used a star for his divine and special purpose, and used it to lead them to where Jesus was.

d. We should not look for a natural answer to a supernatural question!

e. Many things in our lives have spiritual origins and cannot be satisfied with natural answers.

2. God led these wise-men to the location, over a period of possibly two years, to Jesus' location.

a. The journey to find Jesus was not a simple, overnight thing.

b. In fact, there is nothing simple or easy in the story of Christmas.

1. Mary bore Jesus in pain, just like every child.

2. The shepherds risked rejection and refusal by coming to worship a baby.

3. The wise-men followed a star, unsure of where or to whom it would lead.

c. Christians must be careful not to present Christmas as just another fairy-tale.

1. Christian fairy-tales lead to unreal and unrealistic expectations.

2. We must remember that the Story of the Incarnation involved pain, suffering, and long journeys.

3. But the result lead to the worship of the King!

B. Early on in the story, we see that the Magi came to King Herod asking the whereabouts of the one who was born king of the Jews.

1. Why is this important?

a. Because Herod was supposed to be King of the Jews!

b. The reason Herod was king was because of his influence with the leaders in Rome.

c. Herod, at this time, was a cranky and evil king who was responsible for the assassinations of his wife, mother-in-law, and two sons.

d. History tells us that when King Herod was about to die, he rounded up many of the leading people of one of his cities and gave the orders to his soldiers that upon his death, to kill all of these leaders. The reasoning... because no one would mourn his death therefore he wanted to give them a reason to mourn.

2. When the magi ask for the one who was "born king", this posed a real threat to the rule of Herod.

a. The One who is born King has the right to rule over the one who has been appointed.

b. When Jesus was born, he was born King of the Jews.

c. "The words they use mean "born king," not "born to be king," as is often said; they are talking about what he is, not what he will be."

d. Jesus didn't have to wait to be crowned king, he already was king.

e. And the Magi came to celebrate Jesus' kingship.

C. This truth still applies to us today.

1. Jesus didn't need the recognition of Herod or the religious leaders. He was born king.

2. Scripture teaches that someday every knee will bow and every person will that confess Jesus is Lord, and King.

3. Why? Because Jesus' kingship is not based upon popular vote or opinion!

a. Today we have bought into this idea that something needs our approval for it to be so.

b. For example, Americans claimed that Barack Obama or Donald Trump weren't their presidents.

c. But they didn't need your approval or recognition to fulfill the roles of that office.

d. People today may claim that Jesus isn't King of the Universe, King of the world, or King of their lives.

e. But God's sovereignty and power is not dependent upon our approval.

D. In today's passage, Matthew 2, we find 3 groups of people.

1. All three made a decision of how they wanted to see and respond to Jesus' kingship.

2. Herod saw Jesus' kingship through the eyes of hatred and hostility.

3. The religious leaders saw Jesus' kingship through the eyes of indifference.

4. While the Magi saw Jesus' kingship through adoring worship.

E. Everyone has an opinion of who Jesus is.

1. We all have our own view of Jesus.

2. How we view Jesus determines our response to Jesus.

3. What does our view of Jesus say about our belief in Him?

3.3 Ways we all see the Kingship of Jesus:ⁱⁱ

One way we can view Jesus is...

A. **Through the eyes of hatred and hostility** (Herod)

1. When Herod heard the news of Jesus' birth, he reacted out of fear, hatred, and hostility.

a. Later, this hatred and hostility manifests itself in the order to kill all male children under the age of 2.

b. Herod could not stand the thought of there being another King but himself.

2. Today, many around us have set themselves up to be king.

a. Our wants come first.

b. Our pleasure comes first.

c. We set ourselves up to be King and we ruthlessly defend our kingship.

3. The hatred and hostility towards Jesus' kingship is displayed in many ways.

a. In nations such as China and others, leaders cannot stand the thought of their people professing Jesus' lordship, so they unleash persecution.

b. In our culture, we have those who spew hatred and hostility at the idea that there is a God and we are not him.

c. This kingdom of self is expressed in the narcissism of today:

1. Me, Me, Me is not only for 2-year old's.

2. Instead, it is acceptable for all people.

3. And the very suggestion that there is a King of the Universe, and we are not Him, leads many people to express hostility and hatred towards God.

4. We must guard ourselves against the dangers of establishing ourselves or our families as kings.

a. You can't worship yourself, your career, or even your family.

b. There is only one King and that is Jesus.

Another way we can view Jesus is...

B. **Through the eyes of indifference.** (Chief priests and scribes)

1. We often overlook the chief priests and scribes in this story.

a. Herod didn't know what the prophecies said,

b. So he asked the teachers of the Law.

2. They knew that the Christ, the Messiah, would be born in Bethlehem.

a. They should have been excited about the possibility that their Savior had come.

b. They should have longed to go and worship Him.

c. Instead, they responded with indifference.

3. **When we view Jesus with eyes of indifference, we treat him as someone not worthy of our time or worship.**

a. Here in our part of the world, indifference is the greatest challenge to the claim of Jesus as King of our hearts.

b. Many around us have heard the Gospel, and know the claims of Jesus, and simply do not care.

c. Indifference expresses itself in many forms:

1. Busyness is an expression of indifference.

2. Distraction

3. Poor stewardship is an example of indifference. (We don't maintain or improve things we don't care about).

d. Indifference, at its extreme, leads to blasphemy.

1. Blasphemy is to declare something as common that God has called Holy.

2. The religious scribes and leaders knew that this was the Son of God, and they treated him as an ordinary baby.

4. We must guard ourselves and avoid the trap of indifference.

Lastly, we can view Jesus...

C. **Through the eyes of adoring worship.** (Magi)

1. When the Magi arrived, they brought pricey gifts.

a. These gifts are important and symbolic.

b. What they all had in common is that they are appropriate gifts for kings.

2. **The ancients had a saying that said you should never come into the presence of a king empty handed.**

a. The Magi knew that "Gold is the metal of kings."ⁱⁱⁱ

b. And so they traveled a long distance to come and gift proper gifts to the newborn king.

3. The magi saw Jesus' birth through adoring worship.
 - a. Their long and tiring journey was worship.
 - b. Their hands were full of gifts to be given as worship.
 - c. Their mouths proclaimed words of adoration and worship.
 - d. When these Magi looked upon Jesus they saw more than a baby but the King.

4. When you hear the name of Jesus, does it lead you to worship?
 - a. For some of us, we may respond with hostility.
 - b. Others respond to Jesus with indifference.
 - c. And others respond in worship.
 - d. As Christians, this is what our response should be.

Closing: Having a heart of worship.

A. Christmas calls for a response.

1. During Christmas and Easter, all of us have to choose how we will respond to Jesus.
 - a. It is something we can't really hide.
 - b. That's good, because our response to who Jesus is determines our eternity.

2. If we believe the claims of Jesus and the Bible, the only appropriate response is worship.
 - a. Jesus is worthy of worship.
 - b. Jesus is the king of the world.
 - c. Fortunately he is unlike any king we have ever heard of.

B. William Barclay said, "Jesus was 'the Man born to be King'. But he was to reign not by force but by love; and he was to rule over human hearts, not from a throne, but from a cross."^{iv}

1. Jesus' kingship didn't lead him to be a despot or cruel leader.
2. Instead, Jesus' kingship led him to die so we might live.
3. **To know Jesus as King is to experience life changing love.**

C. Today, during this Christmas season, we worship not a King of hatred but a king of love.

1. That's why I can confidently declare that if you need a God change in your life, you can experience one today.
2. Maybe you resent Christianity and God for something that has happened in your past.
 - a. Today, God wants to help you overcome your hatred and hostility and to experience his love and mercy.
 - b. Christmas, Easter, church, and God don't have to be subjects you hate and avoid.
 - c. Instead, they can become powerful reminders of what Jesus has done for you.
3. Maybe you don't care about God or Jesus.
 - a. Coming to church is just a way you are trying to be a good person.
 - b. But there is more to being a Christian than going to church and performing religious ritual.
 - c. You can experience a vibrant relationship with God that is the complete opposite of your indifference.

D. Wherever you are, and whatever you are facing, we want to pray with you today.

1. For some of us, we want and need Jesus to change our priority.

2. Others, you need God to heal, provide.

E. Wherever you are, and whatever you are facing, know that God is there with you.

1. Jesus came not for his sake, but for yours.

2. Jesus was God with Us, so that we all may experience a new life with him.

ⁱ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 36.

ⁱⁱ Adapted from: William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew, Third Ed., The New Daily Study Bible* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2001), 34–35.

ⁱⁱⁱ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 31.

^{iv} William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew, Third Ed., The New Daily Study Bible* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2001), 37.