

## Worshipping the King

### Matthew 2:1-12

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

**“May people never dwell upon our attainments or our deficiencies, but may they always observe this one thing, that we are men of God, that we are ambassadors of Christ, that we are Christ’s servants, and do not attempt to shine for ourselves, or to make ourselves conspicuous: but that we labour to shine for Him, that His way may be known upon earth, His saving health among all people.”<sup>1</sup>**

**Charles Spurgeon**

Ever since Jesus was born humanity has struggled in their reaction to the Babe lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes. One would think the moment that He who fulfilled over 400 prophecies of the Old Testament and was called “Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace,” the Messiah would have had millions of people scrambling to get a peak of His presence here on earth. Despite His divinity, offer of reconciliation and adoption into the family of God, many on Jesus’ over 2000 birthdays have refused to acknowledge or take time to pay homage to the world’s Savior! For those whose feet are accustomed to broad paths of self-glorification one can almost understand their rejection of His “narrow” path of righteousness but to be rejected or even ignored by Christians must bring great sorrow to Jesus’ soul! The following sermon is going to suggest that like the Magi we are to honor Christ on His birthday by bringing Him sacrificial gifts of love and deeds of self-denial with the goal that the world might see and bow their knees to the awesome strength, power and love of the Savior!

#### Refusing to Worship (verse 3 – 8)

**<sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: <sup>6</sup>“‘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.’” <sup>7</sup>Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search**

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<sup>1</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Star and the Wise Men,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 29 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1883), 3–4.

**carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship Him.”**

The most common reaction to Jesus lying in a manger is hostility or indifference.<sup>2</sup> The moment the Magi asked where Jesus was born Herod and all Jerusalem were “deeply troubled.” Even though Herod was an Idumean by birth<sup>3</sup> and not a legitimate king of Israel<sup>4</sup> but



one appointed by the Roman Senate,<sup>5</sup> he considered himself to be the “King of the Jews.”<sup>6</sup> The mere thought of a revolt and losing his title in the eyes of the Jewish people angered and sickened him. All of Jerusalem became disturbed as well for they feared the cruel reaction of this ailing,<sup>7</sup> paranoid tyrant<sup>8</sup> would mean grief and death for many of the Jewish people.<sup>9</sup> But the most disturbing reaction of all came from the chief priests and teachers of the law whom out of their spiritually complacent hearts<sup>10</sup> and desire to retain “religious and political power”<sup>11</sup> through their

alignment with Herod,<sup>12</sup> made no attempt either before or after the Magi’s visit to find out if and where the Messiah was born!<sup>13</sup> This part of the story finished by revealing Herod’s

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<sup>2</sup> John Piper, [\*Sermons from John Piper \(1990–1999\)\*](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Craig S. Keener, [\*Matthew\*](#), vol. 1, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), Mt 2:1.

<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson, [\*“The Gospels and Acts,”\*](#) in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1928.

<sup>5</sup> Barclay Moon Newman and Philip C. Stine, [\*A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew\*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 32.

<sup>6</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, [\*Matthew\*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 99.

<sup>7</sup> Craig A. Evans, [\*The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke\*](#), ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 57–58.

<sup>8</sup> D. A. Carson, [\*“Matthew,”\*](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 86.

<sup>9</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [\*Matthew\*](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 15.

<sup>10</sup> Craig S. Keener, [\*Matthew\*](#), vol. 1, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), Mt 2:1.

<sup>11</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, [\*Matthew\*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 97.

<sup>12</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, [\*Matthew\*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 97.

<sup>13</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [\*Matthew\*](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 15.

deceitful request:<sup>14</sup> the location of Jesus so that he might worship Him when in reality all He wanted to do was to kill Jesus.

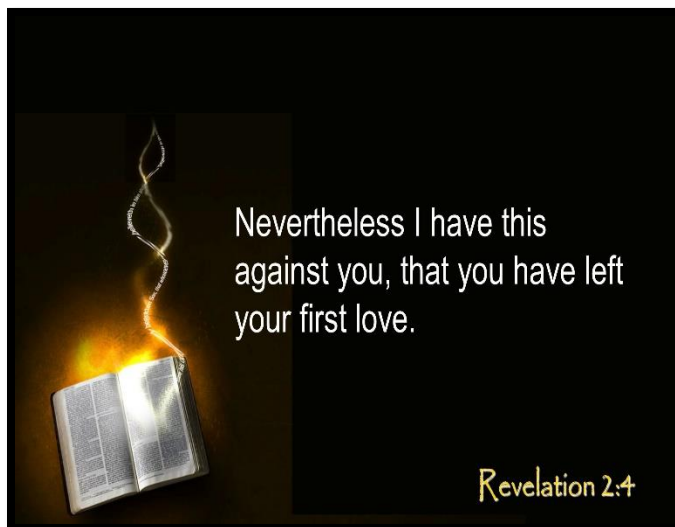
The first point we learn from this passage is how difficult it is to tell the whole world about Jesus of His birthday! There are many people in this world with the stone, cold heart of



Herod whose feet are so accustomed to the broad path of pleasure that the mere mention of a narrow righteous path intensifies their opposition to the Babe lying in a manger!<sup>15</sup> Like Herod and the chief priests and teachers of the law they fear losing their “god of self.” Even though all creation testifies to the eternal power and divine nature of Jesus (Romans 1:20), they refuse to approach the Light out of “fear their evil deeds will be exposed” (John 3:20). Even though Scripture warns they will hate and persecute Gospel witnesses (John 15:18) we are not to fear (1 John 4:4; Matthew

10:28) but strap on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-20) and stand firm in our living message (Romans 12:1-2) that God loves (John 3:16) and offers them reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:20).

The second point that we learn from this passage is that we should not underestimate how



difficult it will be to convince lukewarm, carnal Christians to live and be holy witnesses of Christ’s birth! Many Christians read the Bible a few minutes a week and think they are scribes, scholars, lawyers<sup>16</sup> and experts of God’s word. Even if one studies the Bible night and day what good will that do if one is like the teachers of the Law, hearers but not doers of His commands (James 1:22)? And just because one outwardly appears to be holy like the chief priests of Jesus’ day this does little good if one does not

<sup>14</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 98.

<sup>15</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Star and the Wise Men,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 29 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1883), 2.

<sup>16</sup> Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to Matthew](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 38.

have a deep spiritual connection and devotion to one's Creator.<sup>17</sup> Because they have never acknowledged and lived the truth<sup>18</sup> the backslidden have a form of religion that is void of both power and fruit.<sup>19</sup> To get them to stop being hypercritical witness of self-glorification remind them of their need to repent and return to their first love (Revelation 2:4) ! Pray that these redeemed masterpieces of God's grace might wake up from their spiritual slumber and from humble, contrite hearts show how brightly a living stone can shine and testify to God's existence!

### Worshipping Rightly and Fishing by Example (1-2, 9-12)

**After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> And having been**

**warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.**



An uncommon but faithful reaction to Jesus lying in a manger can be found in the story of the Magi. Even though they are often described as "wise men" or "kings" <sup>20</sup> they were more likely astronomers or astrologers,<sup>21</sup> religious advisors to the royal courts<sup>22</sup> of possibly Persia,

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<sup>17</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Radical Cross: Living the Passion of Christ*, Camp Hill, PA: Wing Publishers, 15.

<sup>18</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 34.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>20</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 12–13.

<sup>21</sup> D. A. Carson, "The Gospels and Acts," in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1928.

<sup>22</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 94.

Arabia<sup>23</sup> or more likely Babylon.<sup>24</sup> Partially due to their cultural belief that the appearance of a star signified the birth of royalty<sup>25</sup> but more likely due to their studying of the OT and other Jewish writings<sup>26</sup> the Magi were so convinced of the significance of the star that they travelled about nine hundred miles by foot to honor the prophesied King.<sup>27</sup> They followed the star not because it was an astronomical phenomenon<sup>28</sup> but because to them it was the Shekinah glory<sup>29</sup> pointing them to the King of their Jewish studies.<sup>30</sup> The Magi were overwhelmed with joy<sup>31</sup> to find a two year old Jesus<sup>32</sup> and Mary in a house in Bethlehem.<sup>33</sup> In an act of reverence for a king<sup>34</sup> they bowed and offered Jesus gifts of gold for a king, frankincense for a priest and myrrh for one that was to die.<sup>35</sup> While it is unlikely, they knew of the spiritual significance of these gifts or of the divinity of Christ<sup>36</sup> their worship clearly demonstrated their belief in Jesus' right to rule!<sup>37</sup> How ironic it is that Gentile pagans came to know the true King while the key religious leaders of Israel rejected Him!<sup>38</sup>

The first thing that we learn from the Magi's visit is how important it is to take time to worship Jesus on His birthday. While the Magi were willing to pay the time and resources to take their over 900-mile journey to worship Jesus, the chief priests and teachers of the law were not willing to pay for their journey of only a five-mile walk!<sup>39</sup> Before you became a Christian, did you not first count the cost of becoming a disciple (Luke 14:25-34)? Those

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<sup>23</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 94.

<sup>24</sup> Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to Matthew](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 35–36.

<sup>25</sup> D. A. Carson, [“The Gospels and Acts,”](#) in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1928.

<sup>26</sup> D. A. Carson, [“Matthew,”](#) in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 86.

<sup>27</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [Matthew](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 13.

<sup>28</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of Matthew](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 30.

<sup>29</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of Matthew](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 30.

<sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to Matthew](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 41.

<sup>32</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 99–100.

<sup>33</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of Matthew](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 30.

<sup>34</sup> Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to Matthew](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 37.

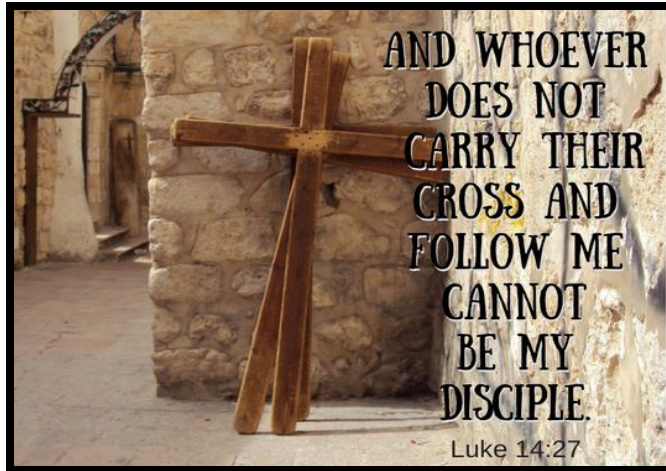
<sup>35</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of Matthew](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 33.

<sup>36</sup> D. A. Carson, [“Matthew,”](#) in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 86.

<sup>37</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of Matthew](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 31.

<sup>38</sup> D. A. Carson, [“The Gospels and Acts,”](#) in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1929.

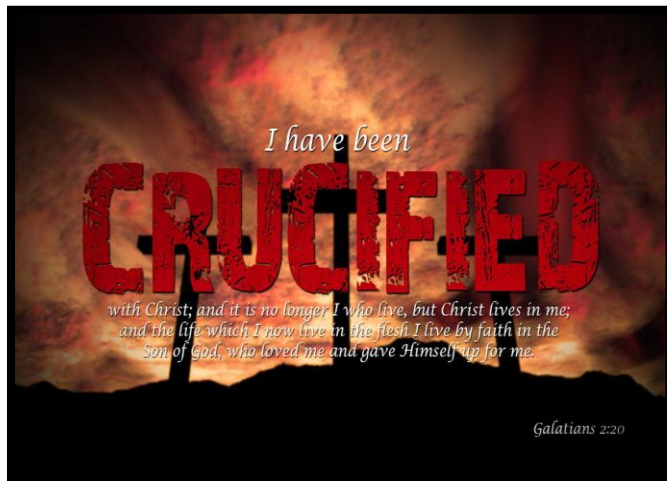
<sup>39</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1990–1999\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).



Christians whose hearts are as “far off spiritually as the Magi were far off locally”<sup>40</sup> need to be reminded that upon becoming a disciple they promised to give up everything for Christ. What message are we sending Jesus on His birthday when we have ample time to buy gifts, visit family and friends and eat food but no time for meditation, reflection, adoration or witnessing of He who is our lifesaving, portion and heart’s desire (John 3:16; Psalms 73:26)? To keep from “losing

our paradise in Christ for another taste of that tree of knowledge-of-good-and-evil,”<sup>41</sup> we as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2) need to visit Jesus on His birthday and rededicate our lives to humbly worship and serve our King!

If we are going to visit Jesus on His birthday then like the Magi, we should bring Him gifts of gold, frankincense and Myrrh. While the Magi saw these as royal gifts fitting for a



king,<sup>42</sup> generations of scholars have attached special symbolism to each of these gifts.<sup>43</sup> Gold symbolizes Jesus’ kingship<sup>44</sup> over our lives. When we offer Jesus gold, we are acknowledging His right to rule over all decisions in our lives and our desire to be living witnesses of His Kingship over all things seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16).<sup>45</sup> Frankincense symbolizes Jesus’ deity.<sup>46</sup> To us He is not just a baby lying in a manger but One who emptied Himself and though He be God chose to be the

<sup>40</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Star and the Wise Men,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 29 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1883), 2.

<sup>41</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Star and the Wise Men,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 29 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1883), 6.

<sup>42</sup> Barclay Moon Newman and Philip C. Stine, [A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 42.

<sup>43</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [Matthew](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 16.

<sup>44</sup> D. A. Carson, [“Matthew,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 89.

<sup>45</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of Matthew](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 35.

<sup>46</sup> Barclay Moon Newman and Philip C. Stine, [A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 42.

suffering servant of all (Philippians 2:6-11; Isaiah 53)! And Myrrh to us symbolizes our gratitude for His atoning sacrifice for our sins<sup>47</sup> and our desire to die to self so that Christ might reign supreme in our hearts.<sup>48</sup> By giving these sacrificial gifts of love and self-denial we profoundly witness to the world of the awesome strength, power and love of our Savior!

And finally, if we are to be great witnesses of Jesus on His birthday then we need to guide people to the truth concerning whom was in that manger some 2000 years ago. Let us



not be like the chief priests and teachers of the law who pointed only to their own filthy rags of self-glorifying righteousness. A dying world does not need to hear about how great our music, programs, building and social atmosphere is in our church. They need to know that the sinless Lamb of God who is the Light and life of this world<sup>49</sup> is offering them a chance to be reconciled and adopted into His family! While they can find much sin, hypocrisy and possibly some duplicity in us they will find no sin in the Creator of which we

gladly point<sup>50</sup> to as the reason as to why we have hope! To help us find some of the right words to say to the lost of this world this Christmas I want to leave you with the following quote by Charles Spurgeon:

**“Jesus was born that you might be born again. He lived that you might live. He died that you might die to sin. He is risen, and to-day he maketh intercession for transgressors that they may be reconciled to God through him. Come, then; believe, trust, rejoice, adore! If you have neither gold, frankincense, nor myrrh, bring your faith, your love, your repentance, and falling down before the Son of God pay him the reverence of your hearts.”<sup>51</sup>**

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<sup>47</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 101.

<sup>48</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of Matthew](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 35.

<sup>49</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Star and the Wise Men,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 29 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1883), 9.

<sup>50</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Star and the Wise Men,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 29 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1883), 9.

<sup>51</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Star and the Wise Men,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 29 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1883), 10.