

Seeking, Finding, Worshipping

We can often become discouraged with the moral decline in our society. Each year seems to bring new spiritual challenges to God's people. In order for us to get oriented in our strategy for the new year, we need look no further than our text today. In the first century, the Israelites were governed by a puppet of the Roman Caesar, Herod the Great, who was an ambitious and ruthless ruler. He viciously murdered any supposed opponent to his throne, including his own sons and his wife. The Roman Caesar at the time, Augustus, said about Herod that he would rather be one of his pigs than one of his sons! Yet, even in such dark times, God's light shines into the darkness and gives us the way of life.

Matthew 2:1-12

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, **2** saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." **3** When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; **4** and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. **5** They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

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

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. **8** And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." **9** After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. **11** And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. **12** And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

In the midst of chaotic times, we can see from the text that God wants all people everywhere to seek Him, to find Him, and to worship Him.

I. **God wants all people everywhere to seek Him (v.1)**

a. People from all nations

We can see from the text that these "wise men" were "from the east." This means that they were not brought up in believing homes! They were not Jews. They were probably from Persia and not expected to know or to care anything about the Jewish Messiah; and yet it is these wise men who seek Jesus out. Matthew is making a point. God sent His son not just for the Jews but for all the people of the world. This is emphasized in Jesus' last words to His disciples when He said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (28:19).

b. People of all types

Because of the Christmas tradition, we have always thought of the wise men as extraordinary disciples of Jesus, but the fact is that "magi" were considered magicians within the occult religions of the East, and they were not held in high esteem among Jews and Christians (Cf. Acts 8:9,11; 13:6,8). Even the pagans held such people in contempt. Both Sophocles and Plato, when speaking of "magi," called them "charlatans." God is showing us that He often calls out the least likely persons to be His disciples. Matthew especially cherished this notion, for we must remember that he was a lowly tax collector before being called by Jesus to follow Him. It is obvious that God Himself seeks such people, for the wise men say that "we saw his star when it rose"; that is, God is the one who sent the star to allure the magi.

II. **God wants all people everywhere to find Him (vv. 2-10)**

God wants us not only to seek Him but to find Him. Our journey has a destination. We notice that the magi initially seek the King of the Jews through astronomy and philosophy, but that can only take them so far. It actually takes them to Jerusalem, where they inquire among God's people about this Jewish king. There they hear the prophesy of the Scriptures. As the scholars quote Micah 5:2 combined with 2 Samuel 5:2 and locate Bethlehem as the place of the Messiah's birth. We must seek Christ through the Scriptures. How desperately we today need to know the Scriptures and need to communicate them to others.

But we notice that the Scriptures alone are not adequate for the seeker, because the very scholars who communicated the location of the Messiah's birth did not themselves seek the Messiah, but the magi did. We must not only hear the Scriptures but have a humble heart. Jeremiah said (29:13) "you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart." One can see the heart of the magi as they arrive at Jesus' house and they "rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." Our joy comes from finding what our hearts want, and the greatest joy comes from wanting the ultimate Good.

III. **God wants all people everywhere to find Him (vv. 2-10)**

In order to know and experience Jesus Christ, He must be worshipped by us. Notice two things about the magi's worship.

a. They worshipped Christ lavishly (v.11)

The magi fell down before the Lord. Their worship involved their bodies. They gave everything they had to express their subordination to His supremacy. They also opened up treasures and gave Him their best—expensive jewels and spices and gold itself for the true King.

b. They worshipped Jesus only (v. 12)

We notice that they returned to their home "by another way." Matthew shows us that the magi chose not to obey Herod (Cf. verse 8) but rather to serve the King of Kings. They chose "another way." So must we if we would know and love and worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

There will come a day when we shall see Him again, not in the little town of Bethlehem but rather in the New City where He will be enthroned. We shall see His face and bow down before Him with great joy.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it so amazing that the first worshippers in Matthew's gospel are magi from the East? What must we learn from this?
2. Describe what occurred when the magi came to Jerusalem. What do we learn in verses 2-10 about Herod? About the religious leaders in Israel? About the Old Testament? About God?
3. Why were the magi exceedingly happy in verse 10? Why are we often not as joyful when we encounter Jesus Christ in our devotions, our worship, or our daily service to Him?

4. What is most notable about the worship the magi rendered to Jesus? What lessons should we draw from this for our own lives?

Going Deeper

1. How does this passage of Scripture help you orient your life in these spiritually challenging times?
2. What “resolutions” do you need to make for the New Year?