

## “THEY FELL DOWN AND WORSHIPED HIM”

Matthew 2:1-12

KV 10-11

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 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.”

Where do you find joy in your life? What does your joy look like? Many people in our world today find joy in their families, friends, jobs, or houses. Many people also seek joy through fun experiences like exotic vacations, cruises, or hiking in beautiful landscapes. While all of these things in our lives are good and enjoyable, they can only give us a small glimpse of joy. These things that we seek in the world will not satisfy us forever. After we get a dose of these worldly forms of joy, it soon wears off and we have to find another source of joy. So how do we find true and lasting joy in our lives? How do we know when we have found this ultimate source of joy? Through looking at Matthew 2:1-12 today, we will learn the story of the wise men who found such great joy. We will see what true joy looks like and how we can have this joy. This story tells us that there are three steps to gaining true joy. First, seeking the truth with a pure heart. Second, having Jesus as our shepherd-king. Third, falling down and worshipping Jesus. May God help us to seek Jesus wholeheartedly and find true joy in worshipping him. Let's pray.

### I. The Wise Men Seek Jesus (1-2)

Look at verse 1. The verse contrasts two different kinds of people - Herod and the wise men. Herod the Great was the ruler of Judea during this time. Herod was known as a great ruler because he significantly rebuilt and expanded the Second Temple in Jerusalem [image], giving the Jewish people a magnificent place of worship. He did this and other building projects in Jerusalem to win the favor of the Jews. Herod the Great was also known for his power-hungry tendencies and short temper. Herod had previously killed many people – even his own family members – to protect his position as ruler of Judea. Herod was willing to do anything to maintain his power, whether it was being a people-pleaser or a violent dictator. While the Jewish people enjoyed the great temple that Herod built, they were also afraid that he could snap at any time.

The wise men came from Babylon. According to AI, Babylon was about 900 miles away from Jerusalem. The journey would have taken about 4 months by walking. Only traveling at night while following the star, it could have taken two or three times longer. These men were very familiar with the movements of the stars as astronomers and astrologers. They probably learned the Hebrew scriptures through the Jewish people during their exile in Babylon. They knew that the Hebrew scriptures told about the coming of the Messiah. We can see that the wise men were really truth seekers. Through their

knowledge of scripture and the stars, they were seeking the Messiah. They were not content with simply knowing the truth, but they gave up their lives to seek after the promised Messiah on a long journey.

What do you seek in your life? What did you buy during Black Friday this year? How you use your time and money shows what you are seeking. Deuteronomy 4:29 says, “But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.” Why should we seek the Lord our God? We should seek him because he is seeking after us. He is our creator, and he wants to restore his relationship with us. John 4:23 says that God himself is seeking after us. “But a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such as these to worship Him.”

Look at verse 2. The wise men say that their purpose in coming to Jerusalem is to find the King of the Jews and worship him. The “King of the Jews” is another name for the Messiah. Through reading the prophecies from the Hebrew scriptures and using their knowledge of the stars, the wise men were able to figure out that the King of the Jews would be born in Judea. These wise men had clearly been studying about the King of the Jews for a long time in order to figure this out. They also made the long trek all the way from Babylon to Jerusalem to see this prophesied king. The wise men were truly seeking Jesus with all of their hearts and placing all their hope in finding him. May God help us to seek Jesus with all of our hearts like the wise men did.

## II. Jesus is the Shepherd-King (3-8)

Look at verse 3. In contrast to the hopefulness of the wise men, Herod felt troubled when he heard news about the King of the Jews being born. We know from Herod’s past that any hint of opposition to his power would lead him to take drastic actions. It only makes sense that Herod would feel troubled at the news of a new king. We can clearly see that Herod wanted to be his own king. His goal was to hold onto his own political power and control over people. The people of Jerusalem were also troubled with Herod. Why should they be troubled? Shouldn’t they be looking forward to the Messiah that they have waited for? The people of Jerusalem saw Herod as their king because of his control over them. While they knew about the Messiah, they did not seek him as their true king. They were happy when Herod was appeased and troubled when he was troubled. When we live under a dictator like Herod, we live as slaves to fear. We cannot experience true freedom or dare to call anyone else our king. Who is the king over your life and your heart?

Look at verses 4-5. After hearing about the King of the Jews, Herod starts to get frantic and assembles all the chief priests and scribes to search the scriptures about this king. Herod knows that this king is much more than an earthly king, and that is why he gathers these spiritual leaders to search for him. Herod quickly becomes concerned with the facts that the scriptures reveal. While it is good to search the scriptures and see them as a fact, Herod does this with bad motives. He does not want to worship this new king through the scriptures, but he wants to stop this king from taking power away from him. The chief priests and scribes knew the scriptures well and immediately found that the Christ was to be born

in Bethlehem. They also searched the scriptures with a wrong motive, only wanting to appease Herod. When we are reading the Bible, we should also think about our motives while doing it. We should not read scripture to gain knowledge or just to appease others, but we should read scripture to receive and obey God's words. The chief priests and scribes should have been rejoicing that the Messiah had finally come. They did not rejoice because they were captive to a worldly king and did not want to seek after the true king, the Messiah. They didn't want to lose their good standing with Herod by supporting someone who could be against him. Despite their wrong attitudes, the religious leaders ended up helping the wise men who were truly seeking the Messiah.

Look at verse 6. Let's read this all together. "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." This prophecy from Micah 5 reveals that the promised Messiah will be a shepherd and a king. The legendary King David – a shepherd boy that became a great king – was also born in Bethlehem. It makes sense that the true shepherd-king Jesus would also be born in this humble town. As a shepherd-king, Jesus did not have a glorious birthplace that was fit for royalty. He was not born in luxury and status but took his place among the lowest in society. These things didn't matter to Jesus because his true purpose in coming to the world was to be a loving shepherd to all who come to him. Jesus is a shepherd to his people because they are precious and they are his creation. He shepherded his people so well that he would lay his life down for them. Jesus would later say in John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Jesus is truly the greatest shepherd and is willing to go to the greatest lengths to love his sheep. Jesus is also a king who rules his people with righteousness and gives true peace. He is a just king that uses his power for good and will punish evil in the end. Eventually, he will bring justice to the world and will completely restore it from the corruption of sin. He does not take sin lightly, but laid down his life to save the world from sin. He is also in control of all things for his glory and for the good of his people. For example, Jesus allowed the wise men to know more about him even through the teachings of cowardly religious leaders.

Look at verses 7-8. After his Bible study with the religious leaders, Herod doesn't change his mind. He summons the wise men secretly and wants to find Jesus. He probably did this secretly so that the public wouldn't know that a new king was born. Herod sends out the wise men to Bethlehem and tells them to search diligently for the Christ. Despite the bad intentions behind this request, the wise men now can go to find who they are looking for! We can see God can even use bad people with the wrong motives to accomplish his will. God sees the faith of the wise men and is determined to get them to Jesus by any means possible. May God bless us to have Jesus as our shepherd-king in our lives and in our hearts.

### III. Jesus is worthy of our worship (9-12)

Look at verses 9-10. Despite their hang up in Jerusalem, the wise men see the star again. Let's read verses 9-10 together. "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. When

they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.” The wise men have such great joy when they see the star come to rest where Jesus was. Seeing this star once again and finding Jesus' exact location was a huge breakthrough. This is confirmation that God is really leading them. After they spent so long studying and planning to find Jesus' birthplace, they had finally done it! They are so joyful here because they are about to see Jesus face-to-face. They have placed all their hope in finding Jesus, and now all their efforts have proven to be worth it. For all the math and science lovers, the joy that the wise men felt here was like “joy<sup>3</sup>” or “joy<sup>4</sup>”. When was the last time you experienced such incredible joy like this? What does your joy look like right now? When we have Jesus as our reason for being joyful, our joy can become as great as this or even greater.

Look at the first part of verse 11. Let's read it all together. “And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.” The ultimate joy of the wise men was to find Jesus, fall down, and worship him. This was who they had waited to see for so long. When they fell down and worshiped Jesus, they made themselves nothing and exalted Jesus above everything. Even though Jesus was only a little child, they knew that he was the ultimate prize and was more valuable than anything. This is the reason why they fell down and worshiped Jesus. What happened to the wise men when they did this? They were able to have true rest, peace, and endless joy through simply worshiping Jesus. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus would later say, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” When we come to Jesus and completely surrender all that we have, we have true rest. The anxieties and cares of the world fade away when we come to Jesus, and his glory fills us completely. We can learn here that joy and worshiping Jesus are closely related. When the wise men became joyful, they worshiped. When they worshiped, they became even more joyful. Worshiping and being satisfied in Jesus is the ultimate destiny of all that believe in him. In the kingdom of God, we will worship our Lord and Savior Jesus forever. This is our destination. Though Jesus is only a child lying in a manger here, he will be enthroned and worshiped forever by all creation. Listen to Revelation 5:13. “And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’” Do you want to be exceedingly joyful? Then worship Jesus!

Their joy doesn't stop there! Look at the second part of verse 11. Let's read it together. “Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.” After worshiping Jesus and laying themselves down before him, the wise men naturally started pouring out in giving. They didn't just give him a gift card or an unwanted gift that they received from someone else. They gave him very precious gifts because they knew he was worthy of them. Even though these gifts cost so much, they gave them up because of their overflowing joy. This shows that true joy is overflowing. We can freely give ourselves without holding back. Do you want to be exceedingly joyful? Then prepare and give to Jesus the best gifts!

Lastly, the wise men returned to their own country in verse 12. After such a long journey, they went back home empty-handed. In reality, they had gained the greatest gift of all – the satisfaction of seeing

Jesus and worshipping him. They gave up the greatest gifts of the world to gain someone so much greater than the world. The wise men did not return back to Herod. God was protecting their lives and also the life of Jesus, who Herod wanted to kill. We are reminded once again that Herod is a selfish worldly king that only wanted to maintain his power. Hoping in a worldly king like Herod results in fear, uncertainty, and hopelessness. Herod is ready to do anything to protect himself. In contrast, Jesus is the true shepherd-king that loves his sheep. He is ready to do anything to protect his sheep. In the end, he would go to the cross out of his great love for his sheep. Trusting in him gives us peace, certainty, and joy. This shows even more that he is worthy of our worship.

Writing this message has taught me that true joy can only be found in Jesus. This message has helped me to examine my heart and to see where I really find my joy. I often have the tendency to find joy in success and feeling accomplished in some way. Starting graduate school for architecture challenged me because it's hard to be successful in my studies now! The standards are higher and the classes are faster paced. Some of my classmates are a lot older than me and more experienced. It has been tough for me to keep up sometimes. It's easy to compare myself with my classmates and feel inadequate with my work. Through this, God has been teaching me that I can't look to the things of this world for joy. As I decided to fall down and worship Jesus by giving myself to him through writing this message, I was able to rejoice exceedingly with great joy. Jesus taught me to focus on him even in the midst of completing my finals this semester. He helped me endure until the end of the semester and kept encouraging me to finish strong. My true joy is Jesus, who is my good shepherd and who has given everything for me. Please pray that God may help me to keep finding true joy in Jesus by falling down and worshipping him. I pray that everyone here can also find true joy in falling down and worshipping Jesus, even when the world demands our worship and offers other ways of joy.

Through this message, we learned the Biblical steps of having true joy. First, seeking the truth with a pure heart. // Second, having Jesus as your shepherd-king. // Third, falling down and worshipping him alone. // Finally, giving the best to Jesus out of overflowing joy. May God help us to fall down and worship Jesus, give our best gifts, and have exceedingly great joy. Amen.