

O Worship the King

MATTHEW 2:1-12 | PASTOR JAKE LIEDKIE

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Well, Merry Christmas, and it is good to be with you here as we're heading into Christmas week. And this morning, I invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Matthew chapter 2, where we just were in our Scripture reading together. Christmas time is so filled with Scripture.

It's filled with familiar themes, familiar songs, things that we hear often, and words and expressions we hear. And so there's so many places where we could dive into meaningful themes about the coming of Christ and so much language that we have from Scripture. It was the prophet Isaiah that said in Isaiah chapter 9, for a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us, and the government will rest on his shoulders.

His name shall be called a wonderful counselor, mighty God, eternal father, prince of peace. Prince of peace. So here is a child that's foretold that will be born, and yet a son is given.

It testified to his eternal pre-existence as God. And interestingly enough, right there in Isaiah 9, we have language that he will, in fact, be a political ruler of some kind. The government will rest upon his shoulders, and he will be a prince of peace.

There's royalty here in his coming child. Nearly 300 years ago, Charles Wesley penned the words we just sang, come thou long-expected Jesus. Born as a ruler to do what? To set thy people free.

From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee. Truly he was Israel's hope and consolation, hope of all the earth. And then he would go on to say, dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart, born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king.

So from day one on earth, Jesus was king. Understand that? That little infant child was king because the very son of God was ever and always the king. It was his identity.

It's who he was. And so from day one on earth, he was a king. His first coming introduced that kingdom.

His second coming will bring the full consummation of his kingdom program. And yet the basic question raised by the hymn writer is this, is the coming of the king your dear desire? Wesley says the dear desire of every nation, the precious desire. Is that really the joy of your longing heart? Said very simply this way, do you want Jesus to come back ASAP and establish his kingdom? So your truest expression of your attitude toward Jesus defines your relationship to him.

In Matthew chapter 2, we encounter the majesty of Jesus. We get to see King Jesus on display. And anytime we see King Jesus on display, what happens? We see how he's reacted to.

What kind of response is stirred in the human heart to the proclamation of Jesus the king? There are those who encounter Jesus the king and their hearts are filled with adoration. They adore the king. And then there's the polarizing reaction on the other end, which would be those who abhor the king, those who hate the king.

And then there's a third response, which is still not a good one, but it's kind of the non-committed middle, if you will. The lukewarm, the ambivalent. It's not that Jesus displeases them.

There's not really any hostility, but at the same time, he's not really compelling to them. It's kind of just another message, just another sermon. It's just another religious experience.

It's just another guy. This morning in Matthew chapter 2, we see King Jesus on display. I'm titled this morning's message, Oh, Worship the King.

Oh, Worship the King. And every one of the gospel writers had a particular focus that he was driving at in revealing the person of Christ. Matthew's agenda is to demonstrate that Jesus is in fact the promised king of the Jews.

He's David's son, who will reign forever. And so, in chapter 1, Matthew spends 17 verses tracing the lineage very carefully from Abraham to King David, and then from King David to Joseph, and Joseph to Jesus to demonstrate that Jesus is in fact David's true son, king from his birth. This morning, if you're keeping an outline, you're going to see three responses to the arrival of King Jesus.

Three responses to the arrival of King Jesus. And what I want you to think of as we walk through this narrative this morning is just to even understand, okay, if I was in first century

Palestine 2,000 years ago, and I was encountering the revelation of the king, which camp am I in? What is my response to the arrival of King Jesus? Matthew begins in verse 1. Now, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east and have come to worship him. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he was inquiring of them where the Christ was to be born. He said to him in Bethlehem of Judea, For this is what has been written by the prophet. You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah.

For out of you shall come forth a leader who will shepherd my people Israel. Then Herod secretly called the Magi, carefully determined from them the time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and search carefully for the child.

And when you have found him, report to me so that I too may come and worship him. After hearing the king, they went their way and behold, the star, which they had seen in the east, was going on before them until it came and stood over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

After coming into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell to the ground and worshiped him. Then opening their treasures, they presented him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, the Magi departed for their own country by another way.

And this is a very familiar story. Most of you have probably heard it. You've read it.

You've had it read to you many times. You've probably heard sermons on it. I'm just going to walk through it again this morning, and we're going to encounter King Jesus face to face, and we're going to see three responses to the news of his arrival.

The first response is that King Jesus is adored by the Magi. Response number one, King Jesus is adored by the Magi. Now, Matthew does not give us an exact year, but he says that this took place in the days of King Herod in verse one, the days of King Herod.

And so we're going to get a bit of a timestamp here. King Herod was ruling over the Jews, but he was not Jewish. A Roman ruler.

So maybe think of it kind of by way of analogy, if the U.S. were to conquer Mexico and then put a U.S. ruler over the nation, that's kind of how Herod is functioning. So he's over Israel, but he's not Jewish. And this was the first Herod called Herod the Great.

Okay, Herod the Great. I mean, can you imagine if I said, hey guys, from now on, why don't you just refer to me as Jacob the Great? I'm like, no, I'm not kidding. I'm serious.

Like, that's my new name. This was Herod the Great, and he received that title for good reason. He did a lot of things during his reign.

He consolidated power. He lowered taxes during famine, which is, of course, very popular when a ruler does that. He established and fortified key cities.

He brought relative peace in Palestine. He began reigning in about 37 B.C. It's probably six or so B.C. right now, so 30 years of political power, and Herod is about 70 years old right now. Okay, so imagine when you read about King Herod, picture a savvy politician.

Okay, probably white hair or no hair. He's at that season of life, and he's obsessed with power. Herod was obsessed with power.

Herod was an insecure leader, and if you were part of Herod's family, it was kind of a dangerous place to be. This was the Herod who had his brother-in-law murdered, had his wife murdered, his mother-in-law, and eventually his three sons. So this brings new meaning, of course, to the phrase a dysfunctional family.

Caesar Augustus, Herod's contemporary, the Roman emperor at that time, stated that he would rather be Herod's pig than Herod's son, so he'd be safer to be a pig than a family member. So this maniacal evil ruler, who's filled with suspicion and has a lust for power, is in the backdrop here when Matthew writes, it's this Herod who's in Jerusalem when behold, when look, pay attention, magi from the east arrive in Jerusalem, and so these magi are wise men. There's not three of them.

They're not kings, so this is no we three kings of orient are. They came most likely from Persia, possibly Babylon, or somewhere in the Arabian Peninsula, but a magi was a counselor. It's kind of even where we get our word for magic in English, so they were sorcerers of some kind.

They were powerful and wealthy, kind of high society, and these were the most educated people in those eastern cultures. One writer says because of their combined knowledge of science, agriculture, mathematics, history, and the occult, their religious and political influence continued to grow until they became the most prominent and powerful group of

advisors in the Medo-Persian and subsequently the Babylonian empire. So these men show up, and interestingly enough, although they're not Jewish, they have some interest in Jewish religious practices.

This is really staggering to think about. They have some interest in what was for them a western religion. For us, it's eastern, but for them it was western.

They've heard something of the one true God of Israel. They've heard something of Yahweh, and what they've heard has intrigued them enough to make a journey. Most likely, if we're piecing together biblical history, they would have heard about Yahweh via Daniel.

If you remember, Daniel ended up in Babylon. It was there that he foretold of a one day coming super king who would reign forever, a Jewish king, a king of kings. And so these magi then would be classified, so to speak, as God-fearers.

That's the language in Acts. People who had some sense of a knowledge of Yahweh, the one true God of Israel, some assent to that, some belief in it, even though they're not Jewish and they're not practicing the Mosaic law. Can I just tell you up front that what we're going to see this morning is that the magi do better than the Jews living around Jesus, because although they have very little knowledge, what little they know they believe.

And this is a very appropriate message to people who have access to the truth, that the quantity of data alone does not produce spiritual benefit. I mean, you could grow up in the church, you could grow up going to Adventure Club, you could know all the verses, you could answer all the questions correctly when you're asked theological questions, you'd have phenomenal church attendance. The question is, do you believe it? Is there evidence that you believe it? Is your life clearly dominated and transformed by truth? Do you love the Savior? See, the magi are in a far better spot having very little revelation than the people surrounding Jesus who are filled with knowledge, because the magi believe what little truth they know.

Understand growing up and learning the scriptures from an early age only benefits you if you entrust yourself to it. And so these magi show up, they want to know verse two, where is he who has been born king of the Jews? They are searching for King Jesus. They've traveled far to encounter King Jesus.

When this entourage shows up in town to find out where the new king is born, it would have been these men traveling alone, but the servants and whoever else was with them, there would have been kind of a gaggle coming into town. The verbal idea is that they were going around asking people, where's the king? Do you know where the king is? Do you know where the king of the Jews has been born? I don't know what you picture about when you picture Jerusalem, but even though this is the capital city, geographically

speaking, it's relatively small, okay? It's about one square mile. It's about one square mile, okay? Roughly the size of downtown Albany and the immediate surrounding area.

So if you were to kind of draw a box around Albany, start at Samaritan General Hospital and go to Ponoble, and they go from like the carousel to Better Beef, that's like Jerusalem right there, okay? So as they're asking around, this entourage from the east, it's not going unnoticed, okay? They're not really just slipping in. I would imagine for them it was somewhat surprising as they're asking around and no one else seems to really know or care about what's going on. They'd seen a star.

It traveled a long way. Where's the baby? They said that they saw his star in the east. Kind of sounds confusing because they were in the east, but it's just the construction in English.

The idea is that we were in the east and we saw the star. When you think about this just for a minute, a royal birth is to be met with some kind of excitement. Just think about what took place across the pond a few years ago.

On July 22, 2013, Kate Middleton and Prince William, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, welcomed a baby boy into the world. As one news outlet reported, cheers erupted at St. Mary's Hospital where the baby was born and at Buckingham Palace when the announcement was released. Throngs of people gathered outside of the palace to wait for the formal signed birth announcement that would be driven from the hospital to the palace.

Following tradition, the document was taken into the palace to be shown to the Queen before it was placed on an easel in the palace court. There's all kinds of interest around the world in the birth of this baby. And in fact, the interest took place even before the baby was born.

One commentator who follows the royal family said this, you have this gorgeous young couple. He's a prince and she's a commoner and they get married and this is their first baby. So it's like the completion of a fairy tale.

I think people find that really fascinating. There's a lot of fascination internationally in the British royal family because it's such an established institution. People find it quite quaint.

Reportedly, every moment leading up to the delivery had been closely scrutinized, including the royal bump, Kate's pregnancy fashion, and every baby store shopping trip. I don't know what I was doing in 2013, but I had no idea all this was taking place or of interest. Robert Lacey, a British historian and biographer, said the following, it's the fascination and joy everybody feels when a baby is born.

And then for British people, certainly the renewal of the monarchy. We know that this new baby is our sovereign who will be our figurehead by the end of this century, maybe even into the next century. Excitement, fascination, interest uniting around a figurehead.

And it's kind of ridiculous considering that the British king and the British monarch isn't really much more than a figurehead. It's not actually a ruling sovereign. And so these magi show up in town in Jerusalem, in the royal city, the place that royal babies are to be born, to ask and inquire about where the baby who's been born king of Jews is residing.

And they find there's not a whole lot of excitement. There's no throng of people that's been rejoicing. According to the text, this is what they're saying as they go around asking, we saw a star in the east and we have come to worship Him.

We have come to worship Him. We've come all this way so that we can fall down on our faces before the God king. You're seeing how astounding this is? I mean, I just immediately started thinking of Pauline language that those who are far off have been called and are now brought near.

One commentator writes, these were true seekers after God because when he spoke to them in whatever way it was, even through a star or Daniel's writings, they heard and responded. Despite their paganism, quasi-science and superstition, they recognized God's voice when He spoke. And though having had limited spiritual light, they immediately recognized God's light when it shone on them.

There's in the Magi or Testament, it doesn't matter where you come from, doesn't matter what you've done. These are not likely candidates for salvation. And yet when they encountered the revelation of God, they believed it.

And here is true faith. So these men come. And this is what God is seeking.

Jesus say of Himself in His ministry in John chapter 4, that the Father is seeking worshipers. Worshipers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. I just ask you this morning, are you like the Magi? Do you prize Jesus? Do you trust Him? Do you submit to Him? And we don't have to imagine what it means to worship Jesus.

The Bible is clear. It uses language like this, although you do not see Him, you love Him and you rejoice over Him with joy inexpressible. And you trust in Him and you glory in Him and you obey Him.

And you love His commandments and they're not burdensome to you. And you could even say, He's my life. That's what it means to love and adore and worship the Messiah King.

The Magi say, hey, we've come all this way because although we were far off, we've heard the revelation, we believe that He's the King and we've come to worship Him. It's the first response to the arrival of King Jesus. Second response is the opposite.

King Jesus is aboard by Herod. King Jesus is aboard by Herod. Verse 3, when Herod the King heard this, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him.

Very troubled. The idea here is that he's having almost a panic attack, if you will. He's having a meltdown.

The Bible gives language to the human experience of trusting in an idol and then suddenly seeing that what you're trusting in is vain. Terror, panic, freak out because the object that you've been relying on has suddenly been ripped out of your grasp and you see that what you've been trusting in is a nothing. That's what idolatry is.

It's a vanity. It has the appearance of substance, but it's not there. And so here's a 70-year-old man and the news that people are looking for a newborn baby is distressing.

Does that seem to make sense? You're nearing retirement. In fact, in God's providence, this guy has three years left, okay? He doesn't even live to see the day that Jesus would be a kindergartner, yet he's distressed. It says that all Jerusalem, verse 3, was troubled with him.

Why is that? Well, kind of gotten to watch how Herod operates for a while. You're assuming that it's not going to end well, the fact that he's distressed right now. Kind of learned how to read the signals, if you will.

In fact, Herod's going to kill a bunch of babies as a result of this. It was not an irrational concern. So that one square mile city is in turmoil because the entourage shows up.

They're asking about the birth of the king of the Jews. Herod is starting to level up here in his intensity, and now all Jerusalem is distressed. So Herod doesn't know the answer of where the Messiah would be, but he knows how to phone a friend.

And we do this all the time. I did this a lot in my business career. My first thought was, I don't know, and rather than go learn it myself, it'd be faster to call someone who's already learned it.

Rather than go to the library and study the ancient scrolls, verse 4, Herod gathers together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people so that he can ask them. He was inquiring of them where the Christ was to be born. So these are the chief priests there in the temple.

They're kind of a quasi religious politician. The scribes would have been the experts in the scriptures. And here's what you need to understand.

These men knew the Bible very, very, very well. They knew the scriptures well in terms of the content. In fact, they know the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

They know the passages. They know where the Messiah will be born. I mean, they have all of the evidence right in front of them, the revelation.

They even say that they believe it. They're part of the religious experience. Yet we see in them the third response to the arrival of King Jesus, and this is that King Jesus is ignored by the religious.

King Jesus is going to be ignored by the religious. Point number one, King Jesus is adored by the Magi. Point number two, King Jesus is abhorred by Herod, which we're going to see more of in a minute.

And thirdly, King Jesus is ignored by the religious. So all these religious leaders know the texts. They know the passages.

They know what to expect. Verse five, they said to Him in Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what has been written by the prophet. And so it would seem almost off the top of their heads, they can answer the question.

Oh, you don't know where the Messiah is going to be born? Got it. We know the text. We know the Bible super well.

They know the verses. They know the answers. I mean, think about this, good grief, they even know the prophet Micah.

I mean, how well do you know Micah? It's a minor prophet. It's a little one. It often gets neglected in our study.

Right now, they know that God had promised to Micah that a rinky-dink village called Bethlehem would be the Messiah's birthplace. This is significant. There is royalty associated with Bethlehem, although it's an inconsequential village.

It's just a few miles outside of Jerusalem. Bethlehem is where King David grew up, tending sheep. His family settled there because his great-grandparents Boaz and Ruth had settled down in that location.

And so on the one hand, it's a royal city, but it's also obscure. It has some significance, and then it's also of no reputation. We understand this.

Hailing from a small town oftentimes is beneficial in a rise to power. Here's an interesting stat. Of the 18 U.S. presidents in the 20th century, only four of them came from big cities, and all the rest were small towns.

Like Jimmy Carter, for example, came from Plains, Georgia, that had a whopping population of 550 people. Yet even his town rose to international notoriety due to who was born there. And so on hand, Bethlehem is insignificant.

Think small village outside of what was a relatively small city, Jerusalem. On its own, it wasn't noteworthy or significant, and yet this is where the royal family hailed from. First David, and then centuries later, David's son, Jesus.

And this town was always associated then with shepherds and kings. The shepherd king. And this is the perspective you and I are to understand when we understand Jesus, the ruler.

It was 2 Samuel 5, verse 2, where the promise came to David, you will shepherd my people Israel, and you will be a ruler over them. Interesting. So this monarch will have absolute authority.

There's only one throne. He rules over his people, and yet he rules in such a way that he loves and cares and tends for and provides for them. And so on the one hand, there's this strong arm of military might and authority and splendor and glory as a king, and at the same time, tender watch care over his people.

And so the chief priests and the scribes know exactly where the Messiah was to be born, and there's zero indication in the text that that news brought them any joy, that there was any follow-up in their hearts. They're able to have this interaction and then just move on as if nothing happened. You've heard that experience spiritually.

You hear the very voice of God. You hear the word of God. You read something from the scriptures.

You encounter the gospel message, and then just kind of move on with life. It was insignificant. I'm in the conversation that night at home.

Chief priest gets home from work. His wife says, hey honey, how was your day? Well, it's kind of random. He heard God is together.

He's tripping again. He's all freaking out about Messiah coming. One asks us all these questions about the prophecies, and we're kind of reviewing it and the timing and the location.

And anyway, what's for dinner? There's no interest to follow up. And so on the one hand, they have all this association with the Messiah and knowledge about him, but it never goes beyond association. And in fact, this indifference eventually will become hatred.

I just say, if you're associated with Jesus, but you do not adore Jesus, you don't worship Jesus, do not feel comfortable being in that position. The Bible describes people who are associated with Jesus, but don't actually worship him. People who are associated but don't adore him.

He uses languages like this, branches that will be broken off. Wedding guests that are invited, but don't make it to the celebration. In fact, the scriptures teach there will be many people on the day of judgment who say to Jesus, Lord, Lord, Master, Master, King, King.

That's the language idea there. Sovereign, sovereign. King, King.

And he'll say what? Depart from me, why? Depart from me, you workers of iniquity, for I never knew you. And so being near Jesus in terms of proximity and being near his word in terms of proximity profits you nothing if it's not united by faith. Your relationship with God is not established on the basis of your church attendance or Christmas being your favorite season or some religious experience you've had or rituals that you undertake.

The question is, do you receive and believe Jesus as Lord and Christ? These chief priests and scribes had all the privilege in the world, all of the opportunity to exercise faith in Christ, and they're just indifferent. Well, Herod, Herod has an agenda, unsurprising. So according to verse seven, he secretly calls the magi.

I was in public relations for a little while, short stint, and that's all about curating and controlling your public image. So Herod here is distressed, but he doesn't want to look distressed. He's desperate, but he doesn't want to look desperate.

So he secretly calls the magi, and he has a little interrogation. He carefully determines from them the time the star appeared. So he gets the date from the magi.

He already has the location, so he pairs those together. Now he's sending them on their way in verse eight to Bethlehem, and he said, go and search carefully for the child, and when you have found him, report to me under the pretense, so that I too may come and worship him. Herod wants to save face, and so he talks a good game regarding worship.

I would imagine the magi probably saw through it. These are wise men. They have a measure of discernment and insight.

I don't think it would have appeared obvious that Herod was in fact just a sincere worshiper with all the hullabaloo and the reaction that he had. Herod, of course, should have been a worshiper, but he would not be. We learn later from Matthew that Herod slaughters all the babies in the village two years old and under.

And there's a lot more going on here, of course, than ignoring or offending a cute little baby. Herod right now is desiring to snuff out the Christ child, and we're only three years away from Herod's death. If Herod did not repent prior to the moment of his death, then he died in his sin.

He died in his guilt. He died unreconciled to God. He died still with the sin and the shame, and he died with a debt to pay.

And so right now, when Herod is aware of the Christ child, and he's still alive, and he still has breath, he has the opportunity to go and worship. He has the opportunity to repent, and upon death then comes judgment, and the opportunity to repent is gone. That's why Jesus would warn people.

He's such a gracious king in his parables. Make sure you don't get shut out of the kingdom. Make sure that you don't delay reconciling with the king until it's too late.

Or Psalm 2 would say, kiss the son lest he become angry. To be shut out of the kingdom is to be in eternal torment, a place of eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth. And so the irony for Herod is that Herod is a man who in one sense has gained the whole world, and yet is forfeiting his soul.

And Jesus says, what's the point of that? So Herod right now has prominence. He has power. He has influence.

He has wealth. He was successful in terms of his accomplishments, except for his life, which was kind of a disaster. Can I urge you, if you've not yet done business with the king, that you do not procrastinate? You don't delay saying, after I've had my fill of sin, or after I've lived a little bit longer, or once I'm ready, or after I finished indulging my flesh, I still have time.

Jesus would say to one, you fool, you don't understand that this very night your soul will be required of you. So the revelation of the king is to respond immediately in humble faith. The magi get a message from the king, verse 9, they hear him.

So they go on their way. Behold, the star which they had seen in the east was going on before them until it came and stood over the place where the child was. Bethlehem was about an hour and a half to walk over to.

There's some supernatural phenomenon of the star. It would seem that what had happened was the star appeared originally to kind of signify the king is born. They knew we need to head west to Jerusalem, the royal city.

And then the star was gone. So now they're in Jerusalem trying to figure out where to go next, how to locate the child. Herod actually helps them out by finding out from the chief priests the location, namely the village of Bethlehem.

And Herod tells them, you guys go to Bethlehem now, and now that star reappears over the house. We don't know exactly what it would have looked like, obviously an entire star couldn't descend on a house, it would incinerate it, but there was some supernatural light. The magi show up, excuse me, the magi see the star, verse 10, and they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

You know what this sounds like? There was hooting and hollering, whatever would have been appropriate in that cultural context. Jumping and shouting for joy, fist bumps, high fives, hugs, tears, shouts of acclamation, dancing. See these magi hear the news and unlike Herod who freaks out about it, or the chief priests and the scribes who could not care less, these men are overjoyed.

That the king has come. They did know about this coming king through Daniel's prophecy, and they would have heard what this king was going to do, and what was going to take place under his royal kingdom. Daniel 9 24 says, 70 weeks have been determined for your people and for your holy city to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.

You understand when these men came to Israel, they weren't thinking, we want to go become Jewish citizens and now sit under his monarchy in Palestine in the first century. There's this ruler, there's more going on than just a really good king. This king is going to finish transgression and make an end of sin, and make atonement for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.

My friends, this is what it looks like to see Jesus for who he is, and to embrace him. See, when you worship the king, you know what you find? You find pardon from sin. You find pardon from sin.

This king came to deliver his people from their sins. He brought the promise of freedom, and peace, and rest, and life, and joy. And this king conquers sin.

He came to deal with your sin problem for you, so he could be a part of his kingdom where all things will be made new, including you. And so they show up with some measure of expectation, exceedingly with great joy, the text says. Verse 11, after coming into the house, they saw the child with Mary's mother.

They fell to the ground, and they worshiped him. Can you imagine that moment? I mean, for Mary, you have some highly educated, wealthy, high society, wise men, international visitors showing up at the house, and they're prostrating themselves on the ground, face down in front of that gurgling little baby boy. And this Jesus here is no longer tucked away in a manger.

The silent night is long gone. He's still an infant, but he's no longer a newborn. And so here are these magi who were previously pagans, unlikely worshipers, worshipers of false gods.

Now they're on their faces before the Christ child, and they bring adoration to the king, opening their treasures, the text says. They presented him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. There's some that see in this the idea that gold represents royalty, and frankincense divinity, and myrrh represents death.

It's possible, but mainly these gifts are gifts that would be fitting of a king. Solomon received similar gifts of spices and precious stones in 1 Kings 10.10. And so gold was precious due to its value and beauty, and frankincense was harvested from trees. It was very valuable, a fragrant perfume, and myrrh, a spice from a tree in Arabia, often used in the embalming process.

So Jesus didn't become a king when he grew up. He was born a king, and these gifts are affirmation of his identity as such. And so all the chief priests and the scribes are ignoring

what's taking place back in Jerusalem, and Herod is scheming how he's going to try to kill the Christ child.

The Magi are in the house worshipping. The text says, and having been warned in a dream, verse 12, not to return to Herod, the Magi departed for their own country by another way. Probably not a small detour for that.

I know about you, I always get disappointed when I see a sign that's going to require a detour, because it means the trip is going to take longer. Imagine how we're getting a detour, probably away from the main routes in Jerusalem that would have taken longer. Yet even here the Magi are obeying God.

They receive a word from the Lord in a dream. Their desire is to protect the Christ child. They understand that if they were to go back to Herod and get questioned about it, could jeopardize the Messiah.

But this is the beginning of the revelation of Jesus the King. What's fascinating about Jesus' ministry as King, is three decades from now we're going to find Jesus in a very similar location. He's going to grow up in a different place.

He grows up in Galilee and Nazareth, that region. Much of his ministry takes place up there. We find him back here in the city of David in 30 years.

And there he's going to be tried in part for statements concerning his kingdom and his relationship to his father's kingdom. It's there that he's going to be mocked and abused with what? A crown of thorns and a false robe, mocking him as King. And then he's going to be condemned as a criminal and hung on a cross.

And on the cross over his head will be written the words, this is Jesus, King of the Jews. See this ruler king is promised an everlasting kingdom, a kingdom that has no end. But the pathway to get there was through a cross where this King would lay down his life for his people.

Last week I read Revelation chapter 1 verse 5 and I want to read it again. From Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth, to him who loves us and released us from our sins by his blood. And he has made us to be a kingdom, priests to his God and father.

To him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Listen, I pray that as you hear the revelation of King Jesus, your heart is filled with adoration and praise. And you can rejoice the same way the Magi did, with joy exceedingly, to be in a right relationship with this King.

I invite you to pray with me. God, what a marvelous plan you orchestrated for salvation, to rescue sinners. Lord, my heart was filled with such joy to reflect on your salvation to the Magi, because they were people like us.

People who do not deserve to be saved and people who had ignorance in their hearts, who had a multitude of sins, and yet what they heard of the coming Christ child, what they saw in him, salvation. And so we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for his ministry.

We thank you for his incarnation. We thank you for his substitutionary death on the cross. Lord, we thank you that we can look forward to your reign and rule one day, because we're promised that if we're in Christ, we get to share in his glory.

What a marvelous reality that is. We love you and praise you. Amen.