

Introduction: Welcome. Please open your Bible to Matthew 1:18-25. That's page ____ .

Christmas was always a big deal at my house. Decorations: Christmas music . . . Tree, Garland, Stockings, Santas (Old Timey), Nativity Scenes! Depicts Mary & Joseph with Baby Jesus in a stable, Barn animals, shepherds, and oftentimes wise men.

Here's a question for you: How easy is it for Christmas to be ornamental, a bunch of decorations tossed over these massive spiritual truths and nothing more. I was at Parker's ballet recital yesterday . . . "O Holy Night." The nativities . . . are they mere decorations or do they evoke a sense of gratitude and worship from us.

"O come let us adore him!"

"The Arrival of Christ and the Worship of the Nations" Matthew 2:1-12

Two simple encouragements for us from our text this morning . . . First,

I. Acknowledge Jesus as the King of all peoples.

Tell the Story!

- Story full of Drama . . .
- Main Characters: Ecclectic Group: Foreign Astrologers, King and Religious Leaders, Humble Family outside of the city.

God brought prophetic visitors from a far land to visit the newborn King.

- Verse 1 describes these visitors as "wise men." They were not kings.
- They were also not there on the night of his birth.
 - Verse 1 clearly says: "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea."
 - Additionally, verse 11 says they went into the house where Jesus was staying.
 - We don't know exactly how long after his birth they arrived. Interpreter range anywhere from a couple of months to a couple of years.
- Should you go home and throw those pretty nativity scenes in the trash? I am not suggesting that.
- In fact, you could actually use it as a talking point. He most people think this, but this is what really happened, and oh by the way, most people thing this about Jesus, but this is really the deal. Not just a wise teacher, mere prophet, nope. He's the King.
- So who were the "magi," the wise men? They were students of the stars. Masters of the constellations.

That's who they are, but where are they from?

- "From the east."
- Some believe they were from Babylon. Many others point to Persia, which would be modern day Iran.
- Don't miss the significance of this! Some of the first people to pay him homage were who? Foreigners. Matthew is trying to let his readers know from the very beginning of his gospel, that Jesus is a "universal Messiah." He is a king for all people! It doesn't matter what your background may be, Jesus wants people just like you to follow him.

Who they were. Where they were from - But what were they doing?

- They came to the capital city of Israel, Jerusalem with an important mission. From their study of the stars, they were led to Jerusalem where they believed they would be led to a newborn king.
- They only have one speaking part in this drama, and we have it in verse 2: "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."
 - Now there have been many attempts to explain the appearance of this unique guiding star . .

- Maybe it was caused from the alignment of the planets in our galaxy, or could it have been a supernova explosion. Maybe it was a comet. Who really cares?!
- As we read in our Advent devotional this week, we should not have mentality for the marginal. We should not get bogged down in speculative details but in the massive truths that Christmas teach us.
- And the wise men help us do this: they came to pay homage to one born king...

T: What does this story teach us? Listen: this is not a cute story. This is God becoming man. Infinite glory taking on finite flesh. The Christmas narrative teaches us that . . .

Jesus is the promised king who reigns over his people.

- This baby is king. It's not that he will be a king one day, as a prince who would one day inherit the throne. He is born King.
- Jesus was the Christ! "Christ" means "anointed one." Who were anointed in the OT? Prophets, Priests, and Kings. And Jesus is all of those for us.
- That's why he is referred to as Jesus Christ. Jesus was his earthly name. Christ is a title for Messiah. The Messiah was God's promised King.

The theme of fulfilled promises in Matthew continues.

- When Herod called together the "chief priests and scribes of the people" they knew exactly where the Messiah was to be born.
- And they quoted the prophet Micah in *verse 6*.
- Born in Bethlehem
 - Micah 5:2 tells us that this King will come from Bethlehem. Bethlehem was no Boston. It was more like the Town of Gosnold (pop. of 75, smallest town in MA). Bethlehem more like that, not even a speck on the national map, virtually insignificant. In this we begin to catch a glimpse of the humility of Christ.
- He is the ruler
 - He rules with humility.
 - Upside-down kingdom. He doesn't fit our idea of royalty. Jesus would not fit our models of greatness, celebrity, and prestige. He did not come to tout his own name. He came as a humble servant. That's why it says, he is "a ruler" what kind? "Who will shepherd my people."
- But also a Shepherd
 - He leads with care. He's no tyrant king. . .
 - In Micah, the emphasis is on the security and peace the Messiah brings through his care and protection> He is no tyrant King. He is benevolent and exercises his reign in a surprising way: like a shepherd who cares for, guides, feeds, leads, and protects his flock, and this is exactly what Jesus does for his people. Verse 4 teaches us that...

Let's look back at **Micah 5:4-5a: "And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace."** Let's notice a few observations.

a) He shepherds through the strength of his reign.

- The Micah prophecy says that the Christ stands and shepherds his people in the strength of the Lord. In other words, Jesus will always accomplish everything he sets out to accomplish. Unlike the Celtics, his record is undefeated . . . forever.

b) He shepherds through his impeccable character.

- Micah says he will stand and shepherd "in the majesty of the name of the Lord."
- I believe we could paraphrase that by saying that Jesus, as King, will lead his people in the greatness and dignity of the character of God.

c) He shepherds through establishing lasting peace.

- Notice verse 4 says, “And they shall *dwell* secure...”
- This lasting peace. Not temporal Peace. We will not enjoy this security for a passing season. We will dwell in it, live in it, remain in it.
- What did the angels announce to the shepherds on the night Christ was born? **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (Luke 2:14)**
- This peace is comprehensive. I want you to think about it in physical and spiritual terms.
- Jesus will bring *physical peace*. How can we be confident of this? Look at the end of verse 4: “FOR, he shall be great [not just in Israel, but] to the ends of the earth”
 - There will be no fear of intrusion. No more nuclear threats. No more missals, machine guns, or murder. Jesus, as we saw in Isaiah 9, will cause all war to cease.
- But what is even greater than this, Jesus will usher in complete *spiritual peace*.
 - No longer will we succumb to our idolatrous desires. He will completely eradicate them and bring us lasting spiritual renewal, completely removed from the presence of our sin.

Fulfilled prophecy – An apologetic for the truthfulness of Scripture and the accuracy of the portrait of Jesus in the Scripture.

T: Not everyone was excited about this arrival! Verse 3 tells us that King Herod was troubled. Why? Because here was a challenger to his throne.

King Herod was hungry for glory. . .

- Many believe him to be “the greatest builder in Jewish history.” He was the one who expanded the Second Temple in Jerusalem, which came to be known as “Herod’s Temple.”
- He was called “Herod the Great.”
- One Jewish scholar described Herod as a “madman who murdered his own family and a great many rabbis.” Another said he lived “prepared to commit any crime in order to gratify his unbounded ambition.”
- 37 B.C. the Roman Senate gave Herod the title “King of the Jews.”
- He thought he was going to lose it all.
- That is why verse 3 says, Herod troubled, and if Herod was troubled, everyone was troubled (“all Jerusalem with him”) because he was willing to do anything to preserve his throne.

II. Worship Jesus as the King of all Peoples.

- Perhaps the magi were only there to pay homage to the newborn king...
- BUT Matthew uses the word “worship.” He “may well be giving the expression its fullest meaning – the attitude of the Magi in the presence of the Baby was the attitude proper in the presence of God.”
- To me, it is no coincidence Matthew’s very first topic after the birth of Christ is Worship!
- Worship is our response to what we value the most, and the one because there is nothing or no one more valuable than God, he alone is worthy of our worship.
- This points to the truth that Jesus is God. He received worship!
- My Muslim friends will say, “Jesus can’t be God. He was just a man. He never explicitly claimed he was God.” He never stopped people from bowing down in worship to him, from his birth til’ resurrection. To receive worship if he were a mere man would be nothing less than blasphemy.
- *Pic – John Henry*
- **“Nobody can call himself a Christian who does not worship Jesus. To worship him, if he is not God, is idolatry; to withhold worship from him, if he is, is apostasy.” - John Stott**

But what should our worship look like? Let me give you a few brief encouragements.

- Worship is characterized by **JOY** (10) “they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.”
 - Christmas is often marked by stress, a blur, financial pressure . . .
 - JOY is the deep delight of the soul that comes from God. Joy came into greater focus when Christ arrived in Bethlehem.
 - This too was prophesied in Isaiah about the coming Messiah. **“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.” (Isaiah 9:2-3)**
 - It was entirely appropriate for the wise men to “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.”
- They also showed **Respect**
 - When “they saw the child.. and fell down and worshiped him”
 - They paid the utmost respect to Jesus. They recognized his greatness and treated him with honor. They had reverence in the hearts.
 - We should worship with joy, reverence, and . . .
- **Sacrifice.**
 - Verse 11 – “opened their treasures, offered him gifts.”
 - In ancient times, it was customary to bring a gift when approaching a superior. These wise men, through their vision of the star believed they were approaching a king. That is why they brought precious gifts.
 - Gold: a precious and costly metal.
 - Frankincense: is an odorous gum found the bark of certain trees.
 - Myrrh: comes from a tree found in Arabia that produces a highly valued spice and perfume.
 - In our worship, we take what belongs to us: not simply our financial resources (though that is part of our rhythms of worship), but anything that is precious to us. Our time, our God-given gifts and skills, our relationships, our love and affection and we say, “God, these belong to you.”
 - At great cost to myself, I place these before you because they belong to you. You are worthy of them.
 - And what is so special about a gift? Does God need anything? No. When we give a gift, we show how much the person means to us. When you give a loved one a gift this Christmas, the most important thing is not that *thing*, it’s your love for them that motivated the gift. That’s worship. I’m giving you whatever I’ve got because you are worthy.
- There can be no indifference in our view of Christ. True followers of Jesus are defined by zeal, passion, and DECISION.

Matthew actually refers to worship 10 times in his gospel. The last two are found in Matthew 28.

- This is what it says: **“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . .” (Matthew 28:16-19)**
- Not only do we see that Jesus receives worship, but just like in chapter 2, we see that this worship should come from all the people of the world.
- It seems that Matthew strategically places this story as the first one of Jesus life, and then his last words of his earthly life as if to invite all people into the worship of Christ the King.
- The visit of the wise men foreshadow this great command from Jesus to take his message to the ends of the earth.
 - John Piper puts it like this as we saw on Monday in our advent reading: **“At the beginning of Matthew we still have a ‘come-see’ pattern. But at the end the pattern is ‘go-tell.’ We are to go and tell.”**
- Not everyone will worship him (Verse 8 - Herod indicated he desired to worship. That was a lie as we

will see in the last half of chapter 2)

- Because Herod was Hungry for his own glory, he did not wish to worship Christ.
- As one person said: “Herod was more interested in saving his throne than saving his soul!”
- In verse 8, Herod acts like he desires to worship, but as we will see next week, it was nothing more than a plan to seek the death of the newborn Christ.
- He was so committed to his own glory that he wanted to devise a plan to kill Jesus.

The question is: will we respond in worship?

- Daily Personal Worship: Daily prayer and daily Word. Giving all of your thoughts and actions through the day to God.
- Regular Corporate Worship: When we come together do you anticipate these moments? When you are here or in community group do you truly delight in who God is and what he has done? We have every reason to rejoice exceedingly with great joy.
- God has big plans for us to know him and worship him with everything we’ve got.
- I can’t wait to expound on this in a few weeks on January 4th when we unpack 2015 Vision Preview. You’re gonna wanna be there and bring your grandmamma...

Conclusion:

The Point: Give King Jesus your unrestrained worship and tell the world of his coming.

Christmas Challenge:

- 1) Daily Worship:** Thoughts, actions, words, deeds: all for him!
- 2) In the next 11 days, Tell One Person the TRUE Meaning of Christmas.**
 - a. What does Christmas mean to you?
 - b. What are your favorite things about Christmas?

If Christ is the Savior of the World, God with us, the King who cares for us and brings peace, how could we withhold this gift from anyone? Let’s go & tell of what God has done.

Let’s pray.