

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expositional Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew** 4- We Have Come to Worship Him

Church December 5, 2021

Matthew 2:1-12

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

2 "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."

3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

6 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'"

7 Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared.

8 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."

9 After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was.

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

11 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 to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

To the Glory of God

Now this beginning Passage in **Matthew 2** is important- not only for what it says- but for what it DOESN'T say. Please notice that the Apostle Matthew never mentions the shepherds seeing and hearing the angel tell them what Dr. Luke wrote in **Luke 2:10b-12:**

10 ... "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;

11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped cloths and lying in a manger."

Now these Jewish shepherds were “**keeping watch over their flock**” (**Luke 2:8b**) just outside of Bethlehem- because they were subcontractors. They had been hired to raise sheep for the Sacrifices that the Law of Moses required in the Temple in Jerusalem. And lots of worshippers over many years- required lots of animals.

But as we found out when we were going over Dr. Luke's Gospel Record- these shepherds were on the bottom rung of the socio-economic ladder of Jewish Culture in the 1st Century. They were the *lowest* of the low. And the job of raising these sheep didn't pay very well- and so, the job only attracted those Jews, who couldn't find anything else to do.

And so, one of the reasons why God gave them such an amazing heavenly Display was because nobody would have believed what these shepherds had to say- if all they had was their own Testimony. So, God gave them an angel and a heavenly host- to give Divine Credibility to what these men told everybody about Jesus' Birth.

But even though these shepherds were low class people; and their Testimony about anything was doubted- they were still Jews. And this is the irony of Luke's Gospel Record when compared with Matthew's. The only Gentile Gospel writer- Dr. Luke- gave us example after example of Jewish people- who were confronted with the Reality that Jesus was God. So, it was to these shepherds that the angel gave the amazing Announcement of Jesus' Birth- by telling them that their “Savior” had been born in Bethlehem. And then the angel gave them a “Sign” so they would know that Jesus was their Savior:

... you will find a baby wrapped cloths and lying in a manger.

Yet Matthew- the Jew- completely omits this Event. And the former tax collector also doesn't even mention the *next* Event either- the heavenly Host praising God and saying,

Luke 2:14

Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.

... which are two breathtaking Events that help us to understand that Jesus truly is-God Almighty in human Flesh. But strangely, Matthew leaves both of them out in his Gospel Record.

Now remember that Matthew wrote this Gospel Account to help convince his fellow-Jews of three Truths:

1. Jesus is the Messiah
2. Jesus is “*God with us*” (*Immanuel*)
3. Jesus is the 2nd Moses

... yet the first Event that this Apostle gave to the Jews concerning the early days of Jesus’ Life- involved Gentile Magicians. Worshipers of the stars (Astrologers). Babylonians. Pagans. And so, the phrase that Matthew wrote in verse 1:

... magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem ...

... was meant to draw the attention of the Jews, who would read this Account and cause them to wonder why God would use pagan Gentiles like this.

Now with all due respect to John Henry Hopkins, who wrote the song, “*We Three Kings*” in 1857- that we all sing today- there are a lot of things in this song (and in the entire celebration of Christmas here in America) that the Bible simply doesn’t teach.

For example, there is nothing in the infallible Account of Scripture that would lead us to believe that these men were “kings”. That interpretation was added many years later to suggest a fulfillment of various Old Testament Prophecies like **Isaiah 60:3** that says:

Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.
... along with **Psalm 68:29**:

Because of Your temple at Jerusalem Kings will bring gifts to You.

... and **Psalm 72:10&11** that says:

Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring presents; The kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts. And let all kings bow down before him, All nations serve him.

It is interesting that, in the 16th Century- John Calvin *refused* to go along with the “coronation” of these men; and blamed the Roman religious system’s false Teachings for the Confusion when he said,

"But the most ridiculous contrivance of the Papists on this subject is, that those men were kings... Beyond all doubt, they [the Catholics] have been stupefied by a righteous judgment of God, that all might laugh at [their] gross ignorance."¹

Now, even though some have even gone so far as to invent the names of these Magi²- the Bible certainly doesn’t. And it also doesn’t say there were only “three” of them. People got that from the fact that they gave Jesus’ Parents the three Gifts of Gold, Frankincense; and Myrrh.³

What is VERY possible, however, is that this group of Magi were wealthy men. And they had also probably brought a large caravan of people- including bodyguards, cooks, and many slaves with them into Jerusalem. Remember, the gifts the Magi had brought with them were very valuable and the Journey was both long and treacherous. And this would explain why Matthew says, “**all Jerusalem**” was troubled at their arrival.

Also, as you read the Bible carefully, you see that these Magi did NOT worship Jesus as a “baby” in the “Manger” along with the shepherds on the night of His Birth- as the Nativity paintings show. The Bible teaches that these men came much later- when **Matthew** tells us that Jesus was a “**Child**” (verses 9&11), Who lived with His Parents in a “**house**” (verse 11). And the fact that Herod had all the children of that Region, who were 2 years old and younger killed- tells us that Jesus *could* have been as old as 2 years when the Magi came.

Now at that time- when someone in Israel referred to the “East” he was NOT necessarily referring to the “Orient”- but usually what is today, Iraq; or what would have been back then- Babylon. And what the Jews of the 1st Century would have wondered about- was the fact that here is God- *welcoming* pagan Gentiles- men,

¹Calvin, John. *Calvin's Commentaries, Vol. 31: Matthew, Mark and Luke, Part I*, tr. by John King. Retrieved 2010-05-15. Quote from Commentary on **Matthew 2:1-6**

² *Melchior* (supposedly a Persian scholar), *Caspar* (supposedly a king of India), and *Balthazar* (supposedly a Babylonian scholar)

³ The Syriac churches of Eastern Christianity have, for many centuries, celebrated 12 magi.

who studied and worshipped the stars no less, to do something amazing: Worship Jesus.

But what would capture the average Jew's Attention was the fact that this Acceptance by God of these pagans- was NOT based on them *first*- abandoning their life of Astrology and Magic. No, God comes to these men FIRST- where they are- IN their Sin! The God that Matthew is infallibly describing here goes as far as to exploit the very Channel of their deepest Idolatry- to draw these men to Jesus.

So, not only is God sovereignly drawing these sinners to Jesus- He's using their own Wickedness to do it! Back in Babylon, God captured their stargazing Attention with a supernatural "Star" (not unlike the way that the burning bush caught Moses' attention); and He leads them, not only to Israel, but to the little town of Bethlehem, and then to the *exact* place where they might see and worship His Son. Here is what Matthew said:

Luke 2:2, 9&10

**2 "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."
9 After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had
seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place
where the Child was.
10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.**

So, Matthew says the "Star" "**went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was**"? Really? So, Matthew wants us to believe that this Star actually moved through the sky? Well, obviously, this is where any thinking individual simply MUST depart from believing that the Bible is true- because we all know from 8th grade Science that stars DON'T move, right? I mean, today, we know that many of the tiny stars that we see in the sky are actually great Galaxies- with millions of suns and hundreds of millions of planets in them.

So, obviously, Matthew was an ignorant 1st Century man, with great superstitions filling his mind. He simply didn't know what we all know today. And so, his Account here MUST be rejected out of hand. I mean stars simply DON'T move!

Are you sure about that? Because this Star DID move. And it not only moved right over the place where Jesus was- it had already BEEN moving for many weeks or even months as this group of first Century "scientists" and magicians traveled many miles on the backs of animals- to get to Jerusalem.

Now over the last few hundred years- it is amazing to me how many people have been so willing to completely discount what the Bible clearly teaches and what Matthew says here so they may bow their knee to the "god" of so-called

“Science”. And then with mug Self-righteousness- they say things like, “*The Science is settled, stars don’t move*”, as though that ends the Discussion.

Because it doesn’t. Just during my lifetime- I have come to understand that “Science”, as we know it today, is one of the most UNSETTLED things in this life. Today, what is supposedly unbiased “Science” is filled with preconceived ideas and political ideology. But besides that- Scientists are *constantly* discovering new things that make many old “facts”- that they were so sure of- become completely obsolete. And new ideas are constantly being raised up- that we never thought about before. And that is as it should be. Because Science is the *ongoing* search for Truth. So, Science, *true* Science; Science that isn’t political; and Science that examines provable facts and that seeks the Truth- is always very fluid.

We must always understand that true, genuine Christianity- biblical Christianity- is NOT at odds with true Science. Never has been and never will be.⁴ The God, Who is revealed in Scripture is a God of Truth. And so, those who love God- also love Truth. So, *whatever* is true- Christians believe and love. Yet Science is constantly evolving. So, if anything- Science should always take a “back seat” to the Bible- until all the facts are known.

What is NOT Science; what is NOT unbiased is to approach a Situation with the Assumption that since the Bible is supposedly filled with Error and Contradiction- it simply cannot be trusted. That approach is patently *unscientific* and *anti-intellectual*.

So, Matthew was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to tell his 1st Century Jewish audience (and us)- that THIS Star moved. And then people make the most ridiculous statements like, “*Well, maybe this ‘Star’ was actually a comet or a supernova or some kind of planetary conjunction*”- as though that would explain what Matthew says here.

I would suggest to you that the Apostle Matthew was no superstitious nitwit. He knew that stars don’t typically lead people to such specific locations. But he also knew that God the Holy Spirit “moved” on Moses to write this in **Numbers 24:17b&18:**

17 ... A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth.

18 “Edom shall be a possession, Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession, While Israel performs valiantly.

⁴ Through the Centuries, there have been many Atrocities perpetrated on people “in the name of” Christianity by the leaders of the Church. But those people were sinning and were not representing what the Bible actually teaches- accurately. But we also have to understand that there have also been horrible Atrocities perpetrated on people “in the name of” Science as well.

So, this “Star” was obviously a supernatural Miracle- that God was using; that was specially tailored to draw these particular Magi astrologers to Jesus. After all, that’s the main reason God created stars in the first place. Moses had written in **Genesis 1:14&15:**

**14 Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years;
15 and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so.**

So, this was really something- the likes of which we have never seen; have no experience of; and have no capacity to describe in scientific terms. And so, we *might* then say that this “Star” was actually an angel of the Lord; or *maybe* even God the Holy Spirit Himself- because that’s what He does- He *draws* or *drags* sinners to Jesus.

And this illustrates just how messy Grace is. You see the Law of God is very neat and tidy. Everything has its place within the Law of God. And when something is out of place- we are told to either reject it; kill it; or get rid of it. But Grace deals with people where they are- IN their Sins; IN their Weaknesses; and IN their Fears; Unbelief; and Doubt.

And these Magi are messy too. In the first place- they were “non-Jews.” And there was a large majority of Jews back then (and today) who would have said, with all sincerity, that God would NEVER even deal with a Gentile to begin with. Yet He did. And yet He does every day. And, God willing, the Almighty will *always* deal with those Gentiles on whom He has set His Love. But in addition to being Gentiles- these guys were also 1st Century “Scientists”.

Now as we learned from our verse-by-verse “journey” through **Habakkuk**- the Babylonians were also called, “*Chaldeans*”. And these people had a world-wide reputation for their viciousness and cruelty. But after Persia conquered Babylon, the term, “*Chaldean*” was used more often to refer to a social class of highly educated people rather than to a particular Race or Ethnicity. The Babylonians were well known as being “wise men” and Astrologers during the time of the Jewish captivity in Babylon. And during the time of the Prophet Daniel, Babylon was the “Intellectual Center” of all of western Asia. The Chaldeans were renowned for their study and knowledge of both Astrology and Astronomy.⁵ They kept detailed *astronomical Records* for over 360 years, which

⁵ **Astrology** is the *worship* of the sun, moon, and stars and is sinful. **Astronomy** is the “*study of*” or the “*science of*”; or the “*knowledge of*” the celestial bodies.

can help us understand how the “**magi**”, who specialized in both Astronomy and Astrology would have been able to recognize and follow the “Star” that led them to the “*King of the Jews*” here in **Matthew 2:2**.

So, these men *studied* the stars- yes. And so, in *that* sense- they were 1st Century “Scientists”. But they also *worshipped* the stars they studied. And that made these sinful, unclean Gentiles to also be idolaters of the worst kind.

Now we know from History that when God set the Jews free from 70 years of Captivity in Babylon- Daniel *remained* in that pagan land and did NOT return back to Israel. And some records suggest that Daniel began a “School” back in Babylon that taught the Scriptures to the Chaldeans. And, it is possible these men had attended Daniel’s School- which prepared them to worship Jesus.

But, in spite of the fact that they are pagans- these Magi are chosen vessels- which are now being used in two ways:

1. Inspiring believers
2. Damning unbelievers

Saved people read about this Event- even 2,000 years later- and we are inspired. We marvel at the Majesty and Glory of God in this Event. And our hearts are filled with Awe and Wonder at the Miracle of the Star. Reading the Account of the Magi and the fact they followed this Star causes us to want to be led by God the Holy Spirit more perfectly. And reading about how they came all that way to worship Jesus causes us to want to worship Jesus too- *regardless* of what that Worship might cost us personally.

We read about them giving *meaningful* Gifts to Jesus- *purposeful* Gifts- that were used to actually *sustain* the Child and His family in Egypt. And that causes us to examine our Giving- to make sure that we give- *meaningfully* and *purposefully* as well. So, these pagans are used- even today- to inspire us.

And Herod actually met these men. But instead of being inspired at this amazing Event- he responded with Jealousy and the “*Slaughter of the Innocents*.” Let’s read what the Apostle Matthew wrote,

3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

6 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL

COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL."

7 Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared.

8 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."

Now in the next Sermon, we will learn about what King Herod meant when he said this. But suffice it to say that he was NEVER actually interested in worshipping Jesus. He simply wanted to use these men to help him find out where Jesus was- so he could kill Him. And in that way- Herod would have no competition to the Title, "*King of the Jews*". So, even as a Child- Jesus is used to divide between those who worship Him and that who do not.

And Jesus does that to people. He inspires the Saved and He damns the Lost. Everything Jesus says or does causes saved people to rejoice and worship. And everything Jesus says or does causes lost people to manifest the darkness of their own hearts in some wicked way. And so, these pagan Magi are standing in front of this evil king- telling him that they have come to worship the real King of the Jews- Jesus.

And they are standing there before this king because God has drawn them many miles- on the backs of animals (camels?) for several weeks or even months- at the direction of a Star! And what do they ask King Herod?

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.

... so, these men had come to worship Jesus.

Now, interestingly, Herod had only recently crowned *himself* as the "*king of the Jews*". And that is fascinating, because according to the Jewish historian, Josephus, Herod was actually an "*Idumean*"⁶- which meant he was a 1st Century descendant of the "*Edomites*"- which were the people, whose ancestor was *Esau*.⁷ This made Herod to be only "half-Jewish" at best.

But Herod was a brutal, vicious, and barbaric man. He ordered that his own wife and sons be murdered. And he was also brutally *political*. And so, he used his Jewish pedigree, when it helped him; and he used his appointment by Caesar, when that helped him.

⁶ Josephus wrote, "*But Antigonus, by way of reply to what Herod had caused to be proclaimed, and this before the Romans, and before Silo also, said, that 'They would not do justly if they gave the Kingdom to Herod; who was no more than a private man, and an Idumean, i. e. an half Jew . . .'*" (*The Antiquities of the Jews*. Book 14, Chapter 15, Section 2)

⁷ Genesis 25:29&30

Now Herod was called, the “*Great*”- certainly NOT because of any *moral* accomplishments- but simply because he was a “great” builder. He also lowered the tax rate on the Jewish people; and oversaw “great” prosperity in Judea back in the 1st Century. He had the port of Caesarea built as well as several other projects in Jerusalem, which added to the city’s grandeur and economic importance.

But Herod is *best* remembered by the Jews as the man, who built their 2nd Temple- around 516BC.⁸ And so, it was called, “*Herod’s Temple*”. The 1st Temple, called, “*Solomon’s Temple*” had been constructed by King Solomon around 957BC but had been completely destroyed by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar around 587-586BC. During the time between the destruction of Solomon’s Temple and the construction of this 2nd Temple- the Jews were without a Temple in Jerusalem. And then in 70AD, the Roman army completely destroyed Herod’s Temple and the Jews have gone without a Temple since that time.⁹

So, the very *first* Event that Matthew put into his Gospel Record- draws our Attention to two things:

1. Jesus
2. Worship

... which could be better put as: “*Worshipping Jesus*”.

And worshipping Jesus is THE Main Objective in all that God is doing here. And there are at least six Truths about “Jesus” and “Worship” that Matthew wants his Jewish readers (and us) to see:

1. From the time of the Magi until He returns- all of Humanity must *specifically* worship Jesus. It is no longer enough to merely worship “God”
2. Jesus is the Messiah, the King of the Jews, and should be worshipped- not merely discussed or analyzed or studied
3. The Magi from the “East” show us that it is God’s Will that ALL the nations of the world gladly worship Jesus- not merely the Jews.
4. God operates the entire Universe in such a way- to make His Son the Object of all true Worship
5. The Tension between the Saved and the Lost centers around “Jesus” and “Worship”

⁸ The 2nd Temple had been originally built by Zerubbabel and was completely refurbished by Herod.

⁹ This Destruction not only eliminated the ability of the Jews to offer animals sacrifices- but also wiped out all genealogical records; and rendered both the Levitical Priesthood and the Sanhedrin Court obsolete.

6. Part of what it means to worship Jesus is to humbly and joyfully give meaningful and purposeful Gifts.

... so, let's look at each one.

1. From the time of the Magi until He returns- all of Humanity must *specifically* worship Jesus. It is no longer enough to merely worship "God"

Verse 2 announces clearly whom this Story is really about:

Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?

So, this Story is about a newborn Child- Who has been destined to be the "*King of all the Jews*". Now, in itself- that would not be a very great thing. Somewhere alive in America today there are probably three or four children or young people, under the age of 18, who are going to become the President of the United States one day. But nobody really cares about this or sets out to find them or honor them.

But verses 4-6 makes clear what the Magi really meant by the title, "*King of the Jews*." Matthew wrote,

4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

6 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'"

So, even though Herod had been called "*king of the Jews*" by the Senate in Rome for almost 40 years, no one called him, "*Messiah*". And to the Jews- the "*Messiah*" referred to the long-awaited God-anointed Ruler; Who would overcome all other Rule; bring in the End of History; establish the Kingdom of God on the earth; and never die or lose His Kingdom.

Now we don't know how these Magi got their Information that there was such a "King" or "Ruler" or even "God" coming. They probably did NOT speak of Him as the "Messiah"- since that Title ONLY pertains to the Jews. But it is clear that Herod got the Message: these guys are NOT searching for a mere, ordinary,

human successor to him. They are searching for the *final* King; the *ultimate* King; the King, Who would end all other kings.

And, of course, unlike Anna and Simeon in **Luke 2**, this *final* King is the *last* thing Herod was looking for. He didn't even know the simple Scriptures about where the Messiah was to be born- he had to ask. And this tells us that, at best, Herod was a lousy Jew- because he certainly didn't know the Scriptures himself. So, he asks the scribes, and the one text that they focus on is **Micah 5:2a** that says,

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel...

Now by itself, that doesn't sound very extraordinary either. The only reason this verse came up- was to answer Herod's Question: "*Where?*" And the answer is: "*Bethlehem*". Not Jerusalem- but tiny, little, insignificant Bethlehem.

But what if Herod had asked them, "*Who?*" They might have read on in **Micah 5:2b, 4a, 4c, & 5a** that says,

... His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity... And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the Lord, In the majesty of the name of the Lord His God... Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth... This One will be our peace...

So, this King; this Ruler; this Messiah is not just coming into being in the womb of His mother Mary.

His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity

... or, as John's Gospel says,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us...

... and this ultimate King would NOT be limited, in His Realm, to the geographical nation of Israel.

He will be great To the ends of the earth

So, that's the first Truth. And as soon as God took on flesh and became Man- it was NOT enough for people to worship God. People now MUST worship

Jesus. It is not enough for people to love God or to follow God or to obey God or to hear the Word of God. They **MUST** now love Jesus and follow Jesus and obey Jesus and hear the Word of Jesus.

And so, any effort today by anyone to worship God- **NO MATTER HOW SINCERE**- is **NOT** accepted by God as “Worship”. People **MUST** worship Jesus- or they are **NOT** worshipping God. At all. And worshipping Jesus is the *highest* and *best* way to worship God the Father. The Apostle Paul was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to say this in **Philippians 2:5-11**:

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2. Jesus is the Messiah, the King of the Jews, and should be worshipped- not merely discussed, analyzed, or studied

The Goal of understanding the Bible- is **NOT** to simply get smart about the Scriptures. The Goal of Bible Study is so we will worship Jesus. So, if we know all Truth so that we can win every argument and yet we do not worship Jesus or delight ourselves in Him or adore Him- we have missed the Point of it all.

Jesus did **NOT** come to this earth to be analyzed; or discussed; or argued about; or studied. He came to be worshipped; and adored; and enjoyed. So, as we study God’s Word- keep in mind that our Study is **NEVER** an End to itself. Our Study is merely a Means to a much *greater* End: Worship.

3. The Magi from the “East” show us that it is God’s Will that ALL the nations of the world gladly worship Jesus- NOT merely the Jews.

Notice that Matthew does not tell us about the shepherds coming to visit Jesus in the manger. His focus is *immediately* on foreigners coming from the East

to worship Jesus. And Matthew ends his Gospel Record with the Command to all believers to go into all the earth- and preach and teach and baptize and disciple ALL the nations of the world.

So, Matthew's Gospel portrays Jesus at both the beginning and ending of his Gospel as a *universal* Messiah; a *universal* King for ALL the nations- not just for Jews.

And this taught the Jews that the Concept of the Messiah that they had heard about their entire lives- had been hijacked by men, who weren't even saved. The Pharisees and Sadducees and other wayward Leaders had warped what the Old Testament actually said about the Messiah. And they had painted a picture of Who the Messiah would be; and What he would do when he got here- that God never said.

For example, **Isaiah 60:3** says,

Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.

... so, even back then- Isaiah saw that the true Messiah would be worshipped by ALL the nations- not just Israel. But the lost Leaders of Israel had fabricated a Man-made idea of the Messiah that was centered around his Ethnicity, Nationality, and Race rather than His Purity, Holiness, and Deity. And that warped, Man-made idea has lodged itself in the Jewish mind to this day.

But it completely misses the much *larger* Point that God has ALWAYS been primarily interested in people, OUT FROM *every* Nation; Tribe; and Language- worshipping the Lamb of God- Jesus Christ- and NOT merely the Nation of Israel. But it wasn't until the Incarnation that this primary Goal of God could actually happen.

And this is why in Matthew's Gospel Record- the very *first* Worshipers are pagan magicians or astrologers- who were NOT from Israel but from the "East" - perhaps from Babylon. And the fact that they were Gentiles and Unclean would startle the Jews, who read Matthew's Account.

And then, at the *end* of **Matthew** the very *last* Words of Jesus are, in **Matthew 28:18b-20** that says,

... All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you...

... and this not only opened the door for us Gentiles to rejoice in the Salvation of the Lord- but it added even MORE Proof that Jesus actually was the Messiah.

Because one of the most repeated Themes of the many Old Testament Prophecies about the Messiah- was that the Nations of the world would rejoice in the Messiah as their Ruler and Savior! And the Leaders of the Jews during the 1st Century worked hard to hide that fact from the people. And in their false Teachings- they warped the main Goal of the Messiah to be nothing more than a re-constituted Israel rather than Salvation for the whole world!

4. God operates the entire Universe in such a way- to make His Son the Object of all true Worship

Over and over the Bible baffles us about how God did certain things. For example, how did this "Star" get the Magi all the way from the East to Jerusalem? And then, how did that Star go before them in the little five-mile walk from Jerusalem to Bethlehem as verse 9 says it did? And then how did a Star stand "over the place where the Child was"?

And the ONLY Answer is: *We don't know*. Now there are lots of people, who will be happy to display their great Wisdom to you as they go to great lengths to explain all of this- in terms of "conjunctions of planets" or "comets" or "supernovas" or "miraculous lights". But as far as I am concerned- they only embarrass themselves. And they waste a whole lot of time. And many of them miss the infinitely larger Picture: WORSHIP!

The bottom line is: We don't know. And I want to plead with you- to NOT become preoccupied with developing theories that are only tentative in the end and have very little spiritual significance. And I risk a generalization to warn you: *"People who are exercised and preoccupied with things like, how the Star worked; and where was the Land of Nod; and how the Red Sea split; and how the manna fell; and how Jonah survived the fish- are generally people who have what I call, an amazing ability to concentrate on things that don't matter."* And most of the time- you will NOT see in these people any deep cherishing of Jesus; or a panting after God; or a hungering and thirsting after Righteousness.

And the great central Themes of the Gospel almost *always* allude them- like: the Holiness of God; the Ugliness of Sin; the Helplessness of Man; the Death and Resurrection of Jesus; Justification by Faith alone; the sanctifying Work of God the Spirit; the Glory of the Return of Jesus; and the final Judgment. And so, they write books about "*Blood Moons*" but they have never seen the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus. And that makes them to be pitiful and sad.

But what is plain concerning the matter of this Star is that it is doing something that it CANNOT do on its own: it is guiding the Magi to the Son of God- SO THEY CAN WORSHIP JESUS! And there is only one Person in Biblical thinking that can be behind that *intentionality* in this Star- God Himself!

And that makes the Lesson to be crystal clear: God is sovereignly guiding people to Jesus- to worship Him! That's it! And Oh what a Miracle that is! And God is doing this by exerting *global* - probably even *universal* - Influence and Power to get it done.

So, Dr. Luke shows us God influencing the entire Roman Empire so that the Census comes at the exact time to get a virgin to Bethlehem to fulfil Prophecy with her delivery! While Matthew shows us God influencing a Star in the sky to get foreign Magi to Bethlehem so that they can worship Jesus!

And this is God's Design. He did it back then. And He is still doing it now. And His Goal (that will NOT fail) is that the nations – ALL the nations (**Matthew 24:14**) - worship His Son.

And this is God's Will for everybody in your office at work; and for the people in your neighborhood; and for everyone in your home. EVERYBODY will worship Jesus. The Lost will worship Him because they are *forced* to do so. And the saved are so blessed- that God will so change their natures- that they will *delight* to do so. But EVERYBODY will worship Jesus. As **John 4:23b** says,

... for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

At the beginning of **Matthew** we still have a "*come- and- see*" Pattern. But at the end- the Pattern is a "*go- and-tell*". The Magi "came and saw". But once we see- we are to "go and tell". But what is NOT different is that the Purpose of God is the ingathering of the nations to worship His Son. So, the ONLY reason that Nations exist- is so they may enjoin themselves to the magnifying of Jesus in the white-hot Worship of all Nations.

5. The Tension between the Saved and the Lost centers around "Jesus" and "Worship"

Make no mistake about it. Missionaries are NOT killed because they build Hospitals or because they treat the sick or educate the unlearned. Missionaries are killed because they compel all people to repent of their Sin; abandon their false pagan religions; and become a worshipper of Jesus. So, Jesus is the Issue. And even more specifically, the worship of Jesus as God Almighty in human flesh- is the Issue. Always has been and always will be.

There is NO persecution centered around Jesus as a Teacher or as a Humanitarian; or as an Example; or as a Political Anarchist; or as a Social Justice Warrior. But people are murdered when they worship Jesus as God. Churches are burned down; and businesses are boarded up and money and possessions are

confiscated; and children are taken; and wives are assaulted- when Jesus is worshipped as God.

In Matthew's Gospel Record- there are two kinds of people who do not want to worship Jesus. The first kind is the people who simply do nothing about Jesus. He is a complete "nonentity" in their lives. This group is represented by the chief priests and scribes.

Notice that after Herod asks them where the Messiah was to be born- they told him- and then they went right back to their lunch. No excitement about the long-awaited Messiah finally being here! They were unconcerned about THE single most important Issue of their lives!

The sheer Silence and Inactivity of these religious Leaders is overwhelming in view of the magnitude of what was happening. Matthew tells us that Herod along with ALL Jerusalem were troubled. But not these guys.

And that makes the inactivity on the part of chief priests to not merely be staggering- but sinful. Why didn't THEY go with the Magi? Wasn't "Worship" their bailiwick? But they aren't interested. They do not want to worship Jesus.

The second kind of people who do not want to worship Jesus is the kind who are deeply threatened by Him. And that is Herod in this story. He is really afraid. So much so that he schemes and lies and then commits mass murder just to get rid of Jesus.

And in our day- these two kinds of Opposition will come against Jesus and His worshipers. Both Indifference and Hostility about Jesus is deadly to your soul. And I pray that you are NOT in either group.

6. Part of what it means to worship Jesus is to humbly and joyfully give meaningful and purposeful Gifts

There are four pieces to that definition of Worship, and all four are grounded in this text.

1. The Magi ascribe Authority to Jesus by calling Him "King of the Jews"
2. The Magi ascribe Dignity to Jesus by falling down before Him in verse 11
3. There is great Joy in both of these Ascriptions of Authority and Dignity in verse 10
4. They illustrate their Joy in worshipping Jesus by giving meaningful and purposeful Gifts

The Gifts of the Magi do NOT earn God's Favor. Nor are they Bribes. The Gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh were merely illustrations of their own inward desire for Jesus Himself in much the same way that Fasting is. When you

give a Gift to Jesus like this, it's a way of saying, *"The Joy that I pursue (verse 10!) is NOT the Hope of getting rich with things from You. I have not come to You for Your Blessings- but for Yourself. And this Desire I already have- is illustrated and demonstrate by me giving up things, in the Hope of enjoying You more- rather than the Blessings themselves.*

By me giving to You what you do not need, and what I might enjoy, I am saying more earnestly and more authentically, 'You are my Treasure, not these things.'" I think that's what it means to worship God with gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

And Oh how I pray that God will take the Truth of this Passage and awaken in us a Desire for Jesus Himself! May we say from the heart, *"Lord Jesus you are the Messiah, the King of Israel! And You are my King! All the nations will come and bow down before You! God operates the whole world to "see to it" that You are worshiped! Therefore, whatever Opposition I may find, I joyfully ascribe ALL Authority and ALL Dignity to You, and I bring my Gifts to say that You alone can satisfy my heart!"*

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.