

The Final Lessons from the Magi

Matthew 2:1-11: *“1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. 3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. 7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. 9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.”*

- I. Verse 1—*“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ”*
 - A. The message of the first chapter is “salvation is of the Jews” because Jesus was Jewish by birth.
 - B. The message of the second chapter is about the Magi or wise men from the East.
 1. These Magi are interested in the King of the Jews.
 2. Those Magi represent the Gentile world with the Gentiles coming to the God of the Jews as God predicted in **Isaiah 60:1-3**.
 - a. **Isaiah 60:1-3** says, *“1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. 2 For, behold, **the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. 3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”***
 - C. It was these Magi that represented the fulfillment of this prophecy in Is 60:3 that **“the Gentiles shall come to thy light.”** Today, churches across the world are filled with **“Gentiles that have come to Israel’s light.”** They are the forerunners of the great wave of **Gentiles** coming to the light of the King of the Jews.
 - D. The Magi are viewed side by side with the Jewish scribes and priests they encountered in Jerusalem in verse 4.
 - E. The contrast is seen in the interest in the King of the Jews; the Magi are more interested in the King of the Jews than the Jews are interested in the King of the Jews.
 1. This is the great mystery of how the Gentiles show more interest in the Jewish Messiah than the Jewish people are interested in their own Messiah.
 2. Another person who came a long way to find the wisdom of God and that person was the Ethiopian Queen of Sheba. She had heard about a person who had the wisdom of God all the over in Ethiopia, and like the Magi, she decided to make the trip all the way to Jerusalem to hear the wisdom of God.
 3. Like the Magi, she put the Jewish people to shame and the Lord Jesus said that she was going to be used in a future judgment against those who did not care in **Matthew 12:42**.
 - a. **Matthew 12:42** says, *“The **queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”***
 4. The Magi who came a long way to worship the King of the Jews, and sadly, those in Jerusalem would not walk 5 miles to worship the King of the Jews.
 - F. The Magi got no encouragement to find the King of the Jews.
 1. It was not like they walked into Jerusalem and were greeted with cheers of, “Good, you came to find the King of the Jews, so you could worship Him.
 2. It was more like, “The King of the Jews? We don’t know, and we don’t care.”
 3. When the Magi looked to man, they could have got discouraged. However, it was not man that encouraged them to start on their trip. It was God.
 4. It was God who stepped in to encourage the Magi with the return of the star.
 - a. **Matthew 2:9-10** says, *“9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.”*
 - G. It is a great encouragement for us to see how the Lord led these Magi with that star. It is just like the hymn says:

*Just when I need Him, Jesus is near,
Just when I falter, just when I fear;
Ready to help me, ready to cheer,
Just when I need Him most.
Just when I need Him most,
Just when I need Him most,
Jesus is near to comfort and cheer,
Just when I need Him most.*

1. That reminds of what God said about how He guides us in **Psalm 32:8**.
 - a. The verse says, *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."*
 - H. The Magi had come to where they assumed they would find the King of the Jews—in Jerusalem.
 1. When they did not find the King of the Jews, the Magi were wondering, "Where do we go next?"
 2. That is when God used the star to say to the Magi, "This is not the place. This is the way, walk here in this way to Bethlehem."
 - I. God guides us in life by a Bible in our hands and that is described in **2 Peter 1:19**.
 1. The verse says, *"We have also a **more sure word of prophecy**; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto **a light that shineth in a dark place**, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."*
 2. Imagine if those wise men did not look up into the sky to see the star that was set for them.
 3. What if the Magi kept their heads looking down and said, "God is going to guide me somehow, but I am not going to look up to the sky." Then, they would have had no guidance from God.
 4. In the same way, God has set our guiding star in the Bible, if a person never reads his Bible, then he could not be guided by God.
- II. Verse 10—*"When they saw the star, they rejoiced"*
- A. In verse 10, when they did see the star again, they **rejoiced**.
 1. That is our experience. We experience a special joy when we realize that God has spoken to us in His word.
 2. For the wise men, it was **very special** for them to see the star.
 3. For us, it is very special for us to be guided by God.
 - a. There, the wise men were among those who did not believe and right out of that darkness, the star appears for them as a light to lead them out of the darkness.
- III. Verse 18—*"The birth of Jesus Christ"*
- A. Somehow, God revealed to those wise men that the King of the Jews they were looking for was just born when they asked in verse 2.
 1. The verse says, *"Where is he that is **born King of the Jews**?"*
 - B. That is amazing to think that they had come to worship a newborn King of the Jews.
 - C. The first chapter also contained those amazing words in verse 18.
 1. **Matthew 1:18** says, *"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise."*
 2. When you look at the meaning of the words, the verse has an even more wonderful meaning.
 - a. Jesus means *"God's Salvation and Christ," "God's Messiah,"* or *"Sent One."*
 3. It reads as follows: *"Now the birth of God's Salvation as God's Sent One was in this way."*
 - a. How amazing to see that **the salvation of the world was tied up in a little baby** that was born in Bethlehem.
 - b. That baby was God's life rescue ring that He threw to the world.
- IV. Verse 2—*"Where is He?"*
- A. We have seen the wise men coming and asking that question in verse 2. That question has a very deep meaning that is of infinite importance
 - B. In that question, we read an **eagerness**.
 1. The Magi go from thinking, "It would be interesting to find Him" to "I must find Him."
 - a. He will be found as that is what God said in **Deuteronomy 4:29**.
 - a)The verse says, *"But if...thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."*
 - b. What God is saying there is that you will find Him when there is a **must to find Him**.
 - c. God says that there is only one way to find God, and if that way is followed, God promises that He will be found.
 - a) **Jeremiah 29:13** says, *"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."*
 - C. In their verse 2 question, there is **hope**.
 1. The Magi go from thinking, "Where is He?" to "He can solve the problems in my life that nothing else can solve."
 2. What if those in Jerusalem had said to the Magi, "Look, just go back to your home and have a nice life. That is all you need in life. Don't waste your time looking for the King of the Jews."

- a. If the Magi had been told that, they would have said, “No. Going home to have a nice life is not what we need in life. We need the King of the Jews, and we know that He can help us in life.”
 3. We feel that hope that has swelled up in their hearts of, “I know that He is all I need in life.”
 4. That is **the “I know” hope of faith** that Job expressed when from His desperate condition of having lost all his wealth and his family and his health. In that state, Job proclaimed the confidence of the **“I know” hope of faith** when he said in **Job 19:25-27**.
 - a. The verses say, *“²⁵ For **I know** that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: ²⁶ **And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:** ²⁷ Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”*
 - b. That was Job saying that he knew that His redeemer was living and that he would see Him.
- D. The final take away was in verse 1 of chapter 2.
 1. **Matthew 2:1** says, *“Jesus was born in Bethlehem.”*
 2. As we mentioned in earlier lessons, Bethlehem was “the least” among the cities of Judah.
 3. There is an important truth even in the Magi’s confusion about Jesus being in Bethlehem instead of Jerusalem.
 - a. If you want to find the King of the Jews, don’t go to the capital of the Jews. You won’t find the King of the Jews there.
 - b. It is similar to someone saying, “If you want to find the King of the Jews, then don’t go to the Jewish religion of Judaism because you won’t find the King of Jews there.”
 4. That is what happened in Moses’ day when God decided to pull up stakes from the middle of the camp of the Jewish people and set up His camp outside the camp. Anyone who wanted to find God had to leave the central camp of the Jewish people and go to the lesser place where the Tabernacle was set up to find God.
 - a. **Exodus 33:7** says, *“And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.”*
 5. That is the way it is today. If any person wants to find God, he has to make the **Exodus 33:7** trip of going outside the camp of Judaism.
 6. This leaving in order to go to God is also the emphasis in **1 Thessalonians 1:9**.
 - a. **1 Thessalonians 1:9** says, *“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;”*
 - b. They turned **to God from idols** to serve the living and true God.
- V. Verse 11—*“Come...saw...fell...worship...presented”*
 - A. In verse 11, we see clearly what the wise men did when it says, *“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”*
 1. When you extract the verbs from that verse, we see the following:
 - a. They were **come** into the house.
 - b. They **saw**.
 - c. They **fell down**.
 - d. They **presented**.
 - B. Those were the four important actions of the wise men.
 1. First, they came in to see the Lord Jesus.
 2. Second, they beheld the Lord Jesus.
 3. Third, they fell before the Lord Jesus.
 4. Fourth, they gave to the Lord Jesus.
 5. That is what happens to every person who becomes a believer in the Lord Jesus.
 - a. First, a person has to come in to see the Lord Jesus, and that is the hardest first step—to turn to God.
 6. Many people come close and think about looking for God. Then, they get scared and dart away.
 7. People can even tell others how to find the Lord Jesus and not actually find Him themselves.
 - a. Because of the example of the scribes and priests, we can see people who are able to show others how to get to the King of the Jews, but they do not go themselves.
 - b. This is even possible today where someone can lead another to the Savior and not actually be saved himself.
 - C. After they came into the house, they beheld the Lord Jesus.
 1. If a person does turn towards the Lord Jesus, he has to behold the Lord Jesus. He must look at Him in His beauty—especially the beauty of His sacrifice on the Cross for our sins.
 - a. Salvation only comes when a person sees the Lord Jesus dying for his personal sins which is what He said in **Isaiah 45:22**.

- a) The verse says, *“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”*
 - 2. Then, after the wise men beheld the Lord Jesus, they fell down.
 - a. That speaks of submission to the Lord Jesus where a person gives his life to the Lord Jesus for Him to now rule over.
 - 3. Last, the wise men gave gifts to the Lord Jesus.
 - a. That speaks of a person giving all he has to the Lord Jesus—his body and his abilities and his wealth.
 - D. Those are the 4 essential steps that a true believer goes through.
 - E. It is important to see that before they gave their gifts to Him, they bowed and gave themselves to Him. Gifts are only meaningful to God if a person has given himself to God.
 - 1. We can see this in the first gift to God mentioned in the Bible which was Abel where it says in **Genesis 4:4**.
 - a. The verse says, *“And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And **the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.**”*
 - F. Those gifts that the Magi gave turned out to be so needed by the family as they made their trip down to Egypt to escape Herod’s sword.
- VI. Verse 12—*“Not return to Herod”*
- A. When the Magi were about to return to Herod, they were warned by God in **Matthew 2:12**.
 - 1. The verse says, *“And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.”*
 - B. This must have been very surprising for the Magi to be warned to not return to Herod.
 - 1. These Magi had a lot of stories to tell everyone back home. This was an exciting trip for them!
 - C. The Magi found **two very strange responses** to their question when they arrived in Jerusalem asking where Jesus was laid.
 - 1. First, they were surprised to find the total apathy on the part of the Jews over the newborn King of the Jews. They found that the Jewish people had no interest in the Messiah.
 - 2. The shock that the Magi had when they realized that the Jews have no interest in finding their Messiah is the same shock that Gentile believers have today as they realize that the Lord Jesus is the Jewish Messiah.
 - 3. The Gentile believer goes to the Jews with all the eagerness of Philip when he went to Nathaniel and said in **John 1:45**.
 - a. The verse says, *“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, **We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.**”*
 - 4. That is how Gentile believers should go to the Jews.
 - a. They say, *“Look! I found your Messiah! Here He is! He is Jesus of Nazareth! That is your Messiah! Come and see for yourself in your Bible.”*
 - D. The second surprise that the Magi found was that from a cruel Roman ruler named Herod. He showed an unusual, strong interest to want to come and worship the King with them, but that did not set right with them.
 - 1. They did not trust Herod.
 - 2. There was just something that did not seem right about Herod and his desire to worship the King of the Jews.
 - E. Their feeling of suspicion was confirmed when God gave them the dream that warned them to not go back to Herod.
 - F. The record states in verse 12, *“They departed into their own country another way.”*
 - 1. The Greek word “departed” means “escaped.”
 - 2. Once they had worshipped the King of the Jews and presented their gifts, they were ready to go home. The most direct way home was through Jerusalem.
 - G. We can imagine that it was while the Magi were thinking about going back to Jerusalem that they had the dream and were told by God to not go back to Jerusalem.
 - H. Just a dream to the Magi is all it takes for the Lord Jesus as a baby to be saved from Herod’s sword.
 - 1. What a great God we have! He knows how to frustrate the plans of the enemies.
 - I. It is important to see that all of this happened pretty fast.
 - 1. The Magi arrive in Bethlehem and go immediately to the newborn King of the Jews to worship Him and give their gifts.
 - 2. But, before they head back home, they spend one night in Bethlehem, and it was during that night that they had the dream to not go back to Jerusalem.
 - J. They knew that Herod had commanded them to come back to him with the information of where the King of the Jews is, but they decide to not obey Herod. Just like the disciples made the decision to not obey the authorities and said the reason in **Acts 5:28-29**.
 - 1. The verses say, *“Saying, **We definitely commanded and strictly charged you not to teach in or about this Name; yet here you have flooded Jerusalem with your doctrine and you intend to***

bring this Man's blood upon us.²⁸ Then Peter and the apostles replied, We must obey God rather than men.²⁹

- K. These Magi are some of the most interesting people in the Bible. They are sort of like Melchizedek who appears in Scripture only once. Sadly, we don't hear of him or the Magi again.
- L. Even still, the lessons they teach us are some of the most important lessons we can learn and practice today.
 - 1. They teach us lessons of eagerness to find God, lessons of hope in God, lessons of obedience to God, and lessons of what it means to become a follower of God.
 - 2. We can become a follower of God by **seeking** and **entering, submitting, worshipping, and giving**.
 - 3. They foreshadow the coming of faith of the Gentiles.
- M. They are in stark contrast to unbelief.
- N. They show us how God guides us through our personal darkness.