

## A REGAL RESPONSE TO HOLY LIGHT

Bible Background – MATTHEW 2:7-15

Printed Text – MATTHEW 2:7-15

### The Visit of the Magi

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared.

<sup>8</sup> Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

<sup>9</sup> After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was.

<sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!

<sup>11</sup> They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

<sup>12</sup> When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return.

### The Escape to Egypt

<sup>13</sup> After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

<sup>14</sup> That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother,

<sup>15</sup> and they stayed there until Herod’s death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: “I called my Son out of Egypt.”

-----New Living Translation

### Lesson Introduction

The words “wise men from the East”, also known as the Magi refer to a group of men who came to Jerusalem around the time of Jesus’ birth to worship Him. Tradition says that there were three of them, but the Bible doesn’t actually say how many there were. These men were clearly not Jewish, but still knew the major significance of the birth of the Messiah to the entire world. Their desire to worship the newborn King illustrated that the Messiah would be the King of all nations.

**Background:** Matthew 2 opens with wise men coming from the East in search of the newborn King of the Jews. Although we are familiar with the non-biblical story of three wise men, Scripture says that they were all from the East. To people of New Testament days, that would probably have been from Persia, modern-day Iran. This was a center of much belief in astrology. The Bible makes very clear that the study of horoscopes is wrong (Deuteronomy

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4:19). It ascribes divine plans to the created stars and moon. Yet God uses His creation to unexpectedly bring people to Himself. In calling these Gentiles from far away, God showed that Christ came for us all. The wise men were astrologers and was some sort of unusual star (possibly a conjunction of planets) that indicated to them that a new king of the Jews was born. So they traveled to Jerusalem, the capital, where they expected to see this baby. They almost certainly arrived in a great caravan with many servants. Hearing that a new Jewish king has been born, Herod instantly knows this must be the Messiah. The jealous and power-hungry king asks his scholars where the Messiah was predicted to be born.

-----*Precepts for Living*, the UMI Annual Commentary 2020-2021, p. 192

### Foreigners Before a King

**Matthew 2:7-8:** With the arrival of the magi from the East, and their considerable entourage, King Herod and all of Jerusalem were in an uproar (Matthew 2:3). The foreign visitors had been asking around as to where they could find the newborn King so they could pay homage to Him (v.2). After inquiring of the high priests and religious scholars in the city, he learned of the prophecy of the Messiah who was to be born in Bethlehem of the land of Judah. According to prophets of old, this leader would rule Israel (v.6).

Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the visitors from the East and listened diligently (Gk. *akribos*) as a pretense of also wanting to worship the prophetic Messiah. But he only wished to ascertain the exact whereabouts of his perceived rival, with planned to eliminate any threat, physically or politically to his throne. His plan, we learn later, was a murderous one to destroy the child and he used the wise men to do the work of finding the child's exact location.

◆ *Herod knew a great deal about the Messiah. Why would anyone who knows about Jesus Christ, sit on the information rather than respond positively to it?*

### Foreigners Before THE King

**Matthew 2:9-12:** The wise men left and traveled the six miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, guided by the reappearance of the star that had caused them to journey to Jerusalem initially. But rather than announcing the Savior's birth, this time the star is a guiding light as they look for the child. When they find Him, they are overcome with exceeding joy.

Just as the tradition persist that there were exactly three Wise Men, another enduring tradition is that the Magi arrive at the stable the very night of Jesus's birth. No Nativity Scene is complete without the Three Wise Men, arriving with their camels in tow and them holding their gifts for the infant in the manger. But looking closely at these verses in Matthew, this lovely setting seems to be contradicted.

First, the Magi enter a house (Gk. *oikia*, refers to a residence for a family) not a stable. Second, the term used to describe Jesus is the Greek *paidion*, which refers to a small child who can walk and talk. The Greek word, *brephos* (babe or infant) was used when announcing Jesus' birth to the shepherds (Luke 1:59; 2:21). Third, some scholars believe that the Magi arrived in Bethlehem almost two years after Jesus' birth.

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Upon entering the house, the men rejoiced to see that they had found the object of their pilgrimage. They had found the Messiah, the Child, King Jesus and worshiped Him, presenting Him with gifts befitting royalty—gold, frankincense and Myrrh. The gifts were prophetic symbols of the roles He would fulfill in His lifetime. The gold was symbolic of Jesus’ role as the long-awaited King of the Jews. The frankincense refers to a tree and the incense made from its sap, burned on altars and indicating Jesus’ priesthood. Myrrh, an expensive scented oil, is also extracted from tree resin and was an ointment used for burial in many African traditions. This ointment suggests the role Jesus would play as the One who would die for the sins of the world (John 1:29; 11:49-52). Having worshiped the Messiah, the foreigners returned to their home using a different route, as God warned, so that they would not encounter King Herod again (v.12)

◆ *Think about a time you had to disregard an authority figure to follow God’s guidance instead.*

### **The Messiah in a Foreign Land**

**Matthew 2:13-15:** After learning that the magi had avoided him, King Herod was furious and ordered his soldiers to go to Bethlehem and kill every male two years and younger, according to the time indicated by the foreign astrologers. Upon the departure of the Wise Men, The angel appeared to Joseph once again with a message. This time Joseph is warned that for the Child’s safety, the Holy family must flee from Herod. Joseph follows the angel’s directions and moves to Egypt, returning home only when Herod was dead. Because Jesus’ childhood followed this journey, Matthew notes that He fulfills yet another prophecy of coming “Out of Egypt.”

◆ *How have you noticed God’s protection in your life as you followed His direction?*

### **Conclusion**

The example of the Wise Men point to the universality of Jesus’ mission. He was born into this world and fulfilled the Messianic prophecy to be King of the Jews, a descendant of the House of David. But in this Christmas season, let us contemplate on His universal mission to redeem those who suffer because of sin and the world’s brokenness. For this reason, He is for people of every ethnicity and culture to worship as the King of all nations.

### **Sources:**

Banks, M. (Ed.). (2020). Love For One Another. *Precepts for Living*, 23(Winter Quarter), 188-197. The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2020-2021.  
*Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation, Carol Stream, Illinois.

## This Sunday is the fourth Sunday of the Advent Season – Joy (or Peace)



The season of Advent lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. At that time, the new Christian year begins with the twelve-day celebration of Christmastide, which lasts from Christmas Eve until Epiphany on January 6. Advent begins on Sunday that falls between November 27th and December 3rd each year) **Advent 2020 begins on Sunday, November 29th, and ends on Thursday, December 24.**

**The Advent Wreath** consists of four Advent candles with the white Christ Candle in the center. One candle is lit each Sunday before Christmas and the Christ Candle is lit on Christmas Day—First Hope, then Peace, Joy and Love.

### Advent Week 4 - Prayer for Love

Heavenly Father, the whole meaning of Christmas can be explained in one little four-letter word...LOVE. You sent your gift of pure love to us that first Christmas. Love descended from heaven to be born of a virgin. Love lay in the scratchy hay of a manger in a meager barn in Bethlehem. All of your love, God, was robed in the delicate skin of a baby and wrapped in swaddling clothes. This final week of Advent helps us to reflect on the magnitude of love that was made manifest in Jesus. You are King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Messiah, and Ruler of All, yet you came not as a lion but as a lamb. You came as an innocent baby whose purpose was to walk this earth in complete love and then to sacrificially give your life as an atonement for the sins of your children. Emmanuel. God with us. Love in the form of a man.

There is no greater gift than this; that a man should lay down his life for his friends. You willingly gave the gift of your life because of your love. Your righteous blood covered our sin. You redeem and restore us when we confess you as Lord and Savior of our life. In that moment, you give us the gift of your love for all eternity. We receive grace upon grace and mercy upon mercy in that moment.

The greatest gift of all came that first Christmas. It wasn't wrapped in a beautiful package and set under a decorated tree. The greatest gift came wrapped in the flesh of baby Jesus and laid in the rough wood of a manger. Our perfect gift would later be rewrapped in the scars of our sin and nailed to the rugged wood of a cross on Calvary, all because of love.

Father, this final week of Advent, fill our hearts and minds with the significance of that truth. Thank you, Lord, for loving us enough to send Jesus. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen

Hope Bollinger

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Lesson for Next Week – December 27, 2020 – Study Guide 4

## **CALLED TO PREPARE THE WAY**

Bible Background ♦ MATTHEW 3  
Printed Text ♦ MATTHEW 3:1-12  
Devotional Reading ♦ JOHN 1:19-34

### **Daily Bible Readings**

#### **MONDAY**

A Voice Cries, “Comfort My People”  
(Isaiah 40:1-5)

#### **TUESDAY**

John the Baptist is the Greatest  
(Matthew 11:2-15)

#### **WEDNESDAY**

The Baptist’s Testimony of Faith  
(John 1:19-34)

#### **THURSDAY**

Jesus, the Father’s Beloved Son  
(Matthew 17:1-8)

#### **FRIDAY**

In John, Elijah Has Come  
(Matthew 17:9-13; Malachi 4:4-5)

#### **SATURDAY**

John Baptizes Jesus in the Jordan  
(Matthew 3:13-17)

#### **SUNDAY**

John Prepares the Way for Jesus  
(Matthew 3:1-12)