

“O Worship The King”

December 22, 2019

Luke 225-35

Thank you for joining me today as we come before the LORD and before His word. And thank you for opening your Bible with me to the second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

The story of the birth of Jesus Christ is one of the most glorious stories ever written. His birth is one of *the* most well-attested facts of history. And, so, Christians across the globe remember and celebrate it in what we call Christmas, the day the God physically entered into humanity.

Today, the men we call the “Three Kings.” Now, kings are kings for, two reasons, generally speaking. One, they are born into it. Or, two, they’ve conquered some other king and now they’ve become king over a newly acquire nation. But, do you remember these three kings?

1. We three kings of orient are,
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.

Chorus - Oh, star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright.
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us with thy perfect light.

2. Gold I bring to crown him again
King forever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign.

Chorus -

3. Frankincense to offer have I,

Incense owns a Deity nigh
Pray'r and praising, all men raising,
Worship him, God most high,

Chorus –

4. Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume
Breathes of life of gathering gloom
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb

Chorus –

5. Glorious now behold Him arise
King and God and Sacrifice
Alleluia, Alleluia
Earth to heaven replies

Chorus -

Who were these men and what sort of kings were they?
And what does the Bible say? And what can they teach us
this Christmas?

I’ve titled today’s message “O Worship The King.” Shall we pray?

Generally at Christmas you’ll see the three kings on your Christmas cards; in the Christmas plays; and in this one Christmas carol.

Now, tradition has it that their names are:

- Gaspar (or Caspar), who has brown hair and a brown beard (or no beard!) and who wears a green cloak and a gold crown with green jewels on it. He is said to be the King of Sheba. Gaspar represents the Frankincense brought to Jesus.
- Melchior. He’s the one usually portrayed with long white hair; a white beard; and wearing a gold cloak. He is the King of Arabia. Melchior represents the Gold brought to Jesus.
- Balthazar, who has black skin and a black beard (or no beard!) is the one who wears a purple cloak. He’s the

King of Tarse and Egypt. Balthazar represents the gift of Myrrh that was brought to Jesus. [Found on and adapted from <https://www.whychristmas.com>

“The History Behind The Three Kings” by James Cooper].

Now, we had to wait until the sixth century A.D. for someone to call the wise men “kings.” And, at that same time, someone narrowed down the number of wise men to three. And each one was given a name.

Then, in 1857 Pastor John Henry Hopkins, Jr. wrote a poem which we sing today as “We Three Kings.” And, what Pastor Hopkins did was to put words into each one of the kings; verse one is to be sung by Caspar; verse two by Melchior; and verse three by Balthazar.

And their story, or at least a part of their story, is given to us in the Bible. Now, what *does* the Bible teach about these men who carried their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to give to Jesus? What are the details the LORD gives to us? As you’ve heard me say many times, the details of Scripture are details that God inserted in the Bible for our benefit.

Find with me the first verse of Matthew chapter two. Matthew 2:1 “*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, [in Micah 5:2]

(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 [Ruler], 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.”

What, then, does the LORD say about these men? And, what can we learn for our lives for today?

First, let me say this. We don’t need all the answers.

Have you ever noticed that God has left a lot of history untold? He’s clearly a God Who picks and chooses what you need to know. The Bible contains only what *He* wants us to believe.

Bible students across the ages have searched the Scripture in search of the identities of the wise men; i.e. who they were? What they were? Where they were from? But, for all our searching and study, we really only know what the LORD has said about them.

I’m curious too, just like you. But, God’s word wasn’t written for the curious. We don’t need to understand every nuance of this story to accept it as historical. It just like this. We have no huge need to understand sunshine sparkling on the snow to enjoy it. The LORD put inside the pages of the Bible just what we need to know in order to be satisfied that it all happened just the way He says it did.

And, with all we do know about the first Christmas, this might be the best. The account of the wise men is just one part of the fact that God entered history as a little, normal, sometimes noisy, and sometimes quiet human baby.

So, even though some of us want to know more about the wise men from the east, all we have is what the LORD says and no more.

The “three kings” idea? It’s probably conjecture. I honestly wish we knew more about the wise men.

You see, the Bible doesn’t say they were kings. The Bible doesn’t tell us their names. The Bible doesn’t even say that there were three.

Tradition, on the other hand, says that one was the King of Sheba, one the King of Arabia, and one the King of Tarse. Now, realistically, would *these* three kings travel from different areas of the world to get to Jerusalem; one from Sheba, one from Arabia, and one from Egypt, each bringing a different gift and still have followed the same star?

So, what can we say? Usually three kings traveling together would do so for one reason; war. And would three kings make a huge journey together? The Bible says they traveled from East to West; verse two. Matthew 2:2 “*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.*”

I’ll admit to you that a lot of what we think about the wise men is just that “what we think about them;” conjecture. We just don’t know. And it’s more likely that these were three wealthy merchants from the land of Persia (modern day Iran) or even the modern country of Yemen (Sheba). Let me show you why. If these men traveled from Persia, the distance from Persia to Israel is about 1,400 miles. And, if we presume they traveled in a caravan. But the average caravan of the first century would have been one thousand camels [Found on <https://en.wiki-pedia.org/> “Trans-Saharan Trade]

(although there could have been as many as 20,000 camels (<http://trade-routes-resources.blog-spot.com/> “The Forty Days Road).

And a trip of more than one thousand miles would have taken at least two months. Their camels would need water after nine or ten days. There would have had to be a plan to stop at the oases along the way.

So, if we take the Bible as the only historical record we have of the wise men, we know they traveled westward to get to Jerusalem. We also know they brought expensive offerings to give to Jesus. But, we just don’t know exactly where they came from. What we do know is that they came in pure faith and they came to see a King; a King Whose birth they’d only read about in the Bible.

So, yes, we do have their story in the Bible.

First, then, we don’t need all the answers to receive a word from Heaven about it.

Second, we do know that they came to worship Jesus; verses 1-2

Matthew 2:1 “*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.***”

Keep in the mind the main message of the story. It’s really all about worship? It’s all about a group of people searching for a king to bow down to.

Think about why you travel. Why would you take a trip, let’s say, to England? For most people, it would be a vacation. For some, to connect with family you’ve never seen. But, for these men, it was worship. They came with gifts and they came to show honor to a child-king.

Look at verse eight. Matthew 2:8 “*And he [King Herod] 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.”*

Even Herod the Great says his intended purpose to go to Bethlehem was to worship the One they called “the King of the Jews.”

And what did these wise men then do?

Look at the eleventh verse. Matthew 2:11 *“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and **worshipped him**: ...”*

Now, it's more likely that Herod was lying because, as we know, his real intent was to put Jesus to death. But, for sure, these wise men came to honor a King. Their purpose was to personally worship a child in a far off land called Israel. So, they must have been students of the Bible, students of history; students of prophecy.

Matthew 2:1 *“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.*

Hadn't they studied the Scripture? Hadn't they read about the King of the Jews coming to Israel? We know they were wise men. And these wise men would have studied the stars. So, we also know they were astronomers.

They were men who believed the Bible. They believed the predictions in the Bible. And they'd watched the stars. And they spent *their* money on this trip. Had they left their families behind, they would need to trust God to provide for and protect their loved ones. And they themselves were protected by the LORD. Don't forget that they were carrying some very expensive items: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And, under ordinary circumstances, nomadic thieves would certainly have attacked them and stolen their gifts. As we know from history, even caravans could be attacked.

And, in their conversations along the way they likely would have discussed the movement of the stars and especially the movement of one specific star; the one that would lead them to Israel and to the location of Israel's king. And, no doubt, they would have discussed this king they intended to meet.

The Bible tells us that had seen His star in the East; a star they likely had read about in the Bible. Numbers 24:17 *“...there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre [a King] shall rise out of Israel ...”*

These men had read their Bibles. They studied God's Word. And they believed what Moses had written; that a star would appear in the sky over the land of Jacob at the time when a Sceptre, a King, would be born.

Can you see that we do know some things about the wise men? If anything, we can see that their hearts were aiming for a Person. They came to see a king and to worship Him.

So, what did they do when they saw a specific star appear in the night sky? They certainly would have discussed it. Traveling at night, they decided to follow it. They must have believed that it was, not only unusual; but they believed they had to follow it; likely similar to the Jews following the cloud when they were in the wilderness.

Matthew 2:1 *“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.”*

Matthew 2:9 *“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.”*

The star appeared while they were in their home in the east. That same star went ahead of them. And after hearing

from the scribes and chief priests and the words of the Bible, they rejoiced to see the star again that same night.

And stars in general, as we know, follow a clear pattern every day of every year to show us that, with God, the universe around us is there is order and symmetry in God's creation. But, stars aren't only for light and to show us the God is a God of order. They are also for signs. And since God is sovereign over His creation, He is able to specifically use a star for a sign, if He chose to do so. And, that's exactly what He did.

And, one more thing. Isn't it interesting that the first people to travel any great distance to worship the Jewish Jesus were likely Gentiles?

Worship. What did they do when they came into the LORD's presence? Verse eleven.

Matthew 2:11 *"And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and **worship-ped** him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh."*

Worship includes bringing something to God. It includes bringing an offering to God. Here are these honorable, wise, wealthy, Biblically knowledgeable, respectful men showing attention to a little Child, Someone Who is much more honorable and much wealthier than they were; showing their respect and love for the King; and expressing their worship by bringing Him very expensive gifts.

What did they bring in worship?

Gold. According to one ancient writer by the name of Seneca, *"in Parthia it was the custom that no one could ever approach the king without a gift."* [Barclay]. So, what does gold say? Gold is an offering you'd bring to a king.

Frankincense. What does frankincense say? Frankincense you'd give to a priest. And in the Bible, it is also a symbol for prayer.

And what does myrrh say? Myrrh is an anointing oil you'd provide for someone who is about to die.

Do you remember the woman who brought her alabaster box of spice to anoint Jesus's feet? Was it myrrh? And what was the LORD's dead body wrapped in when they laid Him in His grave? It was myrrh.

Gold for a king. Frankincense for a priest. And myrrh for one who was to die. [Found on <https://www.studylight.org/> "Studies in Matthew two" by William Barclay].

First, then, we don't need all the answers about the wise men to accept it.

Second, they came to worship Jesus.

Third, they accepted the Bible by simple faith; verse three.

Matthew 2:3 *"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, [in Micah 5:2] (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."

Now, where did the wise men get their clearest direction? Yes, they followed the star God had placed in the sky.

But, as you know, the Old Testament is the only Scripture the wise men had. And the only Scripture the chief priests and scribes had, as well. So, 800 years before the LORD's birth, the Prophet Micah wrote this prediction about the Jewish Messiah. Micah 5:2 *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*

The prediction from Micah is this; that the Ruler of Israel, the One Whose goings have been from everlasting would be born in the little town of Bethlehem of Judea.

The Jewish Rabbi's in the years since Jesus' birth believed that this verse predicted the coming of the Messiah, just as Matthew says here.

"The Aramaic Targum Jonathan, from the third century A.D. translates it his way *"And you, O Bethlehem Ephrath, you who were too small to be numbered among the thousands of the house of Judah, from you shall come forth before Me the Messiah, to exercise dominion over Israel, He whose name was mentioned from before, from the days of creation"* and *"... out of thee shall proceed in my presence the Messiah to exercise sovereignty over Israel; whose name has been called from eternity, from the days of the everlasting."* [Found on <http://www.hadavar.org/> "Micah 5:2"].

Micah 5:2 *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*

What other person's birth could Micah be referring to here; especially the One Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" and the "Ruler in Israel"?

This is the passage that the Chief Priests and Scribes showed to King Herod. So, yet, the wise men believed the Bible and had come to see the King with their own eyes.

So, they arrived in Bethlehem, entered the house where He was living, and proceeded to offer their gifts to Jesus. They had traveled by pure faith. Now, their faith was sight.

One, we don't need all the answers about the wise men to accept this story.

Second, they came to worship Jesus. And we, too, are here to worship this Same Jesus.

And third, we too can accept the Bible by simple faith.

And that leads us to today. What does these three men teach us?

One, Jesus Christ is worth everything you sacrifice for Him. He is Worthy of all your gifts. But, like these men, the

first gift you bring Him is yourself. First, we give ourselves. Then, we bring Him our gifts.

He's the King today. And we, like them, are being called to worship Him.

And, as everyone knows, the child Jesus grew to become the man Jesus. His entrance into the world was the entrance of a King. And, according to the Gospel records, He died with a plaque written above Him that said "This is the King of the Jews."

He was crucified for your sins. So, have you recognized Him for Who He is? Have you received Him as your LORD and Savior and King? Have you responded to Him? The One Who entered this world as a little baby became the Savior of the world?

What will you do? If you've never trust Christ as you Savior and LORD, do it today. Receive Him as your personal LORD and Savior right now.

The Sinner's Prayer

"LORD, I know that I am a sinner. I ask Your forgiveness for all my sins. I believe on Your Son today as the King Who paid for all my sins. Thank You for the free gift of Eternal Life in Him. Amen"

And here's the Christian's Prayer. "LORD, I thank You that You sent Jesus to be my King, my Savior and my LORD. Thank You for His death, burial, and resurrection. I completely surrender my life to you today." Shall we pray?

Hymn # 292 "Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne"