

Called to Worship

Matt 2:1-2, 7-15

SS Lesson for 12/20/2020

Devotional Scripture: Rev 5:6-10

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Matthew and Luke provide unique details on the story of Jesus' birth. Both contain genealogies that trace Jesus' human heritage. Both mention that angels announced Mary would conceive. Luke describes the message delivered to Mary before her pregnancy (Luke 1:26-38), while Matthew describes how Joseph learned of its origins after she was found to be with child (Matthew 1:18-25). Luke then offers a detailed description of the events leading up to the night of Jesus' birth, including Joseph and Mary's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the Roman tax census, the fact that the newborn child was laid in a manger, and the visit of the shepherds (Luke 2:1-20). Matthew skips the actual birth story to describe the strange appearance of wealthy and mysterious Gentiles to honor the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1-18). The two accounts broaden our awareness of the events surrounding Jesus' birth and also offer complementary perspectives on the implications of Christ's coming. Luke's focus on the manger and the shepherds anticipates Jesus' later emphasis on the poor and outcast (example: Luke 6:20-21). Matthew's story of the Magi shows how Christ's life and death would reach far beyond the borders of Israel to bring salvation to people of many races and nationalities (example: Matthew 28:18-20). Taken together, the two Gospels underscore a key feature of Christ's ministry: reaching across barriers to bring salvation to all (John 3:16-18).

Key Verse: Matt 2:11

And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

2:1-2. Though not all scholars agree on the timing of the arrival of the **Magi from the East**, they apparently came some time **after** the birth of **Jesus**. Jesus and Mary and Joseph, though still in Bethlehem, were now in a house (v. 11), and Jesus was called a Child (*paidion*, vv. 9, 11) rather than a newborn Infant (*brephos*, Luke 2:12). The exact identity of the Magi is impossible to determine, though several ideas have been suggested. They have been given traditional names and identified as representatives of the three groups of peoples that descended from Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. More likely they were Gentiles of high position from a country, perhaps Parthia, northeast of Babylon, who were given a special revelation by God of the birth of the **King of the Jews**. This special revelation may simply have been in the sky, as might be indicated by their title "Magi" (specialists in astronomy) and by the fact they referred to a **star** which they **saw**. Or this revelation could have come through some contact with Jewish scholars who had migrated to the East with copies of Old Testament manuscripts. Many feel the Magi's comments reflected a knowledge of Balaam's prophecy concerning the "star" that would "come out of Jacob" (Num. 24:17). Whatever the source, they came to Jerusalem **to worship** the newborn King of the Jews. (According to tradition three Magi traveled to Bethlehem. But the Bible does not say how many there were.)

2:3-8. It is no surprise that **King Herod... was disturbed** when the Magi came to **Jerusalem** looking for the One who had been "born King" (v. 2). Herod was not the rightful king from the line of David. In fact he was not even a descendant of Jacob, but was descended from Esau and thus was an Edomite. (He reigned over Palestine from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C. See Luke 1:5.) This fact caused most of the Jews to hate him and never truly to accept him as king, even though he did much for the country. If someone had been rightfully born king, then Herod's job was in jeopardy. He therefore **called** the Jewish scholars **together** and inquired **where the Christ was to be born** (Matt. 2:4). Interestingly Herod connected the One "born king of the Jews" (v. 2) with "the Christ," the Messiah. Obviously Israel had a messianic hope and believed that the Messiah would be born. The answer to Herod's question was simple, because Micah **the prophet** had given the precise location centuries before: the Messiah would be born in **Bethlehem** (Micah 5:2). This answer from **the people's chief priests and teachers of the Law** (scribes, KJV) was apparently carried back to **the Magi** by **Herod** himself. Then Herod asked them when they had first seen their **star** (Matt. 2:7). This became critical later in the account (v. 16); it showed that Herod was already contemplating a plan to get rid of this young King. He also instructed the Magi to return and tell him the location of this King so that he might come **and worship Him**. That was not, however, what he had in mind.

2:9-12. The journey of the Magi from Jerusalem wrought a further miracle. **The star they had seen in the East** now reappeared and led them to a specific **house** in Bethlehem where they found **the Child Jesus**. Bethlehem is about five miles south of Jerusalem. "Stars" (i.e., planets) naturally travel from east to west

across the heavens, not from north to south. Could it be that “the star” which the Magi saw and which led them to a specific house was the Shekinah glory of God? That same glory had led the children of Israel through the wilderness for 40 years as a pillar of fire and cloud. Perhaps this was what they saw in the East, and for want of a better term they called it a “star.” All other efforts to explain this star are inadequate (such as a conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars; a supernova; a comet; etc.). Nevertheless they were led to the Child and going in, they **worshiped Him**. Their worship was heightened by the giving of **gifts... gold... incense and... myrrh**. These were gifts worthy of a king and this act by Gentile leaders pictures the wealth of the nations which will someday be completely given to the Messiah (Isa. 60:5,11; 61:6; 66:20; Zeph. 3:10; Hag. 2:7-8). Some believe the gifts had further significance by reflecting on the character of this Child’s life. Gold might represent His deity or purity, incense the fragrance of His life, and myrrh His sacrifice and death (myrrh was used for embalming). These gifts were obviously the means by which Joseph took his family to Egypt and sustained them there until Herod died. The wise men were **warned** by God **not to return and report to Herod**, so **they returned to their homes by another route**.

2:13-15. After the visit of the Magi, **Joseph** was warned by **an angel of the Lord** to take Mary and Jesus and flee **to Egypt**. This warning was given **in a dream** (the second of Joseph’s four dreams: 1:20; 2:13, 19, 22). The reason was **Herod** would be searching **for the Child to kill Him**. Under cover of darkness, Joseph obeyed, and his family **left** Bethlehem and journeyed into **Egypt**. Why Egypt? The Messiah was sent to and returned from Egypt so that the prophet’s words, **Out of Egypt I called My Son**, might be **fulfilled**. This is a reference to Hosea 11:1, which does not seem to be a prophecy in the sense of a prediction. Hosea was writing of God’s calling Israel out of Egypt into the Exodus. Matthew, however, gave new understanding to these words. Matthew viewed this experience as Messiah being identified with the nation. There were similarities between the nation and the Son. Israel was God’s chosen “son” by adoption (Ex. 4:22), and Jesus is the Messiah, God’s Son. In both cases the descent into Egypt was to escape danger, and the return was important to the nation’s providential history. While Hosea’s statement was a historical reference to Israel’s deliverance, Matthew related it more fully to the call of the Son, the Messiah, from Egypt. In that sense, as Matthew “heightened” Hosea’s words to a more significant event—the Messiah’s return from Egypt—they were “fulfilled.”

2:16-18. As soon as **Herod** learned that **the Magi** had not complied with his orders to give him the exact location of the newborn King, he put into action a plan **to kill all the male children in Bethlehem**. The age of **two... and under** was selected in compliance **with the time... the Magi** saw “the star” in the East. Perhaps this time reference also indicated that when the Magi visited Jesus, He was under two years of age. This slaughter of the male children is mentioned only here in the biblical record. Even the Jewish historian Josephus (A.D. 37-?100) did not mention this dastardly deed of putting to death innocent babies and young children. But it is not surprising that he and other secular historians overlooked the death of a few Hebrew children in an insignificant village, for Herod’s infamous crimes were many. He put to death several of his own children and some of his wives whom he thought were plotting against him. Emperor Augustus reportedly said it was better to be Herod’s sow than his son, for his sow had a better chance of surviving in a Jewish community. In the Greek language, as in English, there is only one letter difference between the words “sow” (*huos*) and “son” (*huios*). This event too was said to be the fulfillment of a prophecy by **Jeremiah**. This statement (Jer. 31:15) referred initially to the **weeping** of the nation as a result of the death of **children** at the time of the Babylonian Captivity (586 B.C.). But the parallel to the situation at this time was obvious, for again children were being slaughtered at the hands of non-Jews. Also, Rachel’s tomb was near Bethlehem and **Rachel** was considered by many to be the mother of the nation. That is why she was seen weeping over these children’s deaths.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Worship Through Seeking (Matt 2:1-2, 7-10)

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,

2 saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

7 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

9 When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen 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 exceedingly great joy.

Worship in spite of treacherous seeking (7-8)

Treacherous seeking with the motive of testing (Matt 19:3)

3 Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

Treacherous seeking through miraculous signs (Mark 8:11-13)

11 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. 12 He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it."

Treacherous seeking with the motive of justifying self (Luke 10:25-29)

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 27 He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" 28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Treacherous seeking with the motive of gain (Acts 8:18-23)

18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money 19 and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! 21 You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. 23 For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."

Treacherous seeking through lies (Ps 55:11)

11 Destructive forces are at work in the city; threats and lies never leave its streets.

Treacherous seeking disguising the truth (Prov 26:24)

24 A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbors deceit.

Treacherous seeking from flattering lips (Ps 12:1-2)

1 Help, Lord, for the godly are no more; the faithful have vanished from among men. 2 Everyone lies to his neighbor; their flattering lips speak with deception.

Worship through true-hearted seeking (1-2, 9-10)

True-hearted seeking by worshiping in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24)

23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

True-hearted seeking by God looking at the sincere heart (1 Sam 16:7)

7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

True-hearted seeking with a broken and contrite heart (Ps 51:17)

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

True-hearted seeking by offering our bodies as living sacrifices and being transformed (Rom 12:1-2)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

True-hearted seeking through the fear of God (Ps 25:12)

12 Who, then, is the man that fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him.

True-hearted seeking through paying attention to the prophets (2 Peter 1:19)

19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

True-hearted seeking of the Lord (Ps 105:3)

3 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

True-hearted seeking filled with hope (Rom 15:12-14)

12 And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him." 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Worship Through Joyful Obedience (Matt 2:11-15)

11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt,

15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

Worshipful Joy (11-12)

Joy because God has come in the flesh (Isa 40:9)

9 You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"

Joy because God has come to reign (Isa 52:7)

7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Joy because of being in the presence of God (Ps 21:6)

6 Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence.

Joy through worship (Luke 24:52)

52 Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

Joy of the righteous (Ps 68:3)

3 But may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful.

Joy in worship (Ps 100:2)

2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Joy in hope (Rom 12:10-12)

10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Worshipful Obedience (13-15)

Obedience without regard to seeing how it will turn out (Rom 8:23-25)

23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Obedience should be by faith not by sight (2 Cor 5:7)

7 We live by faith, not by sight.

Obedience should be done looking toward the unseen, not the seen (2 Cor 4:18)

18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Obedience without seeing would be blessed (John 20:29)

29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Obedience that is better than sacrifices (1 Sam 15:22)

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

Obedience through putting God's words into practice (Matt 7:24-25)

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

Obedience through focusing on the eternal (2 Cor 4:16-18)

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Obedience through living holy (1 Peter 1:14-16)

14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Observations

(1) *Matthew carefully avoids any sensationalism.* Matthew would not do well as a journalist in today's marketplace. He just doesn't seem able to sensationalize his material. Not only does he fail to embellish his account by stretching the truth, he even refuses to dramatize his account by including all that is true. For example, other accounts of our Lord's journey to Egypt contain many miraculous embellishments:

Tradition, and the apocryphal gospels written many years later, tell many absurd and fanciful things about the flight of the family and their entrance into Egypt. The flowers were said to spring up in their steps as they entered the land; the palm trees to bow down in homage, and wild animals to come near in friendly approach.²²

(2) *Matthew omits much historical information that we would love to have known.* Contrary to popular opinion, we don't know how many Magi came to worship the Lord Jesus. We would certainly like to have been given more information about the Magi. Precisely where did they come from? What did they believe? What was the "star" that appeared, and just how did it guide them? How long was the journey, and what became of them later on? We would like to know how many babies Herod slaughtered, and we would very much enjoy reading a more graphic account of his death. How interesting it would be to read more of the time Jesus and His parents spent in Egypt! Matthew, like the other Gospel writers,²³ was very selective in what he chose to include in his Gospel.

(3) *Matthew's choice of which Scriptures he chooses to cite or refer to is interesting, to say the least.* We all know that Matthew cites the Old Testament more than any other Gospel writer. We should realize, however, that Matthew did not exhaust his Old Testament sources. Matthew did not quote every available Old Testament passage. Some of the passages Matthew cites are perplexing, to say the least. He cites Old Testament Scripture four times in chapter 2, and only one of these is what we might call a "direct" quotation. This would be his reference to Micah 5:2 in verse 6. The question Herod asked the chief priests and experts in the law was, "Where will the Christ be born?" Their answer came directly from Micah 5:2 – the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

But the three other "quotations" in chapter 2 are far less direct. No one would have considered these texts to be prophecy. Neither Hosea 11:1 (cited in verse 15) nor Jeremiah 31:15 (cited in verse 18) would have been understood as a prophecy that would be fulfilled in relation to the coming Messiah. Matthew's reference to "what was spoken by the prophets" being fulfilled is even more obscure. Matthew's use of these "obscure" prophecies is even more puzzling in the light of the fact that there were other texts which Matthew could have cited that would be much more readily understood as fulfilled prophecies. Note these passages, for example:

Conclusion

First, Jesus is the great divider of men. The contrast is clearly evident in Matthew 2. On the one side, there are the magi, who came from afar (and at great sacrifice) to find and to worship the King of the Jews. On the other side are Herod, the religious clergy, and the people of Jerusalem. Herod, at the extreme, seeks to kill the baby Jesus. The others merely appear to ignore Him. Whenever men come face to face with Jesus, they must decide whether they will fall down before Him as God's promised Savior, or whether they will reject Him. As you have considered this chapter, my friend, you have been confronted by a choice: Will you receive Jesus as the promised Savior, or will you reject Him? There is no middle ground. There never has been. Whose side will you take, Herod's or the magi's?

Second, this chapter reminds us that possessing scriptural knowledge about Jesus is not enough. One must act upon the knowledge they have in order to be saved. The Gentile magi did not have as much knowledge about Jesus as the religious clergy in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, they acted on the knowledge they had. They found the Christ Child and worshipped Him. They found salvation; by and large, the people of Jerusalem did not.

Is this not the "bottom line" that Jesus put before His audience at the Sermon on the Mount?

24 "Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house, but it did not collapse because it had been

founded on rock. 26 Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house, and it collapsed; it was utterly destroyed!” (Matthew 7:24-27)

Having heard these words about Jesus, have you acted on them? Knowledge is not enough.

Third, these early chapters in Matthew serve to prepare us for all that will follow in the later chapters of this book. We have learned that Jesus is both the “**Son of God**” and the “**Son of Man**.” Jesus is both man and God. Everything Jesus says and does later in this Gospel leads us to the same conclusion. In His birth, Jesus was rejected by some and believed in by others. Nothing will change as time passes. Jesus was rejected by His own people (John 1:11-12), and yet He was believed in by heathen Gentiles. Jesus is the true Israel, the fulfillment of all of God’s promises and of Israel’s hopes. Matthew’s introduction to this great Gospel prepares us for what lies ahead in it.

Fourth, Matthew should revolutionize our reading of the Old Testament. Matthew sees Jesus in the Old Testament where we would never have expected to see Him. This is because Jesus is, in many ways, the new Israel. He sums up God’s promises and Israel’s hopes. He can see Jesus in the exodus from Egypt (Hosea 11:1). He sees Jesus where we do not. Perhaps this tells us that we should look more carefully for Jesus in the Old Testament, and expect to see Him more often. We should not be surprised when we read this from the pen of the Apostle Paul:

3 And all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they were all drinking from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:3-4).

Let us look for Jesus when we read the Old Testament. He is there much more often than we might think.

Fifth, Matthew is “missions minded,” not just at the end of his Gospel (28:18-20), but from the very outset of this Gospel. Why does a Jewish author, writing primarily to a Jewish audience, write of Gentiles as he does in chapter 1 and 2? It is because an essential part of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news that God has provided salvation and blessing for people of every nation, and not just for Israel. The Abrahamic Covenant was the promise of blessing for both Israel and the nations. This is why Jesus quickly made the Gentile factor clear in Luke 4:16-30, and why Matthew included Gentiles in his genealogy and now again in chapter 2. We, as Gentiles, should see that we have a choice to make concerning our sin and Christ’s offer of forgiveness through His blood. Also, the Jews must own up to their rebellion and rejection of Jesus. Matthew is a Gospel; it is the proclamation of the good news that God has offered the gift of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins to all men.

This is a Gospel which ends with the command that we take the good news to every nation. This we should do. But let us also learn from our text that even when men fail to carry out their God-given responsibility to be a “**light to the nations**,” God is able to bring those He has chosen to Himself. Even when the people of Israel failed to be a “**light to the Gentiles**” God was able to reach out to the magi and to draw them to the worship of His Son. This is not an excuse for us to disobey our command to evangelize; it is an encouragement that God will never allow any of His chosen to slip away, whether due to our sin, or to our human inability to reach certain people who are far away.

As we think of the divine “calling” of the magi, one cannot help but be reminded of Paul’s words to the Ephesians which speak of God’s love and grace in calling Gentiles to Himself:

11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh—who are called “uncircumcision” by the so-called “circumcision” that is performed in the body by hands— 12 that you were at that time without the Messiah, alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who used to be far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:11-13).

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/2-two-incredible-journeys-matthew-21-23>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Matthew's account foreshadows a deep tragedy of Christ's ministry: those who should have been most prepared to accept him did not (John 1:11). Instead, pagan astrologers welcomed him with worship and expensive gifts! This story is filled with the unexpected. No one expected pagan Magi to appear at Herod's palace with congratulations on the birth of a royal child, especially since no such child had been born in Jerusalem! The Magi certainly did not expect to find the king of the Jews in a peasant's house outside the capital. Jews did not expect the Christ to be born into danger so that his parents would need to flee to Egypt to protect him. Most significantly, one would assume that the chief priests and appointed king of Judea would welcome the newborn Messiah. Matthew's account thus demonstrates the need to remain open to the unexpected. It encourages us to watch for God in action, even when (or especially when) he acts through people we might not anticipate. We still need eyes to see and ears to hear (Matthew 13:16-17).

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

The Father desires and delights in praises of His people. Like during the time of Christ birth, many fail to enter into and enjoy this special privilege.

The Wise Men - King Herod reigned over Judea during the birth of the Christ child. A group of men from the East, called Magi or wise men, traveled to Herod's palace. These educated scholars who studied history and astronomy observed a star, a supernatural occurrence, which possibly indicated a royal birth. So, the men followed the star to the king's palace, probably thinking they'd find a newly-born monarch there.

The Jewish Leaders - Herod demanded answers from the Jewish priests and scribes about this new ruler. The leaders replied from the prophet Micah, that the ruler over the Jewish people would be born in "Bethlehem of Judea" (Mic. 5:2). When the wise men inquired about the baby Herod pretended to want to find Him and worship Him. But his real intent was to kill the child and eliminate his competition. The Jewish religious leaders who investigated the matter for King Herod should have been curious about this fulfillment of the Scripture and traveled with the Magi to investigate and find this King. But nothing in Scripture indicates they did that. On the other hand, these Gentile Magi continued to follow the star. Upon finding Jesus and His mother, these highly dignified men prostrated themselves and worshiped Jesus.

The Unbeliever - After some time had passed from the birth, the Lord spoke to Joseph, warning him in a dream to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt. He let them know of the murderous intent of Herod. Joseph took the family to Egypt until they got word of Herod's death.

For Believers - God desires the worship of all humanity. He created everyone and everything. Sadly like Herod refusing to regard anyone or anything higher than himself, we still show an "all about me" attitude. That's the mantra of our day. The king thought only about his wants, his control. The religious leaders had the information about the Messiah but missed their opportunity to worship and welcome the Savior into the world. However, there are still true worshipers who answer God's call to His throne. These believers realize, like the Magi, we are standing in God's holy presence, right here and right now. And when the divine is present (which is now always and everywhere by His Spirit) there is only one mindset, attitude, and posture— bow down and worship