

THE WISE WORSHIPPED*

The Magi followed the signs of the Scriptures and star to Jesus, so they could worship Him.

SCRIPTURE†

Matthew 2

MUSIC‡

Angels from the Realms of Glory
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
Jesus Shall Reign
Joy Has Dawned
Joy to the World
O Holy Night
The First Noel
We Three Kings



* Theme is **sixth** in the **Advent** Christmas worship series.

† Daily preparatory readings shown in **bold**.

‡ Published choral and vocal music shown in **bold**.

PRESENTING & PROMOTING THIS THEME

THE SYMBOL OF THE MAGI

Matthew 2:1-12 | *Ultimately, Jesus' coming was good news not just to the nation of Israel but to the whole world. The wise men who came to visit Jesus were Gentiles, and their worship of the Christ Child helps point to the fulfillment of Isaiah 60. This passage foretells a day when all nations will come to the Light and pay their due to Him. While this will ultimately be fulfilled in the Millennium, the wise men serve as a symbol of a time when all people and nations will recognize Jesus as the true King of kings.*

Isaiah 60 begins with a hopeful prediction to God's people Israel: "Arise, shine! For Thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee! 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. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

Messiah's coming would be a rising light, not just for the Jews, but for the Gentiles. We believe this passage will ultimately be fulfilled in the future reign of Jesus Christ, when the rulers of the world bring their wealth into the New Jerusalem (recorded in Revelation 21:6).

Today in worship we look at the wise men who visit the Child Jesus. Their visit is not recorded just to tell a good story, but to tell us something about Him and His coming. What does their visit tell us about Jesus?

But it is hard to miss the foretaste of these things in Matthew 2 with the coming of the wise men. The coming of the Promised King is signaled by a rising light—the famous star of the Christmas story. The Gentile wise men see this rising light and follow it to visit the Light of the world, Jesus Himself. And they bring of their wealth, gifts to honor Him. And whether they realized it or not, these gifts point to His coming death and His future reign.

This significant visit recorded in Matthew's gospel reminds us that Jesus' coming is for all people. It's for you. It's for me. And though our world for the most part does not own Jesus as its King, we the people of God worship Jesus as our King today. Our worship is to submit to Him, and to look in hope for the day when He will take His throne on earth and receive the glory due His name. He is Jesus, to whom all nations will come. (Caleb French)

THE FIRST NOEL

Use the familiar Christmas carol to highlight the diligent pursuit of the Wise Men.

As God used a “multitude of the heavenly host” to announce the coming of Jesus to the shepherds of Bethlehem, He also announced the birth of Jesus to people in a land far to the east of Judea. Only this announcement was silent—it was only given to those who were watching the skies and studying the Scriptures.

It’s no small wonder that these scholars of the east—the Magi, they are often called—recognized the sign in the heavens and knew it signaled the birth of the Jewish Messiah. But the Gospel of Matthew emphasizes the sad irony of their arrival in Jerusalem. Surely the regional king of Jerusalem—Herod in his luxurious palace—would know of the birth of this royal baby. Surely the great and wise scholars of the Jews have seen the heavenly sign and prepared for the birth of Messiah according to the Old Testament prophecies!

But no. These foreigners were more ready for the birth of the promised King of the Jews than were the Jews themselves. And they were more attuned to the unique nature of His life and death than the religious leaders in Jerusalem. The three gifts of the Magi point to their understanding that this baby was Deity, that His life would end in untimely death, and that He was yet the final King of an everlasting dynasty.

Doesn’t the irony of Matthew’s account ring true today? Wouldn’t it seem that the wise of this world, the mighty rulers, would recognize the sensible evidence and clear Scriptural testimony to the King of Kings? But no. So few recognize the one true God. So few accept the claims and free gift of His Son. The world continues on and seems to take no notice of Him.

But we have seen the sign. We have read and believed the revealed Word of God, and we come to worship—walking past rich kings, and modern intellectuals, and a scoffing world, we come to worship Him who was born to save us and be our King.

The wise sought Him; and when they found Him, they worshiped. We have found Him. And we worship, too.

WORTHY OF WORSHIP

Matthew 2:1-12 | *The wise men traveled a very long distance, all for the purpose of worship. Just like the shepherds, they responded in faith. They were not going for what they could get: not for advice, or blessing, or to receive anything, but what they could give. They gave their gifts and then left. Apart from anything we get from Jesus, He is inherently worthy of worship.*

The wise men travelled a very long distance, all for the purpose of worship. This was quite an undertaking. And their purpose was worship. They were not doing it for what they could get, but what they could give – worship.

As I was meditating on the worship theme today, it reminded me of how we as Christians approach God. So often we approach God in prayer and we are simply asking for something. And God calls us to do that. Nothing is wrong with that. Jesus told us, ask and you shall receive. Ask, seek, knock. However, there should be times, often, when we come to God and simply come to him in worship.

When you come to church, are you coming only for what you can get: fellowship with other believers, food from the Word of God? Nothing is wrong with that. It is one of the blessings of church. However, we must also come ready to give, ready to give worship.

So today, this week, will you be approaching God only for what you can get? Or will you, like the wise men, also approach Him for what you can give?

Come to Him and worship. **(Pastor Mark French)**

The wise men followed the signs of Scripture and star, not to satisfy their curiosity or fulfill their scholastic studies, but to worship this newborn King with specific, extravagant gifts.

Join us to worship our King this Sunday! (Read their story in Matthew 2 in preparation for worship.)



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