

SEARCH FOR THE KING

Matthew 2:1-12

Intro:

(Slide 1)

When you look at nativity scenes, who all is there? Who else? Who else?

(click)

Someone is missing, but before we figure out who, I need to talk about some people who had their act together.

(Click)

Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

2 *After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem **2** and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."*

3 *When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.*

(Click) **4** *When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. **5** "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:*

6 *"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler*

who will shepherd my people Israel." **(Click)**

7 *Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8** He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."*

9 *After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.*

(Click) **10** *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. **11** On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. **12** And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.*

The Nativity

We are familiar with the characters at the Nativity. Who they were, what they did, how they got there.

Of course, Mary and Joseph and how Gabriel the archangel delivered the messages to them to prepare them for the birth of the baby Jesus. **(Click)** **(Click)** **(Click)**

The Shepherds, who were in the fields tending the sheep of Bethlehem (most likely the lambs used for temple sacrifice). (Luke 2:8) These shepherds became

the first messengers of the Good News of Jesus. (Luke 2:17-20) **(Click)**

The Angel of the Lord who delivered the message of 'good tidings of great joy'. The multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:9-14) **(Click)**

Even Caesar Augustus, whom God put it in his heart to order a census was part of the act. If not, Joseph and Mary wouldn't have been heading out 80 miles by donkey to Bethlehem the city of their family origins to be counted. **(Click)**

It's the kings that I want to camp out on for a bit. **(Click)**

The Kings

Who weren't they? (Click)

- They weren't kings. They had no kingdoms. **(Click)**
- They weren't magicians. They didn't practice black magic or cast spells. **(Click)**
- They weren't three lonely guys on camels wandering through the desert. **(Click)**

Who were they?

-They were scholars who studied the prophecies of religions and the history and cultures of other kingdoms**(Click)**

-They were scientists, with an emphasis on astrology-the study of the movement of stars and planets**(Click)**

-Because of these things, they were called wise men. **(Click)**

- The kinds of things they studied were like this picture. **(Click)**

The 'wandering' star – Jupiter, the king of the Roman gods was in conjunction with the wandering star – Venus, the goddess of love. This coming together of these two celestial bodies was in the constellation Leo – the Lion – the king of the zodiac. These types of signs would lead the wise men, the magi, to believe gods would give birth to a king that would be above all kings. **(Click)**

To make things more interesting, as a side note, these magi were likely from the school of teaching that was influenced by Daniel, who King Nebuchadnezzar made chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and fortunetellers of Babylon 600 years earlier. Its likely that because of Daniel's teaching of Hebrew prophesy the magi knew to search in Jerusalem. **(Click)**

Daniel 2:48 - Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

Since they were welcoming a new King, of course they needed to bring gifts. We are told that they brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. Its because of these **three** gifts we think there were three magi, but we don't really know. Considering that there was a school of magi and that rulers of the world would want their own advisors, it isn't unlikely that there were many

kingdoms that would send their representatives to honor the king of kings.

(Click)The magi travelled more than 1000 miles from the orient (middle-east and Asia) through the heart of the Roman empire, with all its military and technological wonders, through the heart of Greek culture with all its art and architecture to the walls of Jerusalem. There in Jerusalem they came to the Palace of mighty Herod. With walls 45 feet tall and ornamental towers standing out above the wall, the palace was both forbidding and awe inspiring.

Herod's response (Click)

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

(Click)Why do you think Herod and all of Jerusalem was disturbed? What would you think if you woke up and heard that there were some fancy foreign guys with a huge entourage of attendants with their armies protecting them as they traveled with their riches.

Even more so, Verse 2 tells us that the magi asked "*Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?*" This is a cool question because

first of all, the verb "asked" is in a tense that means they were "asking around repeatedly".

Secondly, its telling when they asked about the one who was BORN king of the Jesus. Herod was not of King David's line and was only king because he overthrew the previous king and was allowed to remain king by the Romans. So he shouldn't have been king anyway.

Herod immediately sees the threat to his own reign so he gives the magi some instructions. We see them in verse 8: **(Click)**

⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

I can almost hear him saying it.

The Magi's Response

Their Search

They left the palace and according to verse 9, the star they had been following went ahead of them until it stopped (literally stopped and stood) in Bethlehem over the place where the child was. **(Click)**

Remember when I said about the 'wandering' stars Jupiter and Venus? The reason they were called wandering stars is because they move from east to west like all the other stars, but from time to time they appear to reverse direction from west to east and they even appear to stop for a few days before resuming their course. Because these stars were so different from the others in their constellations, they were called 'wanderers'. Our word today for them is planets.

Verse 11 tells us that the magi followed the star to the HOUSE where the CHILD was with his MOTHER Mary.

- House, not barn, cave or manger**(Click)**
- Child, not infant, or baby. This is why we later see that King Herod ordered the death of all boys under the age of two. **(Click)**

- Mother? Where was Joseph? Work, deceased? We really don't know, but some scholars presume that he died before Jesus was one-year-old. **(Click)**

Man! I'm just killing the nativity scene aren't I?

Their offering**(Click)**

Remember I mentioned the gifts that were presented to Jesus. Gold, frankincense and Myrrh.

(Click)Gold was a gift of kings. It also was a practical gift to help finance the future travelling ministry of Jesus

(Click)Frankincense was a gift for a god. It was the spice that was burned on altars by worshipers to honor their gods.

(Click)Myrrh was a really odd one. It is another type of spice, an aromatic resin used to prepare bodies for burial. This shows that God prepared the magi with the truth that this savior-king had been born to die.

Their Return**(Click)**

They came. They searched. They found. They worshipped. They presented their offerings.

¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

The Holy Spirit warned them in a dream to return home by a different route. **(Click)**

I love this word 'warned'. The Greek language is really cool and gives us some great insights that English

misses. This Greek verb is not simply "don't go that way". It has more of the meaning of 'to transact business' – they deliberated with God in their dreams!

I'm sure they probably wanted to go back to Herod and say, "We found the real King!". But God protects those whom He loves. And He protected them by leading them to return home by a different route and not report to Herod.

(Click)There are two important questions that I have for you at the beginning of this Christmas time.

1) The first is this –These men traveled 1,000 miles on foot and by camel through dangerous and unknown lands, risking robbery, life and limb for one night with the Savior. How far are you willing to travel with Him – you who have Him with you every day of your life? How committed are you to what you believe? Was it a struggle just to get out of bed this morning? Is it a struggle to read a little bit out of the instruction manual he left us? Is it a struggle to just talk to him and thank Him daily for His provision for you? Your job? Your Family? Your health? Your time? Your talents? Your treasure? **(Click)**

2) The second is – in all the hubbub – what are you willing to bring to Jesus as a gift this Christmas? An idol is anything would get in the way of worshiping God. What idols are still lingering in your life – what obstacles still control you truly honoring Him and serving Him?

To answer my question from the Beginning-Who is missing at the nativity scene. The answer may be YOU **(Click)**

I want you to do something for me – look in the chair pocket that is in front of you and take the index card. Write on it what you need to give Him this Christmas. It doesn't need to be gold, frankincense or myrrh. It doesn't need to even be your time, talents or treasure. It might be as little as giving Him more credit for things in your everyday life. It might be as much as giving him control of your entire life. –you don't need to sign your name to it– bring them to the front while the band plays and put them under the little Christmas tree. Feel free to stay and pray down here if you want. It could be that you don't even know this King. You may still be thinking of the little baby in the manger. If that's the only Jesus you know, your search for the King can begin and end right here and right now.