

Matthew 2:1–8

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

2 “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”

3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

5 They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

6 ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah, for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.

7 Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.”

"Where is He that is Born King of the Jews?"

Matthew 2:1-8

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, several groups sought Him. However, they were not the ones we might have anticipated. The religious leaders of the day, the Sanhedrin, the scribes, and the Pharisees did not try to find Him. They knew He was coming. They even knew where to look for Him, yet they did not seek Him out. Did Herod, the Great, he who bore the title, "the King of the Jews?" No, he did not. How about the average Jewish person of the day? Nope. No one sought the Savior who was born this day, except a group of shepherds who had seen the "divine press release" presented by the angelic chorus, and some Magi from the East who had seen the Lord's birth star!

It is this second group of seekers we will consider this morning as we look into the account of their search in Matthew 2.1-8. Our study will fall into two parts.

I. The Wise Men Who Sought Him (v.1-2)

II. Those Who Did Not (v. 3-6)

I. The Wise Men Who Sought Him (v.1-2)

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.’” (Matthew 2:1-2)

A. Like Luke, Matthew also contains an account of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Matthew in his account totally ignores the shepherds, and focuses instead on the visit by the magi from the East.

1. Like Luke, Matthew exhorts us to look and see these wise men coming from the East to Jerusalem looking for Jesus.

2. There has been much speculation about who these wise men were. The Greek word used to describe them is magoi, which means "wizard, magician, astrologer, or astronomer."

B. We are told they came from "the East." The fact is, we do not know where the East is. Some speculate these men came from Persia or even Babylon.

1. We read of some like this in ***Daniel 2.2 and 10. "Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king." "The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore, no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean."***

2. Kittle agrees with this assessment. "There is no means of determining whether the magi of Mt. 2:1 (7, 16) are specifically Babylonian astrologers or astrologers in general. The former is more likely, since it is only in Babylon, by contact with the exiles, that the magoi would acquire an interest in the Jewish king (Messiah)."

3. There is another mystery about these men. Where did they get information that suggested that Israel might be looking for a special King to be born? If they were from the land of Babylon, the remaining Jewish population no doubt taught much about the Messianic hope of Israel. So, when they saw the special star, they immediately concluded that this was the Star of the Messiah who was to come.

4. It had to be an especially rude awakening when the Magi arrived in Jerusalem and went to the king's residence and asked, "Where is he that is born the King of the Jews?" This was King Herod's favorite title. Herod the Great took the title for himself when the Romans granted him a kingdom over what had been the nation of Israel. He loved that title, even though he was not Jewish himself. He was an Edomite.

C. One thing we can say about these Magi is they traveled a long way to seek this child and to worship Him. There are some who believe these men actually savingly believed in the Christ child. I don't think we can fully say. But one thing is certain they did seek Him.

II. Those Who Did Not (v. 3-6)

“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah, for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’” (Matthew 2:3-6)

A. While there were those who sought out the Lord Jesus when they heard the news of His birth, some did not want anything to do with Him. Matthew told us about some of them. First, there was King Herod, himself.

1. We read in verse 3 of his initial response to the news. ***“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”*** Do you know why King Herod was troubled? It is because he was a jealous man.
2. He put to death the grandfather of his favorite wife, Mariamne, then her two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus. Then he killed Mariamne herself. Then a few days before his death he killed his son Antipater. Finally, he ordered all the nobles to be assembled around him in his last moments to have them killed after his death so that his death might be attended with universal grief. He would be troubled by anyone who would claim his title, even a little baby boy.
3. Herod was so full of himself that he had no place for the true King of the Universe. Herod did not seek Him except to destroy Him out of jealousy (verse 16). While we might not ever be as evil as Herod, the truth is, at times we have no place for the King of Glory in our lives because we want to be king! Let us be among those who give Jesus His rightful place in our lives.

B. The second group who did not seek Him were the people of Jerusalem. Again, we read in ***verse 3: “When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”***

1. Obviously, Matthew did not mean every last person in Jerusalem was troubled by the news the Magi brought. But it does indicate when the news got around town there was quite a stir. Some suggest that this is because Herod was in a snit and when the King was unhappy there was no telling what he would do.
2. While this makes a lot of sense, I think there is more to this than the fear of a mad king. I remember when I was young and we would have "evangelists" come in and preach a week of special meetings. Invariably, they would latch on to 1 Thessalonians 4.13-17 and use it as a club. "The Lord is coming soon! It could be today! Will you be ready?" And we would be terrified. These evangelists forgot that ***verse 18*** says, ***“Therefore comfort one another with these words.”***
3. Do you know why we were all terrified? We were terrified because we were not those who "loved His appearing." There was something we loved more than the Lord Jesus

Christ. If the prophet Isaiah were to appear to us today and say, tomorrow morning at 10 AM the Lord Jesus is coming again, would we greet this news with joy, or would we be like Herod and all Jerusalem, troubled?

C. The third group who did not seek the Lord is found in *verses 4-6*. ***"And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 So they said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 6 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'"*** This is the group that is the most culpable. They are the ones who knew He was coming and even where He would be born, yet they did not seek Him.

1. It is utterly amazing these men did not seek Him. Messianic fervor was rampant in that day. This is why one of the first questions asked of John the Baptist was whether he was the Messiah to come. We read in *John 1:19,20* ***"Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ.'"***

2. Add to this that these strangers from the east show up to ask "Where is He who is born the King of the Jews?" Even though they knew where He was to be found, they still did not move from their studies to go seek Him. Astounding! Why was this so? It was because they had no room for the living God in their religious life. They had their system of doctrine, they did not want the present religious system disrupted by the advent of the Son of God!

3. How about us? We know something about how our Lord came, but do we know Him? Have we sought Him out? Is He our Lord and Savior? May we not be guilty of the sin of the scribes and religious leaders. We know where to send people to find Him, but we have not sought Him ourselves!

So, beloved, if someone were to walk up to you today and ask, "Where is He who is born the King of the Jews?" I hope you will say, "He is in my heart and life and He can be in yours. Let me show you how!"

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