
WHAT CHILD IS THIS: SON OF DAVID

Matthew 2:1-12

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, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

“And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

We have been exploring this theme in Matthew 1 and Matthew 2, “What Child Is This?” and discovering that Jesus is the Son of Abraham. He is the fulfillment of the blessing promised to Father Abraham, and we receive those blessings in Christ by faith. Today we see that he is the Son of David. All of the promises given to David are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Matthew is telling us that there is something bigger that’s being fulfilled here that’s taking place.

My dad turns 85 in a few days. He recently relocated to a new city. He moved from North Florida to Birmingham, Alabama. I had the privilege just a few weeks ago of going and getting him and driving him to his new home. It was just the two of us, driving in North Florida. We went into South Georgia, to the family farm where he grew up. We stayed

there on the farm. His sister has a place there, so my dad and I stayed with my aunt. Then we drove across Georgia and into Alabama the next day.

As we drove, everywhere we went my Dad had something to say. “Well, we had a cousin who lived back here.” And, “Don’t tell anyone (I’m about to tell you), but I dated a girl over there.” “When I was 14 and driving, the sheriff stopped me here.” “There was a country store here.” “And those people did this.” It was such a rich time. He told me about the night he and mom got married. They left the church, going to a town 30 miles away. They left the little town of Thomasville, which is little now, but it was really little then. About five miles outside of town, pitch black, late at night, almost midnight, the car broke down. They were literally the only ones on this country road. No houses, no people, farms, five miles out of town.

You know, the tests come in marriage. Sometimes they come really early. They decide to walk back to Thomasville. They get out of the car and about that time, someone drive up, stops, and offers to take them wherever they want to go. So they go back to my mom’s house, to my grandparents, at midnight. My dad goes to the door and knocks. This is not what the father of the bride is expecting when he goes home from the wedding, right? He opens the door and my dad claims that he made a joke, that he said, “Listen, it didn’t work out. I brought her back.” I doubt that’s the case.

So, they take the family car on the honeymoon. And the next day my grandfather calls my paternal grandfather, who has a farm and lives close to town, and they go out five miles to get the car. They tow the car back into town, which evidently was a real scene because all over the car it says, “Just Married,” and there are these cans being dragged along. They tell the story about my mom’s dad, my grandfather, sitting in the car, going through town. It’s a little town, everyone knows them, and he’s just waving at everyone. He is so happy, right?

The sensation for me, as my dad is telling me these stories, is that I’m a part of something larger. This is more than just about me or my relationship with my dad or this moment or this huge change for my dad at 85 years of age. I am a part of a family rich in history and tradition with all these memories. They are filling me up with a sense of belonging.

Matthew is doing that for us here as he tells us about the story of Christ, about his birth. He is bringing all of these prophecies from the Old Testament and he is saying that there is something bigger happening. It’s really not so much that he is saying Jesus is a part of something bigger. He is saying Jesus is the bigger something, of which everything else is a part. Jesus is the fulfillment of everything. Jesus is bringing together God’s plan for all of eternity.

In this portion of Matthew’s Christmas story, we read about the wise men, the magi. The theme is royalty. Jesus is the King. The magi, the wise men come looking for the King of the Jews. Herod is alerted to this. He is troubled and troubles everyone else with him.

It’s interesting because we have this picture of the manger scene. There is a manger, and the shepherds are there, and the three kings are there. I don’t want you to go home and throw out your manger scene, but it probably did not happen that way.

First of all, we are not told anywhere in Scripture that there were three wise men, and they are not kings. Tradition started very early – two or three hundred years after the life of Jesus – that they were kings, but we don’t know that they were kings from Scripture. They are called magi and they were astrologers.

What’s fascinating about this is that astrology is generally condemned in Scripture. If we are followers of Christ and we trust in God, we don’t get up in the morning and read our horoscope. Do we? No, we read the Bible, right? We read the Bible! We see certain things. We are not saying that they are void of truth, but there is superstition and a false worship, just to use language right out of Scripture that says no, no, no. That’s not what we do.

Part of why we know that this is authentic is that if you are making this up, you never would do that because it’s frowned on in our faith. There may have been three wise men because there were three gifts. But you know, my wife is going to give me seven or eight gifts, and I only have one wife. (Little plug there.) I don’t know that that will happen. But I guess if you are doing a children’s play and if you have too many actors, just make them wise men, because we don’t know how many there were. There could have been 20, but they do represent something. There is something very rich being taught here. They represent the best wisdom of the day. They come and kneel down and worship our Lord. It’s speaking to the royalty of who Jesus is. I want to unpack this for us in four parts, four truths as we look at the kingship of Jesus and who he is. So let’s just jump in and start with #1.

I. Finally a ruler worth worshipping.

“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” Jesus is King. He is royalty. We lit the candle of royalty today. He was born in the city of Bethlehem, which is the city of David. He is the fulfillment of these amazing promises given to David. It was referenced when we lit the candle, in 2 Samuel 7. It’s in your reading for this week, your devotions that have been prepared for you.

David was a worshipper. Many of our psalms were written by David. He wanted the people of God to gather and to worship the Lord, so he went to the prophet of God and said, “Listen, I want to build a house for God. I understand that God can’t dwell, can’t be contained in a physical place, but we worship him in a tent, in a tabernacle, and I

want to build a house for God. I have a house. I have a palace, but this is not right, that God doesn't have a house. So the prophet said, "Well, that sounds good to me. Yeah, that's great."

Then the prophet goes home and asks God, something he probably should have done to start with. God meets the prophet and tells him, "No, no, no. It's fine. Eventually a temple will be built for me. David's son will do that. It will be a blessing and David will be part of the preparations." This is the message of Scripture. This is so powerful. If you can grab ahold of this, it will help you understand the entire Bible. God says, "I don't want David to build a house for me. I'm going to build a house for him."

You see, we go to the Bible and we think "What do I have to do for God? What do I have to do?" But the message of the Bible is what God has done for you. Jesus is a Savior.

Now, we come to a place of worship. We come to a place of response, but it begins by understanding what God has done for us and responding. God uses this heart of worship that says, "I want to build a house for God" -- this desire to say, "No, no, no. I'm going to extend your house, David, so that one will reign on your throne forever and ever." And Jesus comes as a fulfillment of those promises.

This was huge for Israel. Israel only had three kings as a united nation. In terms of the 12 tribes of Israel, together as one nation, worshipping God, there was only a time period of three kings -- Saul, David, and Solomon. After Solomon, the kingdom divided into two nations, ten tribes in the north, two in the south. That lasted for about 200 years, and then the northern ten tribes were conquered by Assyria. Really, they never again congregated as the ten tribes.

So, when the children of Israel would look at David, they would look to that glorious, golden age where David reigned. Then his son Solomon reigned in all of his wisdom and wealth. When they spoke about a Messiah sitting on the throne of David, and the fulfillment of that, the magnitude is immense. Scripture is telling us: Jesus comes, born in the city of David, born in Bethlehem, as the one to fulfill all his promises.

Now, listen very carefully, because there is something deeper here that is being taught. We saw it in the genealogy. When Stefan was preaching last week and he read the genealogy, he called attention to this fact. It's really staggering. It's kind of troubling, but if you look at chapter 1, in verse 6 as we are going through the roll call of individuals and we read that Jesse was the father of David. We know that from Scripture and from prophecy. "And David was the father of Solomon..." By whom? By the wife of Uriah! That's not good. This is really very troubling. It's highlighted before we come to this section where Jesus is sitting on the throne of David, reigning in his promises.

What it teaches us is that David and individuals like David provoke in us this longing for greatness and glory and godliness. We want great leaders. But that which they provoke in us they ultimately fail to fulfill. And Jesus comes, finally, as a ruler who is worthy to be worshipped.

In 2 Samuel 23 there is a story told about David's mighty men. He has 37 mighty men. They start talking about all these guys that follow David. This one took a stand and killed 800, this one killed 300, and this one defended this spot. As the chronicler is going through this history and telling about these great warriors, he stops because he's just got to tell you this story. He tells you the story about David with his mighty men in the cave of Adullam, this now famous cave where David is hiding out, running for his life, before he has been crowned as king. He has been anointed. He knows this is God's call for his life, but he is just running for his life. He is there in this cave, and it's harvest time. He says, "Oh man, back home in Bethlehem there is this well by the gate. The water from this well is amazing. If I could have a drink of this water..."

At this time, the Philistines are occupying Bethlehem, so three of his mighty men get up and leave the camp. They go into Bethlehem and risk their lives. They get this thing of water and bring it back to David. There is this dramatic scene. The chronicler is telling you this to illustrate the magnificence of this man and his leadership, and the greatness of those who followed him.

So David gets it and is undone. He is like, "I'm not drinking this. I cannot. You risked your life for me, to do this." And he pours the water out before them as an offering to God. Your emotions are moved. You are reading the story, and when you get to the end, you know who the 37th mighty man is? It's Uriah. David betrayed this man, committed adultery with his wife, covered it up, had his life taken, and you just sink. You say, "Is there no one that I can really trust? Is there no one that can be counted on?"

Some of you have had that experience. You've had a pastor betray you. You've had a parent, you've had a boss, you've had a mate, you've had people that you've worked with or worked for, people that you thought shared something that was eternal with you, and you carry a wound of betrayal. The message of Scripture is: There is One who is worthy of worship, who will not let you down. Amen?

Alright, second point. (That was the shortest.)

II. He is greater than all the evil in the world.

The news just gets better and better. There is a villain here. His name is Herod. Herod was horrible. Herod was so jealous and petty and paranoid that he killed his favorite wife, then he killed two sons that he was threatened by. On the day he died, he orchestrated the execution of hundreds of Jewish leaders. He was a wicked man. In next week's

passage we will read about when the wise men **are warned by God and don't go back and don't lead Herod to Jesus**, he kills all the children under two. You have to come back next week to hear the details of that.

He is a wicked, wicked man. But you see him fail. You see the hate, the turmoil, the murder, but you see God taking this humble, little family, this teenage girl, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Joseph, and God guiding them and leading them and taking them. The victory of God is being proclaimed all the way. Here he has a private audience with these three wise men who come to worship him.

Let me just say that there is an important point, very timely for us, very, very relevant. Power is often misused, and used for dark purposes, even when it pretends to be used for good purposes. We have been seeing this in our own country. I have here a list of men who have either been fired or resigned from prominent positions in the last two months because of allegations of sexual misconduct.

Some of these men say that they are not guilty. Some have admitted partial guilt. Some have admitted significant guilt. The watershed moment was a New York Times report that was published on October 5. Harvey Weinstein was accused and that became public. The events that have transpired in just two months... This week three congressmen resigned: Trent Franks, Al Franken, and John Conyers from Michigan.

Conyers was in the House of Representatives, a very longstanding member of the House. His conduct and treatment of women was infamous, but something seems to be changing in society, where now people are stepping forward and saying, "Wait. Let me tell you about my experience here." Time magazine this week named their person of the year "The Silence Breakers." They profiled some of the women that have come out of silence to share these reports.

This is what I want to say about this. I understand that accusations don't always equal guilt, and God knows the full truth. But I want to say I believe that God is bringing judgment. He is bringing judgment for the abuse and misuse of power. I don't know about you, but every network: NBC, CBS, ABC, PBS – every network, major publishers, right? You hear these stories of powerful, powerful people. Women and men both were victimized and afraid. "What can I do? I'm powerless. I can't come forward. I'll lose my job or worse than that."

I believe that the Christmas story offers us a redemptive understanding, that Jesus is greater than evil and he is greater than the misuse and the abuse of power. I would just say this. If you are a Christian, let's answer the call to stand against injustice, okay? I understand it can be nuanced. I understand it can be complicated. I understand it gets politicized. I understand all of that, all the qualifiers you want to hear, yes. But let's stand against the mistreatment of people and the abuse of power.

If you are here, and no doubt there are numerous people here who have been sexually violated, I want to tell you: Jesus is your hope. Jesus is the one who is worthy of worship. He brings redemption. He brings healing. If you are here and you are guilty, I want to tell you from Scripture, be it in this life or in the life to come: It will be known, and I want to call you to repentance. I want to say to you, “What’s in the darkness will come out in the light. Come to Jesus.

Repent. Own your sin. Come out of darkness into light.” It’s critical for us.

Now, I want us to go to the third point, because these weave together.

III. Jesus is a King for all people.

That’s demonstrated here in the account by three wise men who aren’t Jewish, who are Gentiles, who come to worship Jesus. Their worship is received, and that is pretty radical. We don’t really know where they are from. We sing, “We three kings of orient are...” We celebrate that these kings come from the orient, but we don’t really know if they’re from Babylon or where they are from. They come and they worship. We lose this as people living in the 21st century. They were just hated. Babylon took Judah, the two tribes of the south, into captivity. There was deep, deep racial hatred. We just saw recently where the President of the U.S. named Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and just the turmoil! This is 2000 years later! That hatred is just still boiling up, right?

Jesus is being proclaimed here as the Savior for all. In a wonderfully diverse group like this, this is what the gospel is about. When I start to talk about the first issue of the abuse of power, it shouldn’t be complicated. It shouldn’t be controversial. We should be outraged wherever there is truth to these accusations, just plain and simple. We should be full of a holy fire that is outraged, right?

But it’s not long before everything gets politicized. It shouldn’t, because you’ve got guilty people that are in this party and in this party. If you are part of a political party and someone in your party falls, don’t bring up someone in a different political party! Who cares?! That just makes it worse! “Yes, but this...and that...” Yeah, that is what man is capable of. I use that in the sense of mankind. I don’t want to let women completely off the hook. I just think these issues have been politicized when they need to be moral issues that outrage us. Women have been victimized through the abuse and misuse of power. I wish I could tell you that the church wasn’t ever a part of that, but that’s just not true. We need God’s mercy and God’s healing. He is a King for all people.

I’m going to close because I’m out of time. It’s the fourth point, which brings us to a response and it’s this.

IV. Come and worship him.

That's the call. Come and worship Jesus. Imagine this -- JC Ryle pointed this out. They come. They see Jesus in the house. We don't know how old he was, probably less than two. They see Jesus. He has not done a miracle. They don't hear a sermon. No one has proclaimed anything to them, really, and they fall down and worship. That's what God calls us to do.

We are going to talk about some other facets of what Jesus does and who he is, and there is a place where we have intimacy with God. Jesus is called our friend. But please understand this. Before we talk about Jesus being our friend, understand that he is Lord. He is the King of Kings. He is worthy of our worship. He requires our obedience. Our obedience doesn't save us. He marvelously offers his life as a sacrifice for us, that we might be forgiven. And he invites us to come and receive that forgiveness. But we give him all that we are. We give him our lives in worship, in response.

This morning we are going to conclude our service with communion. I'm going to ask the worship team to come up, and I'm going to ask our deacons to come to the tables and begin to prepare the tables for us. Let me just share that as we respond in worship to conclude our service, this is so fitting for us, to come to the Lord's Table, and to worship in this way. His body, broken for us, his blood, shed for us – that we might be cleansed and forgiven.

Jesus doesn't just conquer evil. He redeems our lives from it, using everything for good in the wholeness that he brings to our lives. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, where you have trusted in Jesus and he is your Lord and Savior, I want to ask you to prepare your heart to ask for forgiveness, just in a fresh way as we come to the Lord's Table, to receive forgiveness by faith in Christ and to come and worship him. What we'll do, in just a minute I'll ask you to come to the table. You'll come, you'll be served, and as you are, just return to your seat. Hold the bread and the wine there, and then I will lead us to take communion together.

I am aware that there are probably quite a number of you who are not there just yet in terms of personal faith in Christ. You can't say, "I've really trusted for Jesus to save me. Jesus is the Lord of my life." If that's you, I am so glad that you're here today. I just want to encourage you to sit, pray, and ask the Lord to make himself known to you. There are great promises in Scripture that if we seek him we will find him. I want to encourage you to do that today, to use this time. Then after the service if you want to come into the café over here, we would love to talk to you more about a relationship with the Lord.

Special Messages – What Child Is This: Son Of David

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