

Two Kings

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[0 : 00] Alright, Matthew chapter 2, pick it up at verse 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, 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's 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.

[1 : 25] 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. In going to the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Okay. Have a minute or two to the person next to you to have a little look at that passage. It might be familiar, you think, and check out, remind each other of some of the things that stand out to you, or any questions you might have, and then we'll dig in together.

Over to you. Okay. Okay. Here we go. So, royal families appear to be in the spotlight a fair bit these days, and for all the wrong reasons.

[2 : 41] I'm sure you'll agree. Now, today we meet two royal families in the Gospel of Matthew. And so, we've called this sermon series in Matthew, Conflict in Kingdoms, or Kingdoms in Conflict.

And this passage today makes it very clear why. Because in this passage we have two kings. One is King Herod, and one is King Jesus.

And the truth is, you can only have one king in a kingdom, and while there's two kings in a kingdom, you're going to have conflict. Now, we're very fortunate in Australia, really, that we can have elections, and the politicians actually accept the verdict of the people, and then, by and large, our elections in our country are peaceful.

Although there are leadership challenges in parties, they're nothing like the leadership battles in other countries, where there's an uprising, and there's a coup, and the old leadership's replaced by a new one, by some other dictator.

And old presidents, or want to hang on to power, or kill off old people by, well, whatever means possible. Which brings us to Matthew chapter 2, in the birth of Jesus.

[3 : 59] We're in Bethlehem, right? And Rome rules the world. Now, Matthew's Gospel doesn't go into details about, that Luke does, about giving us why they're in Bethlehem, but he certainly does want to make a point about it, right?

So, the political situation at the birth of Jesus was pretty simple. Rome ruled the world. Caesar Augustus was the supreme ruler, and honoured as a god. He'd become Caesar, when his father Julius Caesar died.

It's very interesting, that Augustus' deity was confirmed in the people's mind, by the appearing of a star in 44 BC.

And yet, Herod the Great is the appointed ruler of Judea. He is the King of the Jews, isn't he? But here is this one who has been born King of the Jews, already King of the Jews.

And here's this passage. You see it there. Look what happens. When Herod the King heard this, verse 3, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

[11:35] There's two key moments in this passage, and this is one of them. Not only was Herod troubled, but Jerusalem, the capital city of Judea, is troubled as well.

Not because they're concerned for Herod, but because they're concerned about what it meant for them. It wouldn't be good for Herod's paranoia.

That would mean all kinds of trouble for the lives of those who lived in Jerusalem. Herod's troubled, because there's a rival king in the realm.

Now the thing to do, right, when there's a rival king in your kingdom, is to hunt him down, and kill him. Or, push him from the fourth window, fourth floor window of a hotel, or maybe poison him with nobichuck.

Now these wise men, literally magi, have come and brought troubling news. They're magicians, these wise men, magi, astrologers, is who they are. We don't know with any certainty who they are, except for what we're told here, that they are from the east, and they have seen his star, which for them is a sign that a king has been born for the Jews.

[12:58] Now, how do they know? Well, no one knows. And yet, there is a spirit world we need to be reminded of.

There is astrology, and we are commanded not to go in being involved with it. And yet, some people are in touch with it.

And even the spirit world believes that there is one God and trembles. Now, the magi know that one has been born king of the Jews, and from birth, this one is king of the Jews.

And they have come, rightly, to worship him. We're not told if they're Gentiles or not. They might have been.

We don't know. But they could have been descended from Jews who'd remained back in Babylon after the exile. They didn't return. And maybe they'd learnt some astrology from the Persians.

[14:03] But their desire is to worship the one born king of the Jews. We're not told how many there are, right? Not necessarily three. We don't know their names. And yet, they have travelled a long way with the sole purpose of worshipping him.

They've come to Jerusalem and they've come to King Herod. Logically thinking that, you know, a king will be born in a palace and in Jerusalem the capital city of Judea.

That makes sense. Now, there's an ominous thing going on here for Herod if you haven't picked it up already. A star has risen again. What might the future hold?

Could this new king be a rival god to Caesar Augustus? What will that mean for me? Well, the promised king then, we see it here.

Where is this one born king of the Jews to be born? Call any experts, get the priests, get the scribes and inquire where this Christ will be born. Remember, Christ means anointed king.

[15:16] That's what Christ means. And the one anointed king is the one who will deliver his people from their enemies. Did you notice how many times the word king or Christ or ruler came up in these first 12 verses?

Now, the answer is no problem for the ones who know their Bibles. They don't need astrology, they don't need divination, they don't need signs in heaven. They have the prophetic word of God.

Right? Micah chapter 5 verse 2 clearly says that Bethlehem in the land of Judah and from this tribe we're expecting a king, right? 2 Samuel chapter 7 a descendant of David is going to be ruling on the throne.

In other words, a king because kings rule, this ruler. And even though Bethlehem is regarded as a small insignificant place, right?

The important thing, this is where David was born and from his line comes Messiah. From his line comes Christ.

[16:24] From his line comes Saviour. From his line comes King. Who is going to be ruler and who will shepherd my people Israel.

It's clear in the scriptures. Now, the particular scriptures that the chief priests and scribes refer to is a bit of a mash-up really, you know.

Micah chapter 5 verse 2, yes. 2 Samuel chapter 7 is included in the idea of it all. But Ezekiel chapter 34 verse 23 is the idea where you get this shepherd of my people.

So come to Ezekiel 34 with me for a second. Please, come to Ezekiel 34. So the idea of a shepherd my people Israel is from Ezekiel 34. Pick it up there at verse all kinds of bad stuff have happened in Israel.

They've gone in big trouble because of the shepherds, the kings, the priests, the prophets have all let them down, right? And pick it up at chapter 34 verse 11. For thus says the Lord God.

[17 : 29] Now listen to the word I come out here. I, I, I, right? Listen. For thus says the Lord God, behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out as a shepherd seeks out his flock when he's among his sheep and have been scattered.

So will I seek out my sheep and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered up on a day of clouds and thick darkness and I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and will bring them into their own land and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel by the ravines and all the inhabited places of the country and I will feed them with good pasture on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land.

There they shall lie down in good grazing land and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep and I myself will make them lie down declares the Lord God and I will seek the lost and I will bring back the strayed and I will bind up the injured and I will strengthen the weak and the fat and the strong I will destroy I will feed them with injustice verse 17 and you my flock thus says the Lord God behold I judge between sheep and sheep between rams and male goats is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture that you must tread down your feet the rest of the pasture and to drink of the clear water that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet and must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet and drink what you have muddied with your feet therefore thus says the Lord God of them behold I I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep because you push with side and shoulder and thrust at all the weak with your horns till you have scattered them abroad verse 22

I will rescue my flock they shall no longer be a prey and I will judge between sheep and sheep verse 23 and I will set up over them one shepherd my servant you following it with me David and he shall feed them he shall feed them and be their shepherd and I the Lord will be their God and my servant David shall be prince among them I am the Lord I have spoken unlike the faithless kings who didn't care for the people unlike the faithless priests who failed to teach the people God's word unlike the faithful prophets who failed to speak the truth of God's word to the people the Christ they are looking for will be born in Bethlehem will be shepherd who cares rightfully for people he will be the shepherd who judges between sheep and sheep because he's no one less than God and yes the king of the Jews the rightful king of the Jews is God himself and we know this how from revelation not divination and yet somehow the star says to this well I can't help but think of psalm 19 the heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork day after day it pour forth speech night after night reveals knowledge there's no speech there's nor the words whose voice is not heard their voice goes out through all the earth their words to the ends of the world you ponder the heavens rightly there's no place on earth where God cannot be known and worshipped as God the heavens declare the glory of

[21 : 34] God which requires nothing less than his praise and his worship the ultimate glory of God is the Son our Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour as John's Gospel says and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory the glory as of the only Son from the Father full of grace and truth you ponder the stars you see the glory of God you've got to come to the Lord Jesus Christ those far from Jerusalem in the temple of God knew that the one born king of the Jews had been born and they came and worshipped him now we'll hear it he does what all despotic kings do speaks disingenuously right he wants to find the child so he sends the magi the wise man the astrologers off to find him under the pretense of his desire to worship him as well and find him they do and here we come to the second great moment in this passage in verse 10 verse 9 and 10 after listening to the king they went on their way and behold the star they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place with a child was when they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy finding

Jesus listen to what they did they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy they rejoiced with mega joy extreme joy because they'd found the one born king of the Jews it's over the top rejoicing think of the time when you've been extremely extremely happy can you think of one birth of a child birth of a

grandchild engagement wedding catching that fantastic fish nailing the contract getting the great result and then ramp that up two or three times higher that's their response to having found this one born king of the Jews and what do they do they fall down flatten their face and worship him that's what they do then they open up their treasures they'd brought and offer their gifts their precious gifts gold frankincense and myrrh riches fit for a king and then being warned in a dream they depart back without telling

Herod where Jesus would be found they'd been told in a dream interestingly enough Jesus is loved by the Magi by the wise men but loathed by Herod we're going to press more into that next week tragically right but one thing I find hard to fathom is this even though something so amazing has happened in the heavens and the Magi the wise men head off to find the long awaited Christ has been born king the Jewish authorities who know their scriptures do nothing it seems they've got no interest in the things of cosmic significance that are all about them and their nation their long awaited Christ has been born the stars have declared it and they're not interested in finding him let alone worship him so I want to consider for a moment what worship looks like you ready let's consider that for a minute or two one of the great dangers one of our great dangers is knowing the facts about

Jesus knowing the truths of the Old Testament being able to sign off on the doctrinal statements knowing what's supposed to happen and what God is going to do even we think we know but they're not be moved to worship God rightly that's our danger we're hardly moved at all at its most foundational level worship is humbling ourselves before the Lord God that's what the Magi the wise men do finding Jesus they fall down before him and worship him on their face then they offer their precious gifts to him what is it that moves the wise men to do what they do it's certainly not compulsion they didn't go there because someone said just go there and find

Jesus they're not complaining about having come so far as they've come no no they would have gone further it's recognising how great this one born king of the Jews is that even the heavens would declare it we will only ever worship Jesus rightly brothers and sisters when we recognise his greatness and his worth which is what God's word will do for us and in us what we all need me included right is a bigger better recognition of who Jesus is and that will move us to worship him rightly he is God the king who reigns and rules and will return to judge and that's got to move us that's got to move us to declare his glory in all the world the religious leaders of the day had all the facts right they would have thought that they worshipped

[28 : 25] God but their hearts were far from him Jesus is worthy of all praise and honour and glory because he is no one less than God himself who rules not just in Judea not just in Samaria not just in Asia but in all the world and not just in all the world in all the universe and he came to save us from our sins worship is honouring God as God and as we taught in Romans chapter 12 when we do that then we give God our most precious gift that we could ever give you know what that is in Romans 12 don't you we present our whole bodies as living sacrifices to him and we do that not by compulsion not because someone tells us to we would go even further to do that we'll do that by radical transformation not by conforming to this world but being transformed by the renewal of our minds our worship of

God will always be limited to the level of our knowledge of God but right knowledge of God will always transform our lives to live to his praise and glory!

worshiping God means living in his service he sets the agenda right and then I follow and worshiping God leads to joyfully praising his name when you find Jesus right you find the saviour you find the Christ you find the king you find God you searching for God look for Jesus there is a way then that enables us to make sense of the world a way to bring order out of the chaos right as we said our foundations of life the way God would have us live that he's laid down it's an ordering life which has Jesus as the bedrock as the foundation with him on the throne and me in his service his plans and purposes get bigger and my plans and purposes get smaller and line up with his as the

Westminster confession says they get some things right the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever to glorify God is to worship God as God to give him the best of my life and it's in every moment of the week and particularly here of a Sunday when we can sing his praises and rejoice exceedingly with great joy which is what we're going to do right now to