

Worship the King  
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Matthew 2:1-12

Modern technology has really helped us with direction. No more struggling to “re-fold” a road map or stopping to ask for directions (or refusing to stop!) We have high tech help in staying on course or tracking our stuff. [Illustration: Teresa’s car. Finding my AirPods.]

All this help is a convenience, but we know that God placed stars and planets in an orbit that has given navigators a sense of direction for centuries. One of those stars is named, Polaris. It goes by another name; do you know it? Why do we call it that?

This morning’s familiar text records the journey of a group of educated men who knew a thing or two about celestial bodies. We could say they were (Dad joke alert!) “star students.”☺ They were astronomers, maybe astrologers (that is not endorsed by scripture). Of course, these were the “Wise Men” or “Magi” who sought to find the newborn king.

The point: The star of Bethlehem gives us a great lesson about salvation. Perhaps more importantly for this group, it is a reminder for those of us who are already Christ-followers on how we should live our lives calibrated to Christ as our “true north.”

Let’s begin by reading these twelve familiar verses.

**(ESV)** — **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, **2** 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.” **3** When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; **4** and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. **5** They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: **6** “ ‘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.’ ” **7** Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. **8** 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.” **9** 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. **10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. **11** 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. **12** And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

- A quick character study:
  - Herod the Great was the appointed Roman governor of Judea. He did some good things [rebuilding the temple; famine relief] then his evil paranoia drove him to do very bad things [killing his wife and her family and a high priest and ultimately all young males (Matthew 2:16)].
  - The “Wise Men” or “Magi” from the east (likely Persia or Babylon) were educated astrologers who perhaps also studied Old Testament prophecy about the coming Messiah from Daniel (9:24-27) and Balaam (Numbers 24:17 which mentions a “star coming out of Jacob.”)<sup>i</sup>
  - Misconceptions: Scripture doesn’t call them kings. The Bible doesn’t say there were three. They were not at the stable (check your nativity set!).
- We know these visitors from the east were familiar with the Old Testament because verse two says when they arrived in Jerusalem they started asking around town: *“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.”*
- Their questions caused them to be summoned by paranoid Herod.
- The missing characters in this story were the Jewish priests at the temple.
- Why would it have required these non-Jewish “out-of-towners” to point out the sign that the newborn King was 30 miles from Jerusalem in Bethlehem?
- The priests had knowledge. When Herod summoned them asking where the Messiah was prophesied to be born, they quoted Micah 5:2 identifying Bethlehem. Why do you think those priests had not seen what the visitors saw? How is that a lesson for today?
- You know the tragic events recorded in the next few verses.
- Herod slaughtered all male children two years old and under. Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt (which fulfilled more Old Testament prophecy [Hosea 11:1]).
- Let’s apply this text to our lives today.
- We’ve seen the statement: *“Wise men still seek Him.”* It is inspiring but questionable if we read our Bible about how salvation works. Why is that?
- Problem #1: It implies that only smart (earthly wise) people can come to Christ. Did the “Wise Men” seek Christ or were they drawn to Him? God inspired the prophets and put the star over Bethlehem. The Magi (to their credit) responded.
- Problem #2: No one seeks Christ. Paul quoted Psalm 14 in **Romans 3:10–12 (ESV)** — **10** as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; **11** no one understands; no one seeks for God. **12** All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”
- Jesus said, **Luke 19:10 (ESV)** — **10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” **John 6:44 (ESV)** — **44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...
- The lesson for Christ-followers: We must point people to the “star” by sharing the gospel. Then, the Holy Spirit acts as the “star” that draws people to Christ.
- What is the lesson of the Magi for how followers of Christ should live?
- Consider what “wise” things these foreigners did. One commentator suggests: *“[They] 1) read and believed God’s Word, 2) sought Jesus, 3) recognized the worth of Christ, 4) humbled themselves to worship Jesus, and 5) obeyed God rather than man.”<sup>ii</sup>*

- All of those should apply to Christ-followers in how we live our lives.
- Based on what we just said about “seeking” Christ I would amend that point to say we should “seek to know and be more like Christ” as His followers.
- The lesson that jumped off the page for me was how they followed that star.
- Back to Polaris, the North Star, sitting almost exactly above Earth’s north pole and used for centuries as a fixed point for navigation.
- Over time, “North Star” or “true north” has become a metaphor for a single, steady guide for direction in life.
- For Christ-followers, Jesus must be our “North Star” guiding everything we do and everything we ARE (John 14:6; Hebrews 12:2; Colossians 3:1–4).
- His word is our map (Psalm 119:105).
- His Holy Spirit opens our eyes and leads us to Him (John 14:26, John 16:13–14, 1 Corinthians 2:10–14, Ephesians 1:17–18, Psalm 119:130).
- He is our “true north” that never changes “...*the same yesterday and today and forever...*” (Hebrews 13:8).
- I learned something new about how a compass works and the lesson for us.
- “Traditional compasses (and phone compass apps) point to magnetic north, not the actual North Pole. At many places on earth, magnetic north is 10–20 degrees off from true north, they call that “declination.” Navigators must correct for this difference—often using maps or GPS-based tools - to keep their direction aligned with true north.”
- Because human wisdom can “drift” we have to “re-calibrate” our lives to Jesus’ teaching and His Holy Spirit’s direction as our “true north.”

#### So, What’s the Takeaway?

- How can we benefit from the lesson of the “Wise Men?”
- Those who don’t know Christ but feel drawn to Him should ask for directions (the message of the gospel) from others who have already been drawn to follow Him.
- Those of us who ARE Christ-followers should emulate the Magi:
  - Read and believe God’s word as the map for our life.
  - Ask His Holy Spirit to give us the light we need to follow that map.
  - Not be distracted by anyone or anything that would throw us off course.
  - Seek to know and obey Jesus as our “true north” in all things.
  - Humble ourselves and worship Him as King of our lives.
- Instead of “*wise men still seek Him,*” how about this re-write: “*Those who are lost can always be found by Him, and those who are saved grow wise as He remains our true north.*”

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/three-wise-men.html>

<sup>ii</sup> ibid