

## **THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM**

**Scripture Reading:** Read Matthew chapter 2

Years ago, the Strasenburgh Planetarium in Rochester, NY produced an annual December show that focused on the star of Bethlehem that led the wisemen to Jesus. Various theories were explored as to the origin of the star with scientists debating whether it was a comet, a meteorite, a conjunction of planets or even a miracle.

As popular as the show was, and it often sold out, it's not Matthew's point. From Matthew's perspective, what was important is that magi from the East came to worship Jesus and to honor him as King of the Jews because of the star. Whereas King Herod would not and could not honor the kingship of Jesus, the Gentile wisemen did. These magi recognized that Jesus was the King and they came to honor him with their gifts. In so doing, Matthew hints at the fact that Christ's kingship is intended for all nations, for both Jews and Gentiles. Even though Matthew's gospel was written primarily for the Jewish people, by including the visit of the magi in his gospel, Matthew wants his readers (including us!) to realize the worldwide appeal of Jesus' kingship from the outset. He also lays out for us the stark contrast between those who would accept Jesus and those who would reject him, between those who would honor him as King and those who would deny his kingship, a theme to which he will return again and again in his gospel.

So what does this chapter have to say to us today? It can challenge us to take a look again at Christ's kingship. While we may not reject Jesus outright like King Herod did, might we sometimes find ourselves guilty of not fully honoring him as King? Is it possible that we can become too comfortable with the Babe of Bethlehem?

If so, then it is here where the star of Bethlehem can lead us just as it led the wisemen. The magi didn't come as the shepherds did to find a Savior whose birth the angels proclaimed. No, they came to honor a King, the one whose birth the heavens announced! The gifts they brought speak to us, too, for they prophetically proclaim Christ's kingship (gold), his priestly intercession (frankincense) and his death (myrrh).

The show at the planetarium was enjoyable and a memorable part of my childhood Christmas memories. Yet, Matthew makes it clear that the "Star" of Christmas wasn't found in a comet, a meteorite, a conjunction of planets or anything else. No, the real "Star of Christmas" is none other than Jesus himself. By including the magi's visit in his gospel, Matthew challenges us to go beyond the crèche to the King, who bids us to submit to his kingship.

**Action Step:** What does it mean when we say that Jesus is King? Take a few minutes to reflect on the difference between Jesus as Savior and Jesus as King. Are there any areas in your life where you have not relinquished control to the King? Jot these down to use in your prayer focus.

**Prayer Focus:** Prayer of submission to Christ's kingship in all areas of your life, including those you specifically listed in the action step above.

**Take-a-way:** *Jesus is to be trusted as our Savior AND worshipped as our King!*