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MATTHEW

To Whom Will We Bow?

Matthew 02:1-12

- I. Introduction
 - a. Feeling like a spectator to your own life
 - i. Not in control – life just happens to you
 - ii. Understandable considering the society we live in – corporations spend billions of dollars of to control our behaviors
 1. Carefully crafted marketing designed to capture our attention and direct our desires
 2. Ads designed to speak to hidden motives (fear, insecurity, pride)
 3. Paid influencers
 4. I receive calls each week with individuals who want to leverage our ministry for their benefit
 - iii. Primary goal – to get something from us, to take something
 1. All these voices carefully crafted - telling us what to buy, what to believe, what to say, how to vote, who to hate, who to love – attempting to conform you to their will
 2. No wonder things feel so out of control
 - b. That is why I am so excited that we are spending the next year in the gospel of Matthew
 - i. The gospel that contains the most spoken words of Jesus
 - ii. You may think – isn't that just another voice trying to control my behavior?
 1. ***John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. 11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.***
 2. All these other voices want to take, they want a piece of us – Jesus gives
 - iii. John 6 – “I am the bread of life” – ***John 6:66 From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.***
 1. ***John 6: 67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" 68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."***
 - iv. For the next year - we have an opportunity to turn off the noise, shut out all the other voices, and meditate on the very words of Jesus - straight from the source
 1. His desire - life abundantly, joy may be filled, peace I leave with you, peace I give to you

Matthew 2:1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem (due to the census Mary and Joseph were driven to House of Bread) 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 have seen 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 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.' " 7 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also." 9 When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. 11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

II. Herod the "Great" and the Magi

a. Background

- i. An Edomite (descendant of Esau) appointed king of Judea by the Roman Empire
 1. Esau = impulsive, self-sufficient
- ii. Politically savvy (He was extremely loyal to Rome) and an excellent administrator
 1. One of his great accomplishments was rebuilding and expanding the Second Temple in Jerusalem around 20 BCE in an attempt to blend political ambition, religious devotion, and legacy building
- iii. Seen by many Jews as a false king (outsider), not from the line of David. This was his attempt to demonstrate his devotion to Judaism
 1. Deep down it was clear he loved power, inflicted the people with heavy taxes, and resented the fact he was not accepted by the Jews
 2. In his later years as his health deteriorated, he became more and more paranoid
 - a. So much so that he had close associates killed including his wife and two of his sons
 3. Not long after Jesus' birth Herod the Great dies, but his dynasty continues as his sons take his place, including Herod Antipas - play a significant role in the story of Jesus' ministry.
 4. The house of Herod does not take kindly to anyone else claiming to be "King of the Jews"
 5. What have we learned from Revelation? This is opposition goes far beyond flesh and blood – Spiritual War
 - a. Irony – in an effort to control others, they themselves were being controlled

b. Wise men from the East

- i. Magi – we do not know a lot about them – and what we think we know is probably wrong
 1. No where does the text say there was three of them, no where does it say they were kings, and Jesus was no longer an infant when they arrived to worship Him
- ii. What we do know - Came from the east (likely Persia, Babylon, or Arabia)

1. Likely Gentile scholars educated in scientific observation and occult wisdom
 - a. Known for studying the stars and interpreting dreams
 - b. Interesting that the Old Testament clearly forbids astrology and mocks astrologers
 - i. ***Jer 10:1 Hear the word which the Lord speaks to you, O house of Israel. 2 Thus says the Lord: “Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, For the Gentiles are dismayed at them.***
 - c. Matthew had to be well aware of this
 - i. As one author points out, many were rogues and charlatans, but some Magi honestly inquired after truth
 - iii. Observed a star which they interpreted to mean the King of Jews had been born
 1. Meaning these magi knew the Old Testament scriptures - Numbers 24:17: “A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.”
 2. There was a large Jewish presence in Babylon so these teaching were readily available
- III. Relationship to the Word (Three Groups who Knew the Scriptures)
- a. Herod was offended
 - i. ***When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.***
 1. Herod saw this fulfillment of prophecy as a threat to his throne – that is why he was troubled – but why was all of Jerusalem troubled
 2. Abusive relationship – when the abuser is troubled, everyone is troubled
 - a. Herod heard the truth – and he saw it as a threat – fought to keep control
 - b. Jerusalem was right to be troubled – ***Mat 2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.***
 3. That is idolatry – that which we fight to protect and control – in so doing – we are being controlled
 - ii. How do we identify our idols? – identify our insecurity, anxiety, anger, and deception
 1. What do we lie about, what keeps us up at night, what do we have a hard time of letting go of?
 2. What are we so afraid of giving to God?
 3. That is what keeps so many people from the truth – I’m afraid He will take
 - iii. I have to be honest - Jesus takes! – What did John the Baptist say as Jesus approached him on the banks of the Jordan River
 1. “Behold, the Lamb of God, **who takes away the sin of the world!**”
 2. He takes away the wages of sin which is death
 3. He takes away the guilt and the shame
 4. He destroys the works of the devil
 5. He crucifies our old nature
 6. He tears the veil separating us and God
 - a. Thank you Jesus for taking that all away

- b. Don't believe the lie that Jesus will hold good things back from you
= He has come to give you life abundantly!
 - b. The experts were apathetic
 - i. ***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.' "***
 - ii. These were the experts in the law – they knew the scriptures inside and out
 - 1. They were happy to show the King what they knew
 - 2. Here is the question – why didn't they go to Bethlehem?
 - a. The experts were apathetic – knowing was enough
 - b. Knowing is not enough – the blessing is in the doing!
 - 3. The blessing is in the seeking and the searching and the responding
 - c. The magi responded
 - i. The irony - The rulers of Israel oppose Him (Herod) and ignore Him (scribes and the Pharisees) - The nations come to Jesus (Magi)
 - 1. Foreshadowing what is to come
 - ii. The magi didn't have all the answers but they wanted to know the truth so badly that they sacrificed comfort and safety and time and wealth and resources to find the King of the Jews
 - 1. And when they finally found Him, they worshipped Him
 - 2. When God warned them in a dream not to return to Herod, they disobeyed a murderous, paranoid ruler by going home another way (Matthew 2:12).
 - iii. They didn't fit the mold – they had pagan backgrounds, likely involved in cultic practices but they wanted to know the truth regardless of the cost
 - 1. And when they found it, they were not willing to give it up

IV. Conclusion

- a. It is not enough to just study the teachings of Jesus – to hear them and nod our heads
 - i. Do you want to know that truth no matter the cost?
 - ii. Are we ready to respond to it? Are we willing to let the words of Jesus destroy idols, break strongholds, and free us from the prisons we put ourselves in?
- b. Herod's concerns:
 - i. Protecting a false self
 - ii. Managing appearances
 - iii. Clinging to status
 - iv. Using religion as a means to an end
- c. Magi
 - i. Sought the truth above all else
 - ii. Moved towards it
 - iii. They remained open, holding loosely to comfort and convenience
 - iv. Lives marked by surrender and not control
- d. Comes down to worship, to the throne
 - i. Herod worshiped himself and his throne as the false king
 - ii. Magi bowed to the true King, they worshipped the Christ the King