Epiphany 2 Matthew 2:1-12
January 2, 2022 80-83-79/90-72

Join the Wise Men in Worshiping Jesus
I. Guided by God's Word.
II. With grateful hearts.
III. With obedient lives.

Dear Christian friends,

In looking at these verses there's REAL DANGER – a danger similar to what we had with Christmas. **With Christmas** it's easy to get WRAPPED UP in the **sentimental details** – the ***"swaddling clothes"*** – the manger – ***"no room in the inn."*** That's all PART of Christmas but not the focus of Christmas. Christmas is all about the BABY in the manger – our newborn Savior

Here it's EASY TO FOCUS on the wise mean – their gifts – **Herod** – yet they are not the center of attention - JESUS is. We can learn much – BOTH GOOD and bad – from the wise men – Herod – the chief priests. But we need to keep the focus **where it belongs** – on Jesus.

So **let's now** JOIN THE WISE MEN IN WORSHIPING JESUS. With the wise men **worship Jesus** 1)guided by God's Word, 2)with grateful hearts and 3)with obedient lives.

I. Worship Jesus guided by God's Word.

Let's first clear up some **common misunderstandings**. The wise men didn't come with the shepherds to the **stable** at Christmas. They found Jesus in a ***"house."*** These verses could easily take us **months** – maybe even a **whole year** – after Christmas.

We're not told HOW MANY wise men there were. It's traditionally three because of the three gifts mentioned but **nobody really knows**. We're not sure WHAT COUNTRY they came from. Matthew simply says they ***"came from the east."*** That could be Babylon or **Persia** or **Arabia**. Matthew calls them ***"magi"*** – a Babylonian term for the ***"wise men"*** who studied the stars, advised kings, etc. They were LEARNED – wealthy – respected men.

We're also not told **how they knew** to CONNECT THIS STAR with Jesus' birth. SOMEHOW God made it clear to them. And this was a SPECIAL star. The star SEEMS to have appeared in the **east for a while** and then was not seen when they **came to Jerusalem**. When leaving Jerusalem they again saw it. Here's MORE PROOF this was a miraculous star. It moved north **to south** as they traveled from Jerusalem to Bethlehem – it actually stopped over the **exact house** where Jesus was.

We join the wise men **in worshiping Jesus** GUIDED by God's Word. They arrive in Jerusalem asking, ***"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? We have come to worship Him."*** THEY knew Jesus had been born and they expected the people of Jerusalem to **know it as well**. Going to Jerusalem MADE SENSE – it was the capital. WHERE ELSE would you expect to find ***"the King of the Jews"***? This is another reminder that GOD DOES THINGS **His way** and that **God's ways** are not usually our ways.

Herod hears about their **arrival** and **question**. Herod's ***"alarmed"*** – shaken up by the wise men. HE'S the king and he's not the type to tolerate any **rivals** or threats to his power.

Herod saw Jesus as a THREAT but for the WRONG REASON. Jesu's was not a political threat to Herod but a SPIRITUAL threat. Jesus is a threat to our **sinful natures** and our **sinful ways**. Those who expect Jesus to "UNDERSTAND" and **accept** their sinful ways with a shrug are SERIOUSLY MISTAKEN. Jesus refuses to accept or **tolerate** ANY defiance or **disobedience**. Jesus calls sinners to repent of their sins – to ***"crucify and deny"*** their sinful natures – NOT cater or cuddle up to them.

Herod summoned ***"the chief priests and experts in the law"*** to find out where Jesus was born. Without hesitation they QUICKLY ANSWERED, ***"In Bethlehem of Judea"*** – and then they quoted Micah 5:2. There's a BIG LESSON for us here – and an **important** WARNING. These chief priests knew to go to **God's Word** for the answer. They knew God's Word too. BUT they didn't believe **what they knew** from God's Word. They didn't join the wise men **in worshiping Jesus**.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? **How many** have been taught God's Word – they know what God's **Word says** about their sin and Jesus their Savior. They know God's Word but they DON'T REALLY BELIEVE it. They know God's Word with their HEADS but **not** with their HEARTS. Their actions show that. They don't want to BE BOTHERED with Jesus – they have no time for Jesus.

Join the wise men AS GUIDED by God's Word they head off to Bethlehem. They took God AT HIS WORD and **got going**. They didn't argue with God **as if** this was really dumb and asking TOO MUCH of them. GOD HAD SPOKEN – they believed – they acted – RIGHT AWAY.

Oh Jesus, HELP US **so to worship** You! **Help us** to "gladly hear and learn" Your Word. **Help us** to have Your Word NOT JUST **in our heads** but especially in our HEARTS. **Help us** to "read, mark, learn and take to heart" ALL that **You tell us** in Your Word. Use Your Word to guide us even closer to You – to **guide** us through this life to **eternal life** with You in heaven!

II. Worship Jesus with grateful hearts.

GUIDED by God's Word **and the star** the wise men arrive at the **right** house and find Jesus. Now PICTURE this in your mind. Jesus is perhaps six months to a year old. He's sitting on Mary's lap or held in her arms. He looks just like **any other** little boy. But now – picture this! – the wise men ***"bowed down and worshiped Him."*** This was no simple bending **from the waist** bow but a getting down on your knees with your face on the ground as if to say, "WHO ARE WE to be here **in Your presence**, Jesus? Please see us not as BOLD, NOSY INTRUDERS but as humble worshipers. We don't come WITH A CHIP on our should but with humble gratitude." PICTURE it! These wise – learned – **rich** – **respected** men SO BOWING DOWN to a little baby Boy! **Many people** would think they looked like idiots!

This may look foolish to the **unbeliever** – this is galling to our **sinful natures** – but JOIN the wise men in **worshiping Jesus** with grateful hearts. **In their worship** they recognize this Child as **not just** a CUTE KID but this is our God – our Creator born our **Savior**. He who is eternal ENTERED TIME that **we might have** eternal life with Him. He who dwells in heaven most high CAME TO our **sin-cursed world** that we might live with Him in all His heavenly glory.

HUMBLY – how else could **they approach** Jesus? Who are we to "COME INTO the presence of God"? Coming into **God's presence** HIS HOLINESS makes our sinfulness **stick out** all the more. We have DARED to ignore – **defy** – **disobey** our almighty Creator AS IF we even have the option of listening to Him or not. We shouldn't be coming into God's presence – we should be banished forever from God's presence!

Yet here is the miracle of **God's love**. He is why we join the wise men in **worshiping Jesus** WITH GRATEFUL HEARTS. Jesus bids us, ***"Come unto Me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."*** Jesus was born a man to RECONCILE and **reunite** us sinners with our holy Creator. God's eternal Son took on our human flesh and blood to be our Substitute before God. **In our place** – giving us all the credit – Jesus lived the life of **perfect love** and obedience that we owed God. Taking the sin of the whole world on Himself Jesus took our place on Calvary's cross. Jesus was punished in our place **for our sins**. Jesus shed His precious blood – sacrificed His holy life – all to ***"take away the sin of the world."*** Rising triumphant from the dead Jesus has conquered death and the grave for us. BECAUSE OF Jesus – trusting in Jesus – we can BE ABSOLUTELY SURE that God

does love us – that God has forgiven all our sins – that we are going straight to heaven when we die. **How** can we not worship Jesus with GRATEFUL hearts?

"Then they opened their treasures and offered Him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh." From their gifts we learn that they FIRST GAVE Jesus their **hearts**. We're not told if there's any SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE in their gifts. But we CAN BE SURE – they weren't cheap or stingy. **How** can we be cheap **with God** when He's given us HIS VERY BEST – His Son our perfect Savior?

We're not told HOW LONG the wise men **stayed** there. But their worship didn't stop when they **packed up** and **headed back** home. JOIN the wise men and…

III. Worship Jesus with obedience lives.

"Since they had been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route." Herod had told them to ***"report back"*** to him so he could go worship Jesus. Herod may have fooled the wise men but he didn't fool God. God was in control and NOBODY was going to interfere in His plans!

The wise men obeyed God. **No doubt** they had come on the quickest route to **worship** Jesus. Now they would have to go OUT OF THEIR WAY – add some EXTRA TIME - EFFORT and **miles** on their way home. This was inconvenient but that didn't stop from OBEYING. No excuses – they just went and did AS GOD WANTED.

JOIN the wise men in so worshiping Jesus. We DON'T JUST worship Jesus **at church**. "OK, Lord, I gave You Your hour now leave me alone." We worship Jesus – **yes at church** – but also with our life **during the week** as well. Worshiping Jesus is now OUR WAY of life. Just consider these passages. ***"I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice — holy and pleasing to God — which is your appropriate worship. Do not continue to conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you test and approve what is the will of God — what is good, pleasing, and perfect."*** Or as we heard on Christmas Day, ***"Jesus gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people who are His very own, eager to do good works."***

We worship Jesus with our HEARTS – our lips – our daily lives. WITH the wise men we keep our focus **where it belongs** – on Jesus – God's Son – our Savior and King. Amen.

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