

Foreign Visitors Worship Jesus

Matthew 2:1-12

BIBLE BACKGROUND
FOR LEADERS

About the Magi

Contrary to traditional images of the events surrounding Jesus' birth, the Magi likely did not visit Jesus shortly after his birth, but actually arrived months later and visited Jesus at the house where he and his parents were staying. Common sense tells us that Mary and Joseph could not have traveled the 70 miles back to Nazareth immediately after Jesus' birth, so they likely stayed in Bethlehem for a few months.

Also contrary to tradition, the Magi were probably philosophers or astrologers from Babylon, not kings. Apparently it was widely thought that a great king who would usher in a period of peace would soon be born in Judea. When the Magi saw the unusual star, their curiosity got the best of them, and they set out for Jerusalem, the Judean capital, to see if the star actually signaled the birth of this great king.

Herod's Response

When the Magi's report reached King Herod, he was disturbed at the prospect of a rival to his throne and immediately devised a plan to get rid of the child. He planned to use the Magi to gather information for him. So when his advisers told him of the prophecy placing the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem, he passed that information on to the Magi and requested that they report their findings to him. In this way he would be able to find the child and deal with him.

True Worshipers

The Magi followed the star to Bethlehem, where their predictions were confirmed. Indeed a miraculous birth had taken place, and the Magi worshipped the new king joyfully and presented him with precious gifts. Throughout history, different symbolic meanings have been attributed to the Magi's gifts. One theory suggests that the gold represented Jesus' kingly

nature, the incense his divinity, and the myrrh (a resin often used in burial) his humanity or mortality.

God had revealed to these non-Jewish seekers of truth the one who would bring peace and salvation to all who believe in him. It is clear from their response to God's warning that they were more concerned about doing what was right before God than about obeying Herod, who could have had them executed for defying him. Matthew's report of this story demonstrated to the Jews of his day—as well as to non-Jews today—that Jesus came for all people who place their trust in him.

The Jesus Connection

No matter where we are in life, we can worship Jesus.
Thank Jesus for his grace, for accepting our worship
despite our many sins.

Consider this: What do you think of the way you worship Jesus? We can worship anywhere, any way, anytime we want. What are some areas of your life that need more worship? Talk to God about how you want to worship to show your love and devotion for him. You can write your prayer here.

[illegible]



DIGGING DEEPER

Matthew 2:1-12

► Bible Point—Anyone can worship Jesus.

Key Verse—“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’” (Romans 10:12-13).

Daily Challenges

Choose one or more of these activities to do this week.

- Choose one way you can reach out this week to the person you thought of in our prayer today.
- Spend an entire day inviting God into every part of your life. Spend an entire day, from when you wake up until you fall asleep, worshipping God with your thoughts and actions. Do every task “as unto him.”
- Do you know someone who worships differently than you do? Take time to talk with that person. Spend more time listening and understanding than talking, but be sure to share how you worship God and what that means to you.

Through the Week

Use the following passages to explore additional biblical insights about choosing to worship Jesus.

Monday—Deuteronomy 30:19

- God is inviting us to choose. Will you choose to believe in Jesus today and choose life?

Tuesday—1 Timothy 2:4

- Think of someone who doesn’t know Jesus. How can you pray for that person?

Wednesday—Mark 16:15

- How can you share your faith with others?

Thursday—1 Samuel 16:7

- Have you judged someone this week based on his or her appearance? What will help you remember to look at the heart?

Friday—Galatians 3:28

- How can you help show God’s love to someone who may be feeling left out?

Saturday—Luke 6:41

- What can you do to see others the way God sees them?

Talk Topics

- Discuss why some people easily turn to Jesus—and why others refuse him.
- Tell about how you came to the decision to trust and worship Jesus—or what is holding you back from that decision.
- Talk about your relationships with people who are different from you. How can you reach out to them with Jesus’ love?

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