

— Christmas Through the Eyes of ... —

Herod and the Magi

Matthew 2:1-12

Magi

The Magi were a cluster of truth-seekers committed to holiness and wisdom. Most likely they were skilled in philosophy, medicine and natural science.

They arrived at Bethlehem sometime after the birth of Jesus. Jesus' family was now in a house and aligning that with Herod's decision to kill boys under two years of age, would suggest that by the time the wise men arrived, Jesus may well have been a toddler.

They travelled to worship Jesus on the strength of a star. A new star appearing in the east meant that God was on the move. They anticipated the arrival of a new king.

Herod

Herod the Great was known as the king of the Jews.

- + Renowned for his building projects
- + Elected ruler over Israel by the Roman Empire
- + A political madman who sought glory, grandeur, and a kingly place.

Herod's reaction to the news of a potential new heir to the throne:
"When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all of Jerusalem with him." Matthew 2:3

In complete contrast to the Magi, Herod saw the arrival of Jesus through the eyes of jealousy and fear. (Matthew 2:16)

Two Views

There are two different ways to be looking at the arrival of Jesus.

1. With faith-filled eager anticipation, as truth seekers ready to worship the King – Magi

OR

2. With Jealousy that the real King will be enthroned. Protective of your own right to rule – Herod

The Magi were searching for truth and purpose and spiritual reality, and they recognised that Jesus was central to the future of the world.

The sad reality is that this Christmas there will be many people who will view Christmas through the eyes of Herod – fearfully jealous of losing their own self-determination, their own plans, their own priorities, their own values, and their own morals.

We have a world of kings who are not about to bow their knee to Jesus Christ, and so they miss the truth of Christmas just like Herod.

At the heart of Christmas lies the incredible truth that the Magi only partially recognised, and that Herod completely missed. Mary's boy child was God's Son who came from heaven to help us understand how much God cares, to set us free from our rebellion against our creator through His own sacrificial death, and eventually to judge and rule our world.

Finding and Receiving Jesus as King

Knowing Christ is worth more than anything else in this world; in fact, knowing Christ is worth more than everything else in this world.

We will never be disappointed by Him. He is that treasure; He's that pearl of great value. (Matthew 13:44-46)

Perhaps the challenge for us with all the familiarity that for us surrounds the Christmas message, is as truth seekers and with faith-filled eager anticipation, worship King Jesus.

The attitude of the Magi is one that necessarily pervades all true worshippers. We abandon our agendas and desires and priorities to offer our worship to Jesus.

While the Magi travelled with their gifts, God's gift to us, Jesus, is worth more than anything else we could ever possess. Does your life reflect that truth? Do you know Him? Are you seeking Him? The great truth that can be discovered this Christmas is Jesus, the one that this whole season is about, and truth-seekers are still looking for Him and can find Him.

Discussion Questions

1. Read Matthew 2:1-12. Compare and contrast the Magi and Herod's response to the news of a new king.
2. What stands out about the Magi to you? What is worth you emulating that you can see in the attitude of the Magi this Christmas?
3. What does it mean to be a 'truth-seeker' in today's culture? How can we help others know about the truth of Christmas?
4. While the Magi travelled with their gifts, God's gift to us, Jesus, is worth more than anything else we could ever possess. Does your life reflect that truth? Do you know Him? Are you seeking Him?
5. As a group, spend some time worshipping king Jesus, thanking Him for all you have and the wonderful richness of the true meaning of Christmas.