

# **GOD REVEALED:**

## **JESUS WHO IS THE CHRIST**

An exposition of Matthew 2:1-12  
at West Hills Evergreen on date

**INTRODUCTION:** Things have gotten a lot worse since Rome got here. But every year, our holy days, we talk about the Messiah God will send one day to save us. Jesus at the DMV...you are the Christ? I am. Everyone takes off their sandals and fall on their faces before him.

**PROBLEM:** What does it mean that Jesus was the Christ, and what does the fact...if anything... have to do with our lives today, what does it have to do with how we think about the Christmas season and what does it have to do with eternity?

**MAIN POINT:** Christ was born to redeem all of life, so worship Him with everything.

**SETTING THE CONTEXT:** In Israel there existed an uneasy peace. Rome ruled in the land of Judea, but the Romans had appointed Herod the Great to serve as the local king and governor under the authority of Caesar. Herod was a powerful and ruthless man who accomplished many incredible things during his reign, not the least of which was the rebuilding of the temple. However, he had done so as a vicious tyrant levying unbearable taxes, and making enemies of virtually everyone. He is famous for the things he built, but also for being the only ruler in Palestine who ever succeeded in securing a prolonged peace in the land.

But the hour was late. The sun was beginning to set on Herod's life. As he increased in age, he increased in paranoia. Near the end of his reign, he executed his wife and several sons out of suspicion that they were conspiring for his throne. As the government became less predictable, tensions heightened between the various political factions within Israel, in particular between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, those who sought favor with Rome as they anticipated the coming of a new political arrangement and those who wanted to break away from the rule of Rome altogether. And it was in this roiling cauldron of political tension and animosity...that a holy innocent child was born. It was in this breaking...shifting...sin cursed world...that men and angels' began singing the first Christmas songs. Let's now humble our minds and open our hearts to the words of the Living God...

**READING:** Matthew 2:1-12 "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: "And

you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

## **PRAYER**

## **ROAD MAP:**

### **Why was there a star on Christmas and why was it being sought?**

1. “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”
  1. Matthew begins this story concerning the birth of Jesus by clarifying that this didn’t occur the night he was born despite the many Christmas plays and children’s books. This took place after the night Jesus was born but likely not long afterwards.
  2. And during the reign of Herod, we read...behold wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. Now who could these guys be? Well the word in greek is not the typical word for wise-men but is actually the word Magoi which is the plural form of the word Magos which was a generic term for people who studied the stars and tried to relate it to astrology (not astronomy, not the scientific discipline of tracing the movement of the stars, but astrology, the theoretical discipline of trying to relate the movement of the stars to events on the earth).
    1. Now you can still call them Magi if you want...you can still use the in your nativity set...I’m not going to go to your house and flip over your nativity set. But they are actually called Magoi, in case you are ever on jeopardy.
    3. But these weren’t Magoi in general but men who studied the stars “from the east”. This additional point of data has led many scholars to believe that these guys are most likely astronomers/astrologers from ancient Babylon now Persia, where there was still a significant Jewish population even after the return following their deportation.
    4. If this is correct, than they would have access to the Jewish scriptures that anticipated a rising star that would have signified the birth of an Israelite king. Otherwise it would be difficult to know why or how they could arrive at the question in verse 2, where is the one born king of the Jews for we have seen his star...”
  2. There was a very ancient prophecy foretold by a gentile of a star rising from Jacob: Numbers 24:10–19 And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together.

And Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee to your own place. I said, 'I will certainly honor you,' but the LORD has held you back from honor." And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, 'If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the LORD, to do either good or bad of my own will. What the LORD speaks, that will I speak'?" And now, behold, I am going to my people. Come, I will let you know what this people will do to your people in the latter days."

1. And he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. Edom shall be dispossessed; Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed. Israel is doing valiantly. And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!"
3. This great light would rise and draw the nations to its light. Isaiah 9:1-7 But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.
4. Isaiah 60:1-7 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you

the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall come up with acceptance on my altar, and I will beautify my beautiful house.

### **What does it mean to be born as the Christ?**

1. The Christ is a translation of the term anointed in the old testament.
  1. God's anointed is God's specifically chosen person for a task. Originally it was a description of how the priests were set apart for their work in the tabernacle and the temple. As time went on, the anointing of God fell to Kings who would represent God and His reign in Israel. Over time, the expectation began to form, particularly in Psalm 2 and Daniel 9 that a particular king would be particularly anointed...not only to rule Israel...but the nations would be his heritage. This is what people thought of when they heard the word anointed or Christ near the time of Jesus' birth.
  2. Jesus didn't simply come and do something. He was designated by God for a special task...He wasn't **born to be** the Christ King...He was born King...this designation occurred before He was conceived. There was many sons of David in the world...there was only one who was designated as Christ King by very virtue of his being born. He was born to rule His people.
    1. Jesus was born in the world to rule His people in truth and love and this is unbelievably good news.
    2. We are all ruled by something. What rules us are the things we can't say no to. When they call us to bow to it's will, we bow to it's will.
    3. If you are ruled by your pride, you will sacrifice everything...even your integrity for the sake of your pride. You will sacrifice things that are precious to you for the sake of your pride. Some of us are ruled by greed, or by our lusts, or by our own desire for comfort. Some of us are ruled by our career, or our fear of losing our career. Some of us are ruled by money and are pursuit of it...some of us are ruled by are need to be liked, or our fear of rejection or failure...but we are all ruled by something because God made us to be ruled...and all of these lesser kings rule us to make us slaves. They rule us for their own ultimate benefit, and not our ultimate benefit.
    4. But Christ was born to rule in truth and love. He was born to rule for the benefit of His people, He rules us that we might be free, and those whom the Lord's Christ desires to set free will be free indeed. Under His reign and by submission to His rule we find that we are released from things that harm us and joined to things that bless us.
    5. He commands us to forgive to set us free from slavery to bitterness. He commands us to generosity so that we will not be slaves to greed. He commands us to be humble so that we will not be ensnared by the folly of pride, he commands us to love people... so that we might not run roughshod over people out of our love for things, and position and authority. He commands us to be self-controlled so that we will not be enslaved to addiction, he tells us to be merciful so that we will not be ensnared by anger, He tells us to seek our fulfillment and joy and satisfaction in Him...because He built our hearts so that it could only, and would only be satisfied and fulfilled in Him.

6. Christ was born to reign as God's chosen King...to restore God's reign in the midst of His kingdom...and His kingdom begins in His people the church.
3. God's anointed is someone designated by God to serve as an authority or ruler in the world. But being anointed ALSO involved something substantial being communicated to, or given to Him by God. In Israel the act of anointing with oil was correlated with the giving of the Spirit. 1 Samuel 16:3.
  1. The physical act of being anointed with oil is a symbol of God pouring out something on His anointed One...He pours out His Holy Spirit on them.
  2. The way God set his Spirit on the kings of old is the same way in which God's Spirit was given to Christ who was God. This was an important part of the Christ's ministry because, even though He condescended from glory, emptying Himself, taking on human flesh as a man...his life and teaching and miracles would belong to the sphere of heaven. All He did would be empowered by the presence and beauty and glory of God Himself.
  3. When Jesus rose from death...he ascended into heaven, sat down at the Father's right hand and SENT the Spirit, into His people...all those who turn from their sins and offer their lives to Him as servants do to a king in faith and willing obedience. The same Spirit that worked through Christ while he was on earth...the same Spirit that raised Christ from death in fact...was sent to dwell in God's people.
  4. This is one of the really significant things about being IN CHRIST...as the New Testament so often tells us we are. WE are invited to share in the heavenly life of God by putting our faith in Jesus and receiving the same Spirit he received...by letting go of our trust in human wisdom...and the ideas of men and putting our hope and trust in the words and ways of God... and receiving the Spirit and having the same presence, beauty, glory and power fill our hearts and minds and life the way it did Jesus who was the Christ.
  5. This is what Paul means by 2 Corinthians 1:21-22
2. When the Christ was born in accordance with the Old Testament prophecies and expectations...something was revealed that the people did not expect...the promised King anointed to rule...the promised King anointed with the very Spirit of God...the anointed Christ was God Himself.
  1. Three times it is said in Mt 2:1-12 that the intent of those seeking him was to worship Him. It is important to see in Matthew's gospel...the most self-consciously Jewish of all the gospels...that this gospel of Jesus life begins and ends with worship Mt 2, Mt 28:9, 17.
  2. This means that the one born to be Christ wasn't just born to rule us in love and truth for our blessing...the one born to be Christ wasn't just born to bring the life of heaven into our world of brokenness and sin and pain and death...the One born to be Christ is also the One who caused us to be born...who formed our world and everything in it...who formed our days and everything in them...the One born to be Christ is the Eternal second person of the God-head...the maker of our bodies and our souls...the heavens and the earth...the one in whom all things live and move and have our being.

3. God revealed Himself on Christmas morning...as Jesus the Christ, our Redeemer and King, the very life of Heaven come to bring life to the world. God revealed Himself as the One who came to establish the reign of heaven on earth, to set us free from our sins and from the power of our fallen nature and broken thinking. God was born as an infant...to not only call us to freedom and new life but to give us the power to be free and to be reborn.
3. And all of this he did...in the roiling political tension...in the dark and terrifying days of Roman rule in the midst of Judea. All of this he continues to do in the midst of our crazy, stressful, busy, confusing, trying and exhausting lives. He comes to reign in truth and love... to cause new life to be born by His Spirit...to bring freedom, hope and **joy** into a hard and difficult world. Not by taking us out of this life...but by causing the light of heaven to dawn in the midst of this life.
  1. This is why the song says: Rejoice...rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee Israel. This is why the herald angels sing glory to the newborn king. This is why it is called a holy night, this is why we are told to come let us adore him...because the one who was born is born to raise the sons of earth and born to give them second birth. This is what it means that Jesus was born as the Christ...He was anointed to rule, to live in the power of the Spirit and give the Spirit to the world...and to reveal God to us in the midst of our broken world.

### **How should we respond to the birth of Jesus Christ**

1. We can see that he has come to reign and bring new life...and be afraid of how that is going to require us and our lives to change. We can say I would rather have my position, and my power and my authority...than God's power and authority in my life and resist him. OR
2. they leave everything to seek Him
3. they believe what is written about Him
4. they come come expecting to find joy overflowing
5. they don't leave their treasure to find him, they bring their treasure and offer it to him

**MAIN POINT:** Christ was born to redeem all of life, so worship Him with everything.

**COMMUNION:** Christ has come that we might bring all of our lives to Him in worship...and this is not so that he can take from us...it is so that He can give to us...the first thing we bring is ourselves and our hearts, humbled and in need, seeking grace. Before we bring our time, our talents, our treasures, our families our hopes and dreams...we bring ourselves and our longing hearts saying create pure and holy and joy-filled life in the midst of my confusing and broken life.