

Bethel Bible Study for January 2, 2014 The Epiphany

Come to know Christ... *by the star.*

Matthew 2:1-12

¹In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ⁶'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" ⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Read **Matthew 2:1-2**

Study How does Matthew place the story in place and time? Is placing it important? Who comes looking for a child? How sincere are the travelers? On the other hand, how naïve are they?

Apply Catholic Christian novelist Walker Percy wrote, "the search is what anyone would undertake if he were not sunk in the everydayness of his own life."¹ How are the Magi called out of the "everydayness" of their lives? How stuck are you and I in our own everydayness?

Read **Matthew 2:2, 9 & 12**

Study How are the wise men guided in their quest?

Apply Because the wise men are guided in that way, what is Matthew saying about who controls human destiny? What then does it mean to be really "wise"?

Read **Matthew 2:3-8**

Study How does the wise men's news strike Herod and his entourage (**v.3**)?

Apply One Bible scholar states "Herod represents the human flight from God. The Magi represent the human quest for God."² If Herod is a 1 and the Magi a 10, where are you on the *Quest Scale*?

Read **Matthew 2:9-12; Matthew 13:44-46**

Study How do the wise men react at their first sight of the child (**v.10**)? What do they give him (**v.11**)?

Apply How do the wise men embody Jesus' parable 30 years later (**Matthew 13:44-46**)? Have you found that "treasure" for which you would give up the best of what you have?

¹ Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer* (New York: Ivy, 1960), p.29.

² Matthew Woodley, *The Gospel of Matthew: God With Us* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), p.33.