



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

The Unexpected King, Revealed to Unexpected People January 6, 2019

(Matthew 2:1-12)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.⁴ When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶ “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.”⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

1. **Icebreaker:** If there was one unanswered question about the Magi that you’d want God to answer for you, what would it be, and why?

2. **Discuss:** If you knew nothing about this story, which people would you say are the most expected to come and worship the Christ—the Magi? Or the Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law? What about the one group makes it seem obvious they’d be there? What about the other group makes it unexpected that they came to worship Jesus?
3. The Magi are often depicted as visiting Jesus at the Nativity. What are some different context clues from this section of Scripture that make it highly unlikely that this meeting took place on Christmas?
4. The gifts the Magi bring have had a lot of symbolism attached to them by people over the years. I don’t know that we can say definitively that God intended such significance to be drawn from these gifts, but gold often represents royalty; frankincense was often used as incense in offerings to God; myrrh was a precious substance often used in embalming bodies. What significance of Jesus’ person and purpose can we reflect on from these gifts?
5. In the last verse, God warned the Magi not to return to Herod and tell him where Christ was. After this, Herod then calls for the slaughter of every boy under age 2 in Bethlehem, and God warns Joseph to take Mary and Jesus and flee to Egypt until Herod’s death (See Matthew 2:13ff). Why would the Magi’s gifts been so valuable for this family, based on what God knew was about to happen?
6. The Magi were “most unlikely devotees” of the Christ, according to one commentator. In what ways could the same thing be said about us? In what ways are we unexpected, undeserving recipients of God’s grace?