

# JESUS ACKNOWLEDGED AS KING BY WISE MEN: AN UNEXPECTED WORSHIP MATHEW 02:01–11

## ***Introduction***

There was hardly anything usual or common about the birth and early childhood of Jesus Christ. Practically every event was unusual or uncommon, totally unexpected. There was the fact of His being God's very own Son, of the virgin birth, of the announcement by angels, of being born in a stable, and on and on. The unexpected continues right on through the experience of the wise men. The wise men (magi) are a picture of those who seek Jesus. As they sought Him, events totally unexpected happened time and again. This is usually the case with those who seek Jesus. But God is faithful. If a person is truly seeking Jesus, God takes the unexpected events and works them out for good (Rom. 8:28). God leads the person to Jesus regardless of circumstances and events, expected or unexpected.

- I. Their surprising knowledge: Jesus was born in Bethlehem (v. 1).
- II. Their unexpected question: where is the newborn King (v. 2)
- III. Their unexpected impact (vv. 3-6).
- IV. Their unexpected commission: having to search for the newborn King (vv. 7-8).
- V. Their unexpected sign: the star guided them again (vv. 9-10)
- VI. Their unexpected King: a modest child in humble surroundings (v. 11).

## ***I. Mathew 02:01 The Birth of Jesus Christ***

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Three quick facts are worthy of note.

1. He was born in Bethlehem. (See *Bethlehem*, Mt. 02:01.)
2. He was born during the reign of Herod the Great.
3. He was sought by wise men or magi from the East. (See *Wise Men*, Mt. 02:01.)

### MATHEW 02:01 WISE MEN – MAGI

They were men from the East (probably Persia), emissaries from one or more foreign nations who were seeking truth. They were influential men of learning and authority, the skilled scientists of their day: skilled in philosophy, science, medicine and astrology. It is thought that they were the priestly order of Persia, the ministers and advisors to the Persian rulers. □

## MATHEW 02:01 BETHLEHEM

The city of Bethlehem was only six miles south of Jerusalem. Its fame was due to these two facts:

- 1) It had been the home and city of David (1 Sam. 16:1; 17:12; 20:6);
- 2) It was prophesied to be the city of the Messiah's birth (Micah 5:2).

All Jews knew these facts, and those who truly believed in a coming Messiah looked for the Messiah to come through David's line and to establish an eternal government. □

## II. *Mathew 02:02 The Magi Seeking Jesus*

The magi's unexpected question — Where is the newborn King? How did the magi know the King of the Jews had been born? The answer is not given, but two significant facts are.

1. They had a most unusual journey: they were guided by a star. What is meant by “his star”? Again the answer is not given. However, v. 9 seems to indicate that it was some astronomical light. This much is known: whatever it was, it was a miracle. It was a miracle at least in this sense: it appeared at the very time of Jesus' birth; it appeared to Gentile wise men far away in another nation; it guided them to Jerusalem where they were to worship Jesus; it appeared at the very time they were given knowledge of the newborn King; and it appeared again for the specific purpose of guiding them.
2. They had a most significant purpose: their purpose was to worship the newborn King. They had come to pay homage to a child whom they understood was to be King of the Jews. They expected what any foreigner would have expected: the child would be a son of the reigning king. Jesus, of course, was not. It was this fact that disturbed Herod so much. He concluded what any reigning monarch would: there was a movement to overthrow the throne.

**Thought 1.** Where is He? Every person needs to be asked the question, for He has already come and most are not aware of it. Why? Because they are preoccupied with self and worldly affairs, with ambition and material possessions, with the physical and the flesh.

- “Where is He?” It is totally unexpected that the message would come from the Gentiles and heathen of the world.
- “Where is He?” It is totally unexpected that His own people do not know.
- “Where is He?” It is totally unexpected that the religionists do not know.

How far away from God and how lost the world has become — not to know that God has sent the true King, His own Son, into the world!

**John 3:16** “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

**John 1:49** Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”

**John 18:37** “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

**1 Tim 1:17** Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

**Isa 9:7** Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

**Dan 7:14** He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

**Thought 2.** “He was in the world [and]...the world did not know Him” (Jn. 1:10-11). How could God send His Son into the world and the world not know it? How clearly the wise men illustrate the world’s blindness to eternal affairs. A wise man is a man who seeks after the King of the Jews.

### **III. Mathew 02:06 The Magi’s Unexpected Impact**

It was the magi who affected the Jews, not the Jews who affected the magi. Few Jews were even aware of their King’s birth. Imagine the great anticipation of the magi as they journeyed and approached Jerusalem. Imagine the shock: no one knew about the newborn King — who He was, where He was, anything about Him.

Three groups in particular are mentioned as being disturbed. Why were they disturbed? They just did not know about Him — that He had already come...

1. *Some people* were disturbed because they had anticipated His coming, but He had not come as they had expected. They had expected a king, not a humble child, not a self-giving Saviour (See *Christ, Messiah*, Mt. 01:18). Others just did not believe; they could not care less. Still others did not want to know about a king who might disturb their lives.
2. *The government* (represented in Herod) was disturbed because it did not want a king coming from God who might threaten the present line and form of authority. (See *Herod the Great*, Mt. 02:03-04.)

3. *Some religionists* were disturbed because they did not want a king to come as He had come. He and His coming did not match their beliefs. Others did not want a king other than the one they had. They were comfortable in the material world and the humanistic religion of the world. Others were so wrapped up in their religious affairs and its busyness that they were not spiritually sensitive enough to be aware of His coming. However, some religionists did turn to Him later (Acts 6:7; 15:5; 18:8, 17).

Mathew stressed a point that is too often true of our generation: the religionists, the very people who should have known about the newborn Messiah, had ignored the Scriptures and its prophecy. The world (Herod) had to send them scurrying to pay attention to its message.

**Mat 13:15** *“For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.”*

**John 8:19** *Then they asked him, “Where is your father?” “You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”*

**Acts 13:27** *The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus; yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath.*

## MATHEW 01:18 CHRIST (CHRISTOS)

*This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about:.... **Mathew 01:18***

The words *Christ* (Christos) and *Messiah* are the same word. Messiah is the Hebrew word and Christ is the Greek word. Both words refer to the same person and mean the same thing: the *Anointed One*. The Messiah is the *Anointed One of God*. Mathew says Jesus “is called Christ” (Mt. 1:16); that is, He is recognized as the *Anointed One of God*, the Messiah Himself.

In the day of Jesus Christ, people feverishly panted for the coming of the long-promised Messiah. The weight of life was harsh, hard, and impoverishing. Under the Romans, the people felt that God could not wait much longer to fulfill His promise. Such longings for deliverance left the people gullible. Many arose who claimed to be the Messiah and led the trusting followers into rebellion against the Roman State. The insurrectionist Barabbas, who was set free in the place of Jesus at Jesus’ trial, is an example (Mk. 15:60f)

The Messiah was thought to be several things.

1. *Nationally*, He was to be the leader from David’s line who would free the Jewish state as an independent nation and lead it to be the greatest nation the world had ever known.

2. *Militarily*, He was to be a great military leader who would lead Jewish armies victoriously over all the world.
3. *Religiously*, He was to be a supernatural figure straight from God who would bring righteousness over all the earth.
4. *Personally*, He was to be the One who would bring peace to the whole world.

Jesus Christ accepted the title of Messiah on three different occasions (Mt. 16:17; Mk. 14:61; Jn. 4:26). The name “Jesus” shows Him to be man. The name “Christ” shows Him to be God’s Anointed One, God’s very own Son. *Christ* is Jesus’ official title. It identifies Him officially as:

- *Prophet* (Deu. 18:15-19),
- *Priest* (Psa. 110:4),
- and *King* (2 Sam. 7:12-13).

These three officials were always anointed with oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit who was to perfectly anoint the Christ, the Messiah (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:32-33). □

### MATHEW 02:02–03 HEROD THE GREAT

Herod the Great was a bloody tyrant. Secular history records that he murdered many of his own family members including his favorite wife (he had ten), her grandfather, her brother, and some of his own children. On one occasion, he had the whole Sanhedrin, the ruling body of Jewish government, assassinated. On another occasion, he had murdered every notable man in Jerusalem. He was very capable of the crime reported here. Christ was born during the latter years of Herod’s reign, and his reign as king had been a long one (37 BC to 4 AD). This fact shows just how much of a bloody tyrant Herod really was. He would not even be around when a child king would inherit the throne, yet he felt threatened by the reports of a child king. He was a man possessed by evil. He was suspicious, savage, and warped. Herod had all the children killed, not only in Bethlehem but also “in its vicinity” (v. 16). □

#### **IV. *Mathew 02:07–08 The Magi’s Unexpected Commission***

The magi’s unexpected commission: having to search for the newborn King. Note the magi’s testimony about the star. The magi had unashamedly testified to the supernatural, the star that had led them to seek the newborn King. All the city had heard their testimony, even Herod. The magi were now commissioned to go and search and find the child. The newborn King’s own people were not even aware of His coming. The magi never expected they would have to search for Him.

**Thought 1.** What a shock! Some expect to find “the newborn king” *in the lives of* those who profess to be God’s people, and they are unable to find Him! Too often they are forced to go elsewhere or to give up their search.

**Thought 2.** God used an evil man, Herod (without his knowing it), to help the magi in their search. Any person who seeks the newborn King will be led by God to Him — no matter who God has to use to help the seeker.

## **V. Mathew 02:09–10 *The Wise Men, Magi, Seeking God***

The magi’s unexpected sign — the star guided them again. Apparently the magi did not expect the supernatural sign to appear again (v. 10). They had searched faithfully and done all they could, and they were continuing on. God honours such effort. He met their need (Isa. 64:5). But note: only the magi went to search out the newborn King. And imagine — Bethlehem was only six miles south of Jerusalem!

**Thought 1.** God will meet the need of any man who faithfully searches and does all he can, the man who continues on and refuses to quit. Yet how few search Him out today (2 Cor. 6:2).

**Deu 4:29** *But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

**Isa 55:6** *Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.*

**Jer 29:13** *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

## **VI. Mathew 02:11 *Jesus Christ: The Unexpected King***

The magi’s unexpected King — a humble child in modest surroundings: They found the child King in a house. No doubt the magi had expected the child to be the son of a reigning monarch with all the splendour, wealth, and royalty attached. They had expected Him to be known by all. How unlike what they found — a child with common parents in a modest house! Note: they gave the child King worship. Mathew records that they bowed down and worshipped the newborn king. He says nothing about their having worshipped Herod.

**1 Chr 16:29** *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his Name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness.*

**Psa 95:6** *Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.*

**Psa 96:9** *Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.*

**Phil 2:11** *And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

**Phil 2:9-10** *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.*

**Thought 1.** God's ways are not man's way (1 Cor. 1:26-31). The newborn King is not a humanistic Saviour. He is God's Saviour who has come in God's way.

**2 Cor 8:9** *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

**Phil 2:7** *But made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

**Phil 2:8** *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! ■*