

CHRISTMAS PRESENCE: "JESUS RULER"

THESIS: Revere The Presence

TEXT: Matthew 2:1-12

OPEN: True or False: You can worship God separate from church gatherings. What does worship mean?

Illustration: (Newspaper story: "Mega-Church Downsizes, Cuts 'Non-Essential' Members")

In **Matthew 2:1-12** let's discover how the presence of Jesus as the Ruler of all and Shepherd of His people brings joy from God.

Matthew 2:1-2 "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 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.'"

Historical: Herod was not born a Jew, nor "king of the Jews." He was born of Idumean-Edomite descent in

73 B.C. which made him 70-years old when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Herod's father, Antipater, had done political favors for the Roman Empire. As a result, Herod's family was given the right to rule Judea as client-kings. The Roman Republic was beset by civil wars. King Herod's father and brother were killed in political coups between 43-40 B.C. Herod fled to Rome and was declared "king of the Jews" by the Roman senate in 40 B.C. However, there was a problem because Antigonus of the Hasmonean dynasty had gained power in Judea in 40 B.C. Herod eventually conquered his "kingdom" when he persuaded Mark Antony (of Cleopatra fame) to put Antigonus to death. Herod attempted to gain political favor with the Jews by marrying a Hasmonean Jewess named Mariamne.

Historical: Magi came from the east which included powers like Parthia and Persia which were threats to Rome. They were scholars and advisors to kings—thus the term "wise men." Magi served as priests, scientists, mathematicians, philosophers, doctors, and legal authorities. Our word "magistrate" derives from "Magi." The Magi are not three kings, but they are king-makers. Most likely, there were more than three wise men who came to worship the "One born King of the Jews." The prophet Daniel was elevated to chief magi in Nebuchadnezzar's court because he interpreted the king's dream by God's power—not by divination or magic which is sinful. This may be how the Magi learned of the expectation of the birth of the Messiah.

Old Testament Scripture prophesied the miraculous birth of Christ many hundreds of years before it occurred. This helps to support that the Apostles of Jesus did not make up a "miracle myth" and a religion about Him.

1. **Isaiah 7:14** "The Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel." (*Book of Isaiah was written in approximately 735 B.C.*)
 - A. There are those who question the miracle understanding of Isaiah 7:14. They say that in addition to "virgin" the Hebrew word "almah" can also be translated "young girl" so what's unique about a young girl being with child" according to critics. Consider the following insights to support virgin birth from Greek theologian Spiros Zodhiates from *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* (p. 804-805):
 1. The Greeks, who translated the Old Testament into their language long before Christ was born, had no question about the meaning of *almah*. In the Septuagint, they translated Isaiah 7:14 with the Greek word *parthenos*, the word for "virgin." The Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to use *parthenos* (virgin) in *Matthew 1:23* when quoting *Isaiah 7:14*.
 2. Those who suggest that the birth mentioned in Isaiah 7:14 would be a normal birth contradict the significance of the Hebrew word for "sign" (*ot*). The word never refers to ordinary events,

but always to special or distinctive actions. With reference to God, it's commonly translated as "miracle." Therefore, the "sign" would denote something extraordinary, not merely a normal birth.

3. The child born would be named "Immanuel" (God with us). He cannot be just any child. In addition, other passages (*Isaiah 9:6; 11:1-5*) refer to a divine person who would be born. Moreover, the language of the announcement, "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son" is reminiscent of pagan phraseology used to announce the birth of "gods." It's not suggested that Isaiah was likening Christ's birth to that of some pagan deity, merely that the idol-worshipping Ahaz would recognize the significance of the prophecy.

Matthew 2:3 *"When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him."*

***Disturbed** (Greek: *tarasso*) means agitated, stirred up, or troubled.

Historical: King Herod became increasingly paranoid about threats against his person and throne. He had numerous sons, wives, and others close to him put to death because he feared plots to overthrow his life. Emperor Caesar Augustus once said of the cruel Herod, "I would rather be Herod's pig than to be Herod's son." The last century of the Roman Republic was beset by civil wars and Jewish affairs were complicated by these troubles.

Matthew 2:4-8 *"When (Herod) 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.' ⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He 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.'"*

Scripture refers to Jesus as the Chief Shepherd—the overseer of the souls of mankind.

***1 Peter 2:24-25** "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for

righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned

to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

Let's revere the presence of Jesus the Shepherd-King of our souls. We revere and respect the Lord by worshipping Him and obeying His Word. There's blessing and joy in doing so—and real hope.

1 Peter 5:4-6 "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time."

What does Scripture mean by the "crown of life or glory?" Will Christians wear literal crowns in Heaven?

Crown (Greek: *stephanos*) denotes (a) the symbol of triumph; hence a reward or prize; (b) a token of public honor for distinguished service, military prowess, or of nuptial joy, festal gladness, or triumphant return of kings.

As Christians, our reward or "crown" is eternal life. **Eternal** (Greek: *aidos*) means immeasurable and uninterrupted. **Life** (Greek: *zoe*) signifies a vitality and not just mere existence. Regarding Heaven, life (quality) is eternal (quantity) because there is a complete absence of sin. We reign victorious over sin and death through Christ our King for eternity.

Matthew 2:9-12 *"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. ¹⁰When they saw the*

star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On 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. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route."

Worship (Greek: *proskyneo*) means to bow the knee, pay homage, or show reverence and respect.

Romans 11:35b—12:1 "To Him be the glory forever! Amen. Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."

***Spiritual act of worship** (Greek: *logikos*) means reasonable and logical, pertaining to the commonsense ministry of obedience and service to God.

***Quote from Rienecker/Rogers:** "The use of our bodies is characterized by conscious and intelligent devotion to the service of God" (*Linguistic Key To Greek N.T.*, p. 375).

Romans 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."

Illustration: (Gospel tract: "*His One Mistake*")

CLOSE: Let's revere Jesus—Ruler and Shepherd-King of our souls—by worshipping Him and obeying His Word.