

Topic	The Wise and the Foolish
Reference	Matthew 2
Date	3 Jan 2021
Speaker	

Good morning. And I also wish you a Happy New Year in the name of our most gracious and loving Lord and savior Jesus Christ. And I believe we use this cliché Happy New Year so frequently, and yet I believe we can only have a Happy New Year when we surrender our lives to Jesus and walk in the path that he has shown us. So I do wish you a Happy New Year in our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

Thank you for having me again in your church with you to have this time of worship and bring the word to you. Today is the first Sunday in the year 2021 and we are, as you just read, as we read in Matthew, the gospel of Matthew chapter 2, and it's an interesting chapter. There is much to learn from it, but I want to make a few main points that we can learn from as we enter into this New Year, that is going to be very unknown to us. We have just entered into it and we don't know what to expect, but I believe that Lord will have some lessons for us to learn from this chapter.

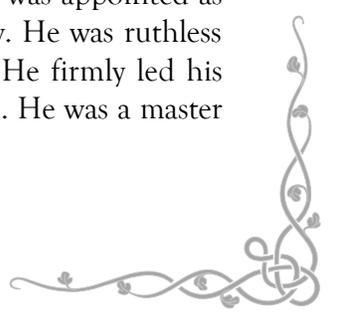
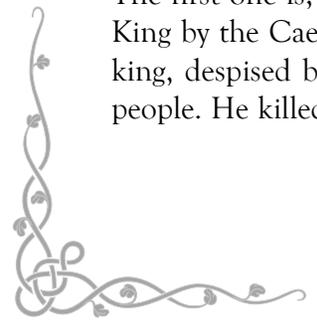
As you can see, I have titled it the wise and the foolish Matthew chapter two. So let's get straight to this chapter. What I would like to do is divide this chapter into two parts. The first part is Matthew chapter 2. The first part is verses 1 to 12 and that is title 'Where is the King'. And when the wise men came to King Herod, they asked him the same question, where is the King of the Jews?

The first verse begins with the word now. So, Matthew now moves on with the story of Jesus. He presented in chapter one, that's about the birth of Jesus and I assume that you covered that during the Christmas season. So Matthew moves on the story of Jesus after his birth, and he said, now this is what took place. And most people believe that about this time when Matthew goes to this chapter, let me just turn straight to it in my...I'm old school, I still like to have the paper Bible, not used to the phones yet, but it says,

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

So that's how he begins. Bethlehem of Judea was about 10 kilometers from Jerusalem. Jesus's birth placem, also King David was from Bethlehem and Jesus came from the lineage of King David. Ruth, King David's grandmother had also lived in Bethlehem. We read about that in the Old Testament as well. So he introduces the story of Jesus, which now continues his life as a 2 year old, or maybe just under 2 years of age. In this section, this part one, there are four main characters. There are others, but these are the four characters. So let's look about each one of them and think about them.

The first one is, we are introduced this passage is the King Herod, Herod the great. He was appointed as King by the Caesar, by the Roman emperor. And he was a Jewish person. He was a Jew. He was ruthless king, despised by most of the Jewish people, even some of the Romans disliked him. He firmly led his people. He killed his wife, some children, his own children he killed, and other relatives. He was a master



builder though. He was used by God to rebuild the temple when he first took over in 37 BC and he ruled until 4 BC and many other cities and buildings. So we are introduced first with this King Herod.

Then the second group of people we are introduced here are the wise men. Most people believe that there are three Kings because of the song, three Kings from the East, but there were more than, maybe there were three Kings, but there were more people in this group of people. They were Majis comes from the Greek word, Migil, and this same word is used in the book of Daniel as well. They were priests, they were expert in mysteries. These are the people that people would call upon to solve mysteries and find meaning of different riddles and prophecies of the old scriptures. And there were the one to be called and dreamers and interpreters. They interpreted dreams, and this is what they did.

And so these are the men, they came all the way from the East, we are told. And I believe somewhere in the region of Babylon that we read about in the Old Testament, Mesopotamia, and some people believe that they traveled for about 1,200 kilometers, camels and in other ways, and roughly took them about 40 days of long tiresome journey to get to Jerusalem. So these are the people we read about and they come and ask King Herod, where is he who has been born King of the Jews? And that's the question they ask.

Now we also read about the star in this story. And so here is just a little bit of background. These people were not Jewish people. They are from that part of the world, Mesopotamia, ancient Babylon area, but I'm sure, you know, if you know your Old Testament history that after the fall of the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 BC large number of people were taken into exile by King Nebuchadnezzar and that settled in Babylon. And they were there for 70 years and many of them came back, but there was tremendous amount of interaction between Jewish people and the people of that land.

Many of the old Testament prophetic books were written during this time and the post exilic period as well. So these people had come in contact with this Jewish people. They were teachers and scribes and had heard about. The prophecy probably taken from Numbers chapter 24 verse 17, and the Jewish people during this time believed that this prophecy pointed to a Messiah, a deliverer. A King would come someday, he would deliver his people from all oppression and bring the kingdom of God. And this was later discovered that this view that this is what the expectation was, the prophecy connected to the star and the dead sea scrolls as well.

So here is a little background on these people. They saw the star and they made this long journey of 1,200 kilometers to come to Jerusalem. And they came from the East. They brought gifts. We read in this first part as well. They gave gold, which shows royalty. When you approach a King and in those days Kings had lot of goals, even in some of their clothing, they had gold fibers. So gold is to honor the King, to respect the King, his royalty. They gave him frankincense for ceremonial incense burning on the altar. And people had used not just a Jewish people, but other communities as an offering to royalty and sometimes as prayer to God as well. And murr is used in making perfume for anointing. So all these gifts point to the King Jesus, who was maybe 2 years or just under that age and they give him this gift, believing that the prophecies that we've been taught by some of your own teachers are true and he is the King. So we hear about this wiseman.

Then the another group of people are the chief priests and scribes. This is also a fascinating group of people. Chief priests were giving oversight to the temple, temple worship, temple activities, sacrifices. When people came, they basically ran the temple services. They were in charge and the scribes were interpreters and teachers of the law. The Mosaic Law, the Old Testament scriptures, they knew about the prophecy. It was a quick answer. When Herod asked them, Herod asked them, inquired them about where the Christ was to be born. Verse 4, they asked the question, where is the King? And Herod asks the scribes where would this Christ be born? And the word Christ in the Old Testament and the New Testament in the Greek comes from the Messiah of the Old Testament.

So Herod knew the scribes and the priest knew that they were asking about the Messiah, the deliverer. The King and they were also expecting the Messiah and they knew about the promise immediately out of memory that is obviously the Bethlehem, Micah chapter five verse two Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem. They knew that and they told that to the King. So that's them. And then the King of the Jews, the child Jesus. We see no words here spoken by Jesus. We'll look at some of his words spoken later by Jesus. The Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one, that is what it means. Messiah is the anointed one, a savior. And as I said, under 2 years of age. 17 times in the New Testament, we read this word, the King of the Jews, the King of the Jews, including the gospel of Matthew, but throughout the four gospels 17 times this word is used and that is to show his office. He will shepherd his people, Israel. When King David was anointed as a King in 2 Samuel, the same words are used. King David was to be a shepherd and a ruler. And now Messiah is introduced also as a shepherd and he will rule his people.

There are other people in this story, but we don't have much about them. That is Joseph and Mary in verse 21. Silent care and obedient to God. They just took care of young Jesus Messiah, both chosen to play a very significant role in this story. So, here is the first part, and these are the key players in here. So now comes the interesting part.

One, there are three responses. As you read this carefully. Let me present to you. There are three key responses by three groups of people and three very different responses.

First, when King Herod, I describe he responds in two words, fear and rejection. **Fear and rejection.** He was troubled and all the people who were with him, they were troubled. And he tried to actually kill him. He was so deceptive. He told this wisemen that he was really interested in knowing about this Messiah, the Christ. I wanted to come and worship him. I want to do that. And he told them to come back to him, but he was full of fear and rejection. He wanted to preserve his personal status. He did not want, and people with him that we read about another king to rule over them. They were happy with their own life and they did not want the status quo to change. We do not want a new King over our life. We are happy with ourselves. The seeds of humanism, here you see they were afraid to be ruled by someone else, and they were afraid to lose control over their lives. I am the ruler and the King of my life. We don't want anyone else. So that's one response by King and his people, fear and rejection.

Here is the second, two responses and they're quite shocking actually. I find them quite shocking and that is the priests and scribes. We don't read much about them in this chapter, but throughout the gospel readings, not just Matthew, but Mark and Luke and John, you read about priests and the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees and other people. These are the people I described their response with these

two words, **apathy and neglect**. They actually didn't care to investigate. I was really surprised when I was reading this. They should have just jumped from the chairs and said, really, we want to come with you. We want to go to Bethlehem right now because we've been waiting for the Messiah. We've been waiting for him for so many years. Our prophets have told us many prophecies about him. And neglect. They were expecting Messiah the King, knew the prophecy but they completely ignored this and took no steps to find him. You know, ultimately these are the people who were involved in killing him, crucify him, crucify him. I wonder where these priests and scribes were. Most likely they were part of that crowd who shouted crucify him. So that's their apathy and neglect.

And here is another shocking response by wisemen, **worship and offering**. They made a tiresome expensive journey, 1,200 kilometers over 40 days, but when they saw King Jesus, verse 10 said, read those words.

Rejoiced and with great joy, tremendous joy and exceeding exuberant joy with great joy they worshiped him. They fell down and worshiped him.

Offering and worship is we see here. Amazing, amazing response. So here are the wise and the fools, and here is an irony here. Very interesting. King Herod and his men. Think about this, the priests and the scribes and the other people with them were only 10 km from Bethlehem. They were very close, very close to where the Messiah was, where the King of the Jews was and they missed him. So near yet so far. They missed worshiping him. They missed offering gifts and their life to this newborn King and the people who are so far from the East, they found him, think about it. Some people can be so close to Christ, know so much about him, the prophecies in the scriptures, and yet their heart can be so far away from him. Very, very interesting.

So these are the three responses and we'll come back to that towards the end. So now let's move on to part two. We are kind of studying this chapter.

I've titled this, a promise keeping God, Matthew 2:13 to 23. In this part, we read about Old Testament prophecies fulfilled. Do you know that all three sections here, all three sections in this one and width, this was to fulfill what the Lord has spoken by the prophet. Look at verse 15, it says,

And remain there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord has spoken by the prophets.

Matthew writes out of Egypt I called my son and this prophecy is found in Hosea chapter 11 verse 1 and it reads,

When Israel was a child I loved him and out of Egypt I called my Son.

So in this first section verses 13 to 15 redemption is remembered. Everybody in Israel, the Jewish people knew the story. The greatest redemptive historical story of their time was when God brought his people out of slavery in Egypt of over 400 years, tremendous. They celebrated it, remembered it, taught their children. And he said out of Egypt, I called my son and that refers to the nation of Israel and Matthew in writing to his audience who is primarily Jewish audience he had in mind. He reminds them that when you

think of this Messiah, even in his infancy, there is the redemption story part of his life. So that's the first story, redemption remembered.

In the second portion, is a little complex. We don't have much time to go into it, it is verses 16 to 18 also and it ends with the same words. 16 to 18,

then what was fulfilled then was fulfilled what was spoken by prophet Jeremiah.

So we read about that as well. He says, I'm telling you this story about prophet Jeremiah weeping and lament, Jeremiah 31:15 and that there is a town mentioned here, North of Jerusalem. And that's a fascinating history where they were taken from Jerusalem after Jerusalem fell 586 BC into captivity. They traveled North and then turned right to go to Babylon. They pass through this town and once they pass through this town they were now leaving the area and it said, Rachel was weeping, Rachel mother of the Jewish people, the tribes of Israel was weeping for children taken into exile. But if you read the story of the return from the exile in the Old Testament, there is rejoicing as they came into Jerusalem from the same town.

So here is a story of this thing and some of you want to know. It's a sad story. That little children were killed and how many most historians believe it wasn't in hundreds, maybe 10 to 20, no more than 30 children of that age at that time under two years of age in Bethlehem, but here also, he gives this account to inform his audience that this was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. Then the last one is the savior saved 19 to 23. Angel appears to Joseph and Joseph comes and he brings him back to Galilee. And they spent about one year or less than one year in Egypt. There is not a specific prophecy about that, he would be called Nazareen, but very briefly here that in the Old Testament Nazarus was a town that was despised. And even during time of Jesus, if you sell somebody that you're from Nazareth, oh that is terrible. You know, you don't have good reputation if you're from the town and John 1:46 says, can anything good come out of Nazareth? So he says in verse 23, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled that he would be called a Nazarene. And he said that is that attitude off being despised. And people of Nazareth being despised that was fulfilled.

So this all three accounts. The way Matthew presents here is to tell his audience, listen to this prophecies, in chapter 1, he had a prophecies from book of Isaiah. This is the Messiah that I'm writing about. Keep reading this story, the rest of the story that I'm writing. But in this beginning, chapter two, he is the Messiah and he is a promise keeping God, what he has said many years ago through the prophets are evident in the story of this child, Jesus.

And so now as we conclude this chapter reflection, there are two things to take away from here in the few minutes we have left.

Promise of the future. The first one is promise of the future in Matthew 26:64, the baby Jesus, we read about in chapter two says these words when he's grown up 30 years from chapter two now, these are the words of Jesus.

But concerning that day about this return, second coming and hour, no one knows not even the angels of heaven nor the son, but the father only.

And if you read that in the context talks about Jesus, he is coming back again. The prophecy of his second coming. Matthew was describing just now in chapter two prophecies of his first coming, Jesus is talking about his second coming and in 26:64, this is what Jesus said,

you have said so, but I tell you from now on, you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming on cloud bounds off heaven.

And so these are the promises Jesus is making. And these are for us. This promises that Jesus, his own words. He's coming back in John 14:1 and 3, it is much clearer. Jesus says, let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me, in my father's house are many rooms. I am going away, but I will come back and told his disciples in Jerusalem and I will take you to be with me, words of Jesus. In Acts chapter one in verse eight, the angels told the disciples that Jesus whom you see going away, he will come back the same way. And there are many other chapters, Revelation 21-22.

So my brothers and sisters we read about the old Testament prophecies with Matthew in chapter two, says are fulfilled. Our God is a promise-keeping God. And in the gospel, we have words of Jesus and he says he is coming back. So, we have those promises, prophecies made of Jesus's second coming. And our God is a promise-keeping God, we can count on him. He will come back. And now promises for here and now, and this is what I want to conclude with an application. And these are the two very powerful, powerful promises. And I'm taking as much as possible from Matthew, because I believe that you are going to study Matthew as the year go on.

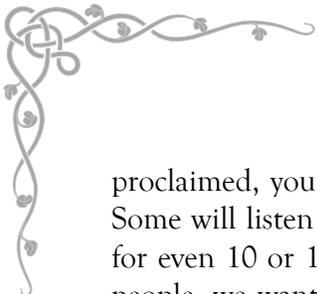
Matthew 6:33-34, the baby Jesus we read about in Matthew 2, who was two years old. These are the words he speaks 30 years from that time.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for itself, sufficient for the day it is own trouble.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things, his righteousness will be added unto you. That's the promise he is making Jesus, but look at it in chapter 11. Another one, I find that most encouraging. And I claim this as a promise for 2021.

Come to me says Jesus, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

How do we respond? We read three responses, King Herod rejection, Pharisees apathy and neglect, but the wise men worshipped him and offered themselves to the King. The first one is knowing the reality of response to the gospel. There is a missions evangelism principle in here we will study about that in Matthew chapter 13, that when the gospel is



proclaimed, you will find the same responses from the people. Some will outright hate and reject Jesus. Some will listen to him and even get very familiar, even coming to your church, attend the church some for even 10 or 15 years, and yet we'll be far away from Jesus. And we don't want to be foolish like those people, we want to be wise and we want to trust our Lord with the promises that he has given us with worship and offering of our lives.

So let me just remind him, closing this two promises for here and now remember that. As Matthew describes and tells his audience that these prophecies that were made in the Old Testament are fulfilled during the birth account of Jesus we have the prophecies of his second coming, my brothers and sister Jesus will come back. Trust and be excited and wait with anticipation of his return and his promises here and now are to be taken with trust and confidence. And as we enter into 2021, let me remind you two words from the 6:33,

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow. Seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all things will be added unto you and he is inviting us, this baby Jesus, we read about in Matthew two later spoke and is inviting us even today. Come to me, all you labor and heavy laden as we enter into 2021, I will give you rest. Let us enter into his rest as we walk into year 2021. God bless you.