

“Coming to Worship the King (Part 1)” – Matthew 2:1-12

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.sobc.net.]

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 2. While you are turning there, let me remind you about the response cards in the pews. [elaborate]

I anticipate spending three weeks in Matthew 2 and two weeks on the first story we find in this chapter. The first story concerns a group of men coming to Israel in search for the newborn King and Messiah of the Jews. There are many things we can learn from this text of Scripture, but I really want to focus our attention in the next couple of weeks on something these verses teach us about the *Gospel*, something they teach us about *God*, something they teach us about *God's Word*, and something they teach us about *God's Son*. Then we will seek to learn from the characters in this story about how to respond to each of these things. So that is the plan for this Sunday and next.

Before we get to that, however, let's begin by reading God's Word. Focus your minds. Don't distract others. Hear the Word of the Lord, starting in verse 1...

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶ " 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.' " (Matthew 2:1-6)

This is God's Word...

Let's Pray...

Now, verse 1 tells us the setting of this story—"after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea." Matthew adds "of Judea" so his readers won't confuse which Bethlehem he has in mind. There was also a Bethlehem of Zebulun (Joshua 19:15), which is north of Jerusalem. But the Bethlehem he's talking about is five miles south of Jerusalem. The city's name means "house of bread" and it was known as the "city of David" because that's where king David was from. So this is another tip of the hat to David, whose life anticipated a greater king, a greater son of David, who would come and reign over God's people forever.¹

Now we know from verse 11, that these travelers eventually encounter Jesus at a "house," not a manger. So some time has elapsed since Jesus' birth. How much time, we don't know exactly. But based on Herod's conversation with these travelers and his response to murder children under the age of two, there is a pretty good chance that Jesus may be around two. So think toddler Jesus. A little different than the way the story has been popularized in America I know, but *text trumps tradition*.

In fact, it may be a good idea for you to take everything you think you know about this story and just throw it out the window. Let's start from scratch, because this is one of those stories that has a lot of traditions that have developed around it that have no real basis in the text. Take our Christmas songs, for example. We sing "We Three Kings," but is there anything here that says that they were kings? No. There is not. And is there anything that indicates that they were three in number? No, not really. That number probably comes from verse 11, when three kinds of gifts are described, but what if multiple people brought the same kind of gift?

In fact, there are details in the text that would suggest that they were neither three in number nor traveling kings.ⁱⁱ For one thing, their arrival in Jerusalem was easily noticed evidently and creates quite a stir, which is much easier to imagine if there was an entourage of travelers instead of just three. It's hard to imagine three men carrying such gifts for long journey without being mugged along the way. And, if they were kings, would nobility really travel alone? But notice they are not even called "kings"; they're called "magi." The ESV translates the word "wise men," but the Greek here is "magi" (cf. NASB, NIV)

What are "magi"? Great question. This is the word from which we get the English words "magic" or "magician." But don't think David Blaine or Chris Angel or David Copperfield kinds of magicians; that's not who these travelers are. They are "wise men," but they are not just wise men. The word is usually used for astrologers, those who study the stars. In that day, Magi were very well connected with high-ranking political and religious offices and people of great power and influence, which would explain how they had such valuable gifts to offer Jesus and why Herod gives them the time of day. They are more likely advisors to kings, than kings themselves.ⁱⁱⁱ

As for their origins, all we are told is that that they are "from the east" (1:1). They may have been from Babylon or Persia, but we don't really know. We are simply told that they come from East of Jerusalem and they come at the prompting of a star. Now notice what verse 2 says about this star. Some of your translations will say that they saw this star "when it rose" and other translations will say they saw the star "in the east." So which is it? The older translations tend to go with, "in the east." But if you translate it that way it's a little confusing when you try to reconcile it with verse 1. Many have asked, "If they are from east of Jerusalem and they followed a star that appeared 'in the east,' that would have lead them in the opposite direction of Jerusalem. So is this a contradiction in the Bible?" No it's not.

When it says that these men saw the star "in the east," it could just mean that they were in the east when they saw the star. Another possibility is that "in the east" is misrepresenting the meaning. The word translated "east" means "rising." Since celestial bodies seem to rise in the east because of the rotational direction of the earth, it becomes a figure of speech for the compass point we call "east" (which is how the word is used in reference to the origins of these magi). But literally what it says here is "in the rising" or "when it rose," which would mean the location of the star in the sky may not have been limited to east. Many of the translations you brought today will say "when it rose" in verse 2 and 9 for this reason. That's a more literal translation. That is probably how Matthew's audience would have understood it as well. Matthew seems to be stressing the appearing of the star more than its direction. And, for what it is worth, Jesus is also called a rising sun or star in Luke 1:78, 2 Peter 1:19, and Revelation 22:16.

But, for the sake of argument, let's just say it was in the east (which it may well have been). The text doesn't say that they follow it to Jerusalem. It's not until they make their way to Bethlehem that we get the impression that they are following the star. So if the star was in the east, they end up in Jerusalem not because they followed the star there but rather they connected this star somehow to the birth of "the king of the Jews" (as verse 2 tells us)^{iv} and they naturally traveled to Jerusalem because, they reasoned evidently, where else would the king of the Jews be born if not Jerusalem, the capital city of the Jewish people. And if he wasn't born in that city, surely someone there would know about where this newborn king of the Jews could be found.

The point is, regardless of which interpretation you go with, each option shows there is no contradiction in the text. The only contradiction to be found is in the Christmas songs and traditions. Now some of you may be mad at me. You may be thinking, “Why you messing with our Christmas songs pastor? I liked those Christmas carols and you’re ruining it for me. I’m going to start calling you pastor Scrooge.” Sorry. I like them too. But this is a useful thought exercise if for no other reason than to remind us that *text trumps tradition*.

We, as Evangelical Protestants, are sometimes quick to criticize other faith traditions because they elevate their traditions to the same level of authority as Scripture. We saw an example of this last Sunday when I mentioned the widespread belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary, the belief that Mary remained a virgin her entire life after Jesus was born. Well, that’s not taught in Scripture. She was a virgin when she was pregnant with Jesus, but nothing in the Bible teaches she remained a virgin her whole life after Jesus was born. But there are some faith traditions that hold as true the lifetime virginity of Mary, like the Roman Catholic Church because a Pope said so. And we would be quick to say, “Hold on there, that’s not in the Scriptures. That’s just tradition. We don’t believe it because it’s not in the text and the text even seems to lead in the opposite direction.” And all the Protestants cheer. But if we are going to do that, shouldn’t we hold ourselves to the same standard? Shouldn’t we be willing to reform our beliefs, if the Scriptures prompt us to, even if we have always believed something or grown up in a certain way?

Do you realize that with the exception of things like the ordinances, prayer, the preaching of God’s Word, and worshipping, there is hardly a thing we do on Sunday morning that the vast majority of Christians throughout church history have done. Most Christians throughout church history have not held a hymnal or had a copy of your favorite Bible translation. Most Christians wouldn’t recognize any of the contemporary music we sing or the hymns we cherish. The vast majority of Christians in history would have had no idea what an altar call or a response card was. God was saving people through faith in the risen Christ for almost twenty centuries before those things even existed. If you’ve ever been on the mission field around the world, you quickly realize that churches do things a lot differently than us and that is not necessarily bad. Very often we have the same core things in common with them (and the rest of those Christians in past centuries), but the expression of those core truths varies from setting to setting. The packaging changes. The non-core (i.e., those things that are not biblically mandated) changes based on the context of ministry. In fact, isn’t this what Paul was talking about when he told the Corinthians,

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. ²³ I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Do you see his point? There are certain “core” things, defined by what God’s Word has mandated and what it clearly teaches, and Paul never abandoned those things and neither should we, even if they are not culturally popular. In fact, he was critical of all those who did. But then there are all these “non-core” things, driven more by personal preferences or traditions or the characteristics of a culture, and Paul was willing to adopt and adapt those things if it meant reaching more with the Gospel. So the Gospel message and the Scripture he proclaimed never changed, but when he was with Jews he packaged it differently. And when he was with non-Jews he packaged it differently. And when he was with the weak, he packaged it differently than when he was with the strong. The core never changed. He never abandoned the offensive parts of God’s Word. The non-core stuff, however, did. In fact, Paul is saying it must for the sake of our witness. I don’t want to chase that bunny any further for now...

But let me reassure you, I bring that up not because I'm thinking about some radical change to bring upon Southern Oaks. So don't panic. Stop biting those nails. I bring this up simply because our Christmas songs are an illustration of the non-core stuff, that we've grown up with, have become sentimental to us, we get territorial about, but does not in every case line up with God's Word. And granted it's probably pretty inconsequential in the case of Christmas carols, but we are Sola Scripture people. Scripture alone people. That's one of our banners. So we should always be shining the light and truth of Scripture over our traditions and see if they line up and if not have the courage to change our mind. That's all I'm saying.

Now back to Matthew 2. Look at the second verse again. They ask, "*Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him?*" Most agree that the reference here to "his star" has an Old Testament background in Numbers 22, which was the story of Balak and Balaam.^v In the book of Numbers we find God's people journeying from Mt. Sinai to the Promised Land. As they traveled they grew in strength and people took notice. One of those people was the king of Moab, named Balak. So what Balak does is call for Balaam, who was a magician, or seer. And essentially the king hires Balaam to cast a curse on the Israelites. Balak says to Balaam, "*Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed*" (Numbers 22:6).

But as the story unfolds, God makes it clear to Balaam that the man will not be cursing Israel, but will actually be declaring a blessing on them (Numbers 22:22-35). So three times, Balaam obeys the Lord and blesses Israel, to the frustration of the king of Moab. This is how Balaam's last oracle begins:

*The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,
16 the oracle of him who hears the words of God,
and knows the knowledge of the Most High,
who sees the vision of the Almighty,
falling down with his eyes uncovered:
17 I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near:
a star shall come out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise out of Israel... (Numbers 24:15-17)*

The last couple lines are important for our purposes. He mentions a "scepter," which is a reference to someone who rules (i.e., a king). And he mentions a star that would appear out of Jacob, which means Israel. If you keep reading in the oracle, you discover that this king would deliver the people from their enemies (24:17-19). So basically what we have here in Numbers is a man from the east prophesying a star and the arrival of a king from among the Jews. This prophecy was widely regarded as a messianic prophecy.^{vi} And it should not surprise us, therefore, that this is being fulfilled in Matthew when Magi from the east notice a star that alerts them to the arrival of the King of the Jews. God is sovereignly bringing his plan to pass, which he hinted at centuries before through a pagan magician.

In addition to this, the prophet Isaiah also predicted the arrival of the king and likened him to a star—or a light—that would gather in the nations. Listen to these words from Isaiah 60:

*Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
2 For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;*

*but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.
3 And nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your rising.
4 Lift up your eyes all around, and see;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from afar,
and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.
5 Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and exult,
because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
6 A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD. (Isaiah 60:1-6)*

So Isaiah is describing how the nations would be drawn to the light of the Lord that shines forth in Israel. And these nations are described as bringing with them riches when they come, even gold and frankincense are mentioned (cf. Hosea 2:23).

Now we get a sense for what Matthew is trying to teach us. He's showing us another example of God's sovereignty in bringing all of the prophecies and pointers to fulfillment in Christ. And, don't miss this, he's teaching us something about the Gospel.

The Gospel: The Gospel Is for Outsiders and the Nations (Not Just Insiders and Israel)

Remember, this book was most likely written to people with a Jewish background. So how would the Magi have appeared to that audience? They were pagans. They were caught up in practices that the law of God condemned. But they were from the east, which meant that they were not Israelites. They were from the nations. They were Gentiles. It's not a coincidence that the first group that Matthew describes as coming to Jesus were these men. He could have mentioned the shepherd, but he chose not to because he's making a point about the Gospel.

What is he trying to teach us? He's trying to teach us that the good news about Jesus, the good news that the King of kings has arrived and is going to live a perfect life and die on the cross as a payment for the sins of those who would turn from sin and turn to Christ for salvation, the good news that God has made a way for our forgiveness through the death and resurrection of Christ, the good news that now there is no more condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, that good news...is not simply for Israel. It's for the nations and the end of this book makes that crystal clear. And these Magi are representative of those nations, coming to Jesus. They anticipate us, people like us, who are not Jewish and of Israelite descent. We were outsiders of the covenant, but God has brought us in. We are in because God was faithful to His promises to Abraham and David. The Gospel is not just for the Jewish people. It is for the nations.

And it's not just for people who are clean and proper. These men are into things that Israel held in contempt. They were unclean by every Jewish measure you can think of, yet they are the ones who come. They take what little information that they have access to and they come to Jesus. The first worshipers of Jesus that Matthew tells us about are a gaggle of magicians and astrologers.

I remember when it dawned on me that Magi were typically wrapped up in witchcraft and astrology and astronomy and idolatry and things that the Law of God does not approve of, I was puzzled because God used what they were wrapped up in as the means by which he moves them to Christ. Honestly, that kind of bothered me at first. I was thinking, “God wouldn’t do that, would he?” It didn’t quite fit with my view of God. And yet this text seems to be teaching us something interesting about God.

God: God Meets Us Where We Are to Make His Son Known and Worshiped

In no way is this story condoning the practices that these Magi may have been involved in. So don’t use this text to justify purchasing your horoscope at the grocery store. That would be wrong. That would be sinful. The Bible clearly forbids astrology. The prophet Jeremiah instructed God’s people to “*Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them for the customs of the people are vanity*” (Jeremiah 10:2-3). Isaiah mocks those who practice astrology. He says, “*You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons make known what shall come upon you. Behold, they are like stubble; the fire consumes them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame...they wander about, each in his own direction; there is no one to save you*” (Isaiah 47:13-15). “Matthew neither condemns nor sanctions [their astrology],” one commentator points out, “instead, he contrasts the eagerness of the Magi to worship Jesus, despite their limited knowledge, with the apathy of the Jewish leaders and the hostility of Herod’s court—all of whom had the Scriptures to inform them.”^{vii}

But don’t miss that it was a star that got the Magi’s attention. Does that bother you that God would reveal himself to these sinners through their sinful practices?

Daniel Doriani writes,

“God [here] reverses the field and chooses to speak to stargazers through a star. Stars had significance for these men. God descended to the Magi’s level to communicate with them. Stars got their attention, so God used a star. To this day, God speaks in language that gets the attention of people. Today, we imagine he might drop a pile of coins on the tile floor in a casino to get the attention of a gambler or croupier. Some might ask why God would want to speak to casino denizens. Because that is his way. The Magi were pagans serving a pagan king. Yet God spoke to them, for that is what he does. Christianity is not a religion for ‘good people,’ it’s for sinners who listen when God calls.”^{viii}

Do you see his point? God meets us where we are. What a great picture these magi are of this fact. If you are a Christian you have a story of how God met you where you were and got your attention. For some of you God used a trusted friend or family member to get your attention, when they came and shared the Gospel with you. For others of you, God may have used the bottom of a empty bottle of liqueur you clenched by a toilet. For some of you, God helped you come to your senses when you hit rock bottom of your addiction to narcotics. For some of you, it was when your marriage was falling apart because of your choices. Maybe it was from a prison cell.

Many of you came to your senses right in the middle of your sinning. That is what happened to Matthew himself. He was a tax collector and Jesus came to him as he was in the act of collecting taxes and exploiting God’s people. Jesus called Matthew to follow him while Matthew was in the act of sinning. Magi were known for their sinful and idolatrous stargazing, but God got these men’s attention through a star.

What a merciful God that he would meet us where we are. And do you know why He does it? Because He loves us. Yes, even sinful us. And because He has to come to us if we are to be with him. That's the point of the incarnation. He comes to us first, before we come to Him. If we are to turn to Him, He has to work in our lives and reveal Himself to us. He has to come to us through the circumstance, through the messenger, through the parent, through the sermon, through the hangover, through whatever means he graciously sees fit, because if He doesn't we would perish. How gracious and compassionate and loving is our God that he would meet us where we are even when we were far away from him and sinful. Paul once wrote, "*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8).

We cannot begin to imagine all of the things that God might use to make His Son known in the world that we might respond to Him in worship and obedience. Some of you are here today because God has brought you here and is drawing you to worship this Jesus and to find hope and salvation in Jesus. Whatever the circumstances that got you here, they were wielded by a sovereign God who is drawing you to Himself, even without your knowledge.

"What is plain concerning this matter of the star is that it is doing something that it cannot do on its own: it is guiding magi to the Son of God to worship him. There is only one Person in Biblical thinking that can be behind that intentionality in the stars—God himself."^{ix} And, notice, He doesn't just use the star, he uses the murderous intentions of a tyrant. Herod has no intention to worship this one born King of the Jews, yet God uses even the wicked Herod to accomplish his purposes. "Herod's role in the narrative should not be overlooked," writes Stanley Hauerwas, "for without Herod the wise men might not have found the one they sought." The lesson is that even the "enemies of the kingdom often serve the movement begun in Jesus."^x God uses even them to push people towards Christ, to make His Son known and worshiped.

So while it may make us uncomfortable at first, it's incredibly comforting in the end to know that God graciously accommodates himself to where we are. This story is a kind of "redemptive analogy."^{xi} Think about it. He met them where they were and he invited them on a journey. That's what God did for us Christians. God didn't wait for us to get it all together before he reached out to us. He met us where we were and offers us the power and faith to follow Him. He speaks our language. He comes to our level. He scratches where we itch. He accommodates Himself to us, for our good, to save "some." And this is grace. And it is a beautiful truth. And it's an analogy that he calls us to mimic.

Remember when I quoted from 1 Corinthians 9, where Paul talked about becoming all things to all men that he might see some saved. He was adapting himself so that he could effectively communicate timeless truth to an evolving audience. And he doesn't just claim to do this, we see examples of him doing this.

For example in Acts 17, he stumbles into the Areopagus of Athens and he looks around at all the statues and icons of all their pagan idols. And he spots one that was for "an unknown god." It's the catchall god, just in case they missed one. Well, they did miss one. The One true God, in fact. So Paul says to them,

"Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you." (Acts 17:22-23)

And then he shares the Gospel with the Greek idolaters. Do you see what he did? He accommodates himself to them. He's speaking their language. He's finding some point of contact with them and running with it. He's doing for them what God did for us. God is using Paul to do for them, what God used a star to do for the Magi.

These are wonderful examples for us. As a church we too need to “become all things to all men” so as to “win some.” That means we have to always be adapting certain things as the culture around us changes. The question is, what do we adapt? The answer is NEVER the truth.

The truth never changes. The Gospel never changes. I don't care how offensive the Gospel is to our culture, we must never be ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for the salvation of those who believe (Romans 1:16). So we never change that, even if the churches around us do (as many of them have). But we may have to change what we do to get that message to people. We have to speak their language. We have to know where they look and be able to connect Jesus to their context. We may have to change how we package the Gospel so we can more effectively communicate the truth to a new generation of lost people. But we have to do this without watering down the truth. And without sinning. And in this way, both God and Paul, set before us wonderful examples. The story of the magi is a redemptive analogy for how God meets us where we are. It's time for us to let God use us to meet others where they are.

Yet it is vital for us to notice that the star only gets them so far. Something else is needed. The star gets them to Jerusalem, but not to Bethlehem where Jesus was. Did you notice what gets them to Bethlehem? God's Word. So we learn something about God's Word here...

God's Word: *God's Word Is Needed and Intended to Lead Us to Jesus*

We will pick up with this lesson next time.

But, listen, maybe you are here today and you're thinking, “I feel a little like the magi in that I don't really know much about God's Word and I don't know much about Jesus, but it feels like God has been trying to get my attention. It feels like God is drawing me to Jesus and I can't really explain it. I don't know what all this means. I don't know where all of this leads. But I just know I want to end up with Jesus.”

Listen, if that is you then I have good news. That's the Holy Spirit working on you, because God means to save you. Save you from what? Your sin. Sin is that stuff we have done that God doesn't want us to do. It makes us guilty before a perfect and sinless God and it separates us from Him. If our sin is not forgiven and our guilt removed then we will forever be separated from God. But this why Jesus came.

Jesus came because there was nothing we could do to fix this problem. So Jesus came and lived the life we should have lived and on the cross he laid His life down in your place. He substituted Himself for you, so that all the consequences we deserve for our sin He absorbed so that we wouldn't have to. He died to remove our sins. He resurrected to give us right standing with God. He saves all those who are willing to acknowledge their need for Him to save them. He saves those who turn from their sin and turn to Christ to save them, those whose faith rests in Christ alone.

Maybe you need to do that today. Maybe you need to put your faith in Christ today, trusting in Him alone to save you. You can do that now. God's Word says, “*if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame'*” (Romans 10:9-11). Do you believe that? You can trust Him now to save you and He will save you.

Will you bow your heads...

Let's pray...

ⁱ Cf. previous sermon called “Could This Be the Son of David?” preached on July 13, 2014, to Southern Oaks Baptist Church. See www.sobc.net.

ⁱⁱ There are even certain traditions that suggest their names were “Melkon” (later rendered “Melchior”), Balthasar, and Gaspar and they were ethnically Ethiopian, Indian, and Greek, but this almost certainly pure speculation. See D. A. Carson, “Matthew” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 85.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. the book of Daniel for other examples of Magi.

^{iv} Timothy Keller remarks, “In that period of time, in that first century BC/AD, there was a strong rumor all around the Mediterranean that soon a great ruler would come out of Judea. Tacitus, Suetonius, Josephus, and a number of historians refer to it. The reason we know it was influential ... There was a man named Vespasian who was a Roman general. He put down a rebellion in Judea in the 60s AD. He, in a sense, reconquered Judea. When he came back to Rome and ran his campaign to become emperor (by the way, he won his campaign to be emperor), he used as part of his campaign rhetoric the fact that he was the ruler who was supposed to come out of Judea. He used it. There was a very strong rumor and idea that somehow some great world ruler was going to come out of Judea soon. We also know that right around the time Jesus was born, there was an odd conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. The astrologers went crazy over it, and they all looked at it. Therefore, in light of all I just said, the idea that astrologers from the East, knowing about this great ruler who was supposed to come out of Judea (everybody knew about it), seeing this conjunction, would come and say, “Where is he?” makes perfect historical sense.” Timothy Keller, “Christmas Message,” preached on December 20, 1992, to Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, NY.

^v Several of the following insights and the flow of thought was adopted and adapted from David Platt, *Matthew* (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 31-33.

^{vi} See Carson, 86.

^{vii} *Ibid.*

^{viii} Daniel Doriani, *Matthew, Volume 1: Chapters 1-13* (Reformed Expository Commentary; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 28-29.

^{ix} From a John Piper sermon, titled “We Have Come to Worship Him” that was preached to Bethlehem Baptist Church on December 21, 1997.

^x Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew* (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible; Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 40.

^{xi} Grant Osborne, *Matthew* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 92.