

The Kingdom-Driven Life #4

The Book of Matthew

Revelation and Result

I. Revelation and Result-Three Clues to Christ's Kingdom Come Near

A. In our last study, we focused on the Christmas story, the “immaculate conception” and the virgin birth. (Life begins at *conception*, not at birth!)

1. The Nicene Creed calls Christ “very God of very God”, the ultimate revelation of God's person.
2. Today, we'll look at the first half of Matthew 2, which moves from **revelation** to the **result** of the revelation.

B. When the King is **revealed**, three **results** occur:

- True seekers will be attracted (2:1-2)
- Existing “kingdoms” will be disturbed and threatened (2:3-6)
- True and false worshippers will be exposed (2:7-12)

II. Three Results of the Kingdom Come Near

A. First Result-True Seekers Attracted

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”
Matthew 2:1-2 KJV

1. When the Kingdom comes, God will “promote” it!
2. The wise men or magi were Gentiles (non-Jews), probably from the court of the King of Persia.
3. They were pagan astrologers, those who look for guidance from the stars.
4. The amazing thing here is that for this most special event in history, God chose to reveal Himself where the pagans were looking!
5. It's remarkable that the very God who forbade astrology to His people as punishable by death (Dt.18:9-13) uses a star to lead the pagans to Christ!
6. And while God's people had a King in their midst and sought Him not, the pagans are traveling hundreds of miles on foot to seek Him out!
7. The heart of the Kingdom is outreach and missions! Matthew's gospel is distinctively Jewish, yet throughout his writings, he emphasizes Gentile inclusion!

B. Second Result: Existing Kingdoms Threatened

King Herod was *deeply disturbed* when he heard this, *as was everyone in Jerusalem*. He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"

"In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote:

'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,
are not least among the ruling cities of Judah,
for a ruler will come from you
who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.

Matthew 2:3-6 NLT

1. The birth of the Messiah-King had been foretold in the Hebrew scriptures, and Herod's priests and teachers were well aware of them. Here they quote Micah 5:2. There are others:

a. The *star* was prophesied by Balaam, 1500 years before Christ!

I see him, but not here and now.
I perceive him, but far in the distant future.
A star will rise from Jacob;
a scepter will emerge from Israel.
Numbers 24:17 NLT

b. The *gifts of foreign kings*

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.
Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.
...And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba:
Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.
...And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.
Excerpts from Psalm 72:10-11, 15, 18-19 KJV

c. Messiah's birthplace

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
are only a small village among all the people of Judah.
"Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you,
one whose origins are from the distant past.
The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies
until the woman in labor gives birth."
Micah 5:2-3 NLT

2. One must wonder why the Jewish king and his teachers who knew the scriptures were not seeking the newborn king, while the pagans were!
3. Notice that when the Kingdom of God comes near, the kingdoms of this world are *disturbed* and *threatened*.
4. This was because the same star that signaled the arrival of the new king also signaled the demise of the existing one!

The cosmic signal of another ruler would necessarily indicate the end of the current ruler's reign.

Craig Keener, Matthew IVPNT Commentary

5. You can't have two "kings", and every "king" knows it!
6. Any Good News that fails to disturb and alarm earthly rulers is not the Gospel of the Kingdom.
7. We can't overemphasize this point: The real issue is not Jesus as "Teacher", Jesus as "Healer", Jesus as "Savior"...it's Jesus as KING! Until the Church preaches the Kingdom of God, instead of minimizing Christ as a "Prophet" or "Priest", the kingdoms of this world will proceed ahead undisturbed.
8. This is the heart of the passage- that the earthly visit of the Son of God is marked at its beginning and end with one central issue: Jesus is a KING!

**Now Jesus was standing before Pilate, the Roman governor. "Are you the king of the Jews?" the governor asked him.
Jesus replied, "You have said it."
Matthew 27:11 NLT**

9. The Church, as the "pillar and ground of the truth", must proclaim the Lordship of Christ. When we do so, there'll be no doubt because earthly authorities won't like it!*

***The phrase "separation of church and state" is continually used to keep the kingdom message marginalized and confined to the walls of church buildings. However, this term is not found in the Constitutional documents at all! It was a phrase used in a letter from Thomas Jefferson to a group of Baptist Pastors in Connecticut in the early 1800's, assuring them that the government would not interfere with religion, not the other way round! How many Christians accept the boundaries the politicians and earthly authorities put upon us without question? Is it any wonder we're not "disturbing" anybody?**

10. Polls indicate that America's confidence in Congress is at an all-time low. Why? Because most of what goes on there has been revealed to be selfish and self-serving. Those in authority, outside of true Christ-followers, are threatened by any challenge to their power and totally dedicated to preserving it!

C. Third Result: The Kingdom Exposes True Worshippers from False

1. Herod's teachers and counselors knew the scriptures, and now they know about Messiah.
2. Yet, instead of seeking Christ themselves, they conspire to kill Him!

**Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. Then he told them, Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!
Matthew 5:7-8**

- a. Here's a lesson for the Christian church regarding earthly rulers or being enfolded into a political system. If this occurs, all evil things are possible!
- b. Also notice how earthly rulers will profess to be Christ-seekers and Christ-worshippers; but in their hearts, they would murder Him if they could.

After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

Matthew 2:7-12 NLT

- 3. The typical manger scenes of today depict the wise men worshipping Christ in the manger. A pretty picture, but inaccurate.
- 4. The shepherds followed the star to the manger.
- 5. The occurrences here are *years later*. We know this because:
 - a. The Magi find the child living with His mother *in a house*. (Mt. 5:11)
 - b. Herod orders the execution of all the male children *up to the age of two*, (Mt. 5:16), because he had inquired as to the time the star appeared to gauge the age of the child. (Matthew 5:7-8)
- 6. The shepherds worshipped the infant Jesus in the manger; the Magi worshipped Jesus at the "house", but the Jewish king and his officials did not worship Him at all!
- 7. Christians must understand that the world's opposition to Christ's kingship is not passive; it is active, aggressive, and can easily escalate into violence.

**God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.**

God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Matthew 5:10-12 NLT

- 8. It is the nature of the Kingdom of God to force a *choice*.

Matthew's teachings of *revelation* (ch. 1), and of *response to revelation* (ch. 2) make the Christmas stories a Gospel in miniature. The magi's *faith* dominates the first half of Chapter Two. Herod's *unbelief*, the second half. The irony is that the outsiders seek, find and worship the Messiah of Israel, while insider's leadership seeks to eliminate its most sought-after King. Thus the "first are last, and the last first", a frequent theme in Matthew.

Frederick Dale Bruner: *The Christbook: Matthew 1-12*

III. Conclusion

A. The Gospel of the Kingdom is a revelation.

B. There are three consistent responses to that revelation:

- True seekers will come.
- Existing authorities will be threatened.
- True and false worshippers will become obvious.

This text is actually a microcosm of the Gospel, teaching we must preach the Good News to all people, because we never know who will believe it and who won't.

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