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**Matthew 2:1-12**

*Meeting Jesus in Matthew: Who is Jesus?*

*Jesus is King*

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Introduction:

1. On Tuesday night I saw The Nutcracker at the Boston Opera House with Monica and her family.
2. The original premiered in St. Petersburg, Russia in December of 1892.
3. The Boston Ballet's most recent version premiered in November of 2012.
4. Monica, her sister, and family grew up going to the Nutcracker every season.
5. For many years Monica and her sister performed (doll, lamb, attendant, cherub, tea, angel, reindeer).
6. I think it's fair to say there are three different types of people that go to the nutcracker.
7. There are those that love the party scene, mouse king, sugar-plum fairy, and Russian leapers.
8. These are mostly young girls, cultured suburbanites, art students, and my wife and her sister.
9. There are those that go because they have friends or family who bring them along.
10. These are some parents or teenage boys who are more or less apathetic about the nutcracker.
11. Finally, there are those that go but don't truly appreciate the nutcracker or have a good attitude about it.
12. When they got married, they didn't know they were also marrying the nutcracker—that's me...
13. At Christmas, we all respond differently to the The Nutcracker, with love, apathy, or rejection.
14. This Christmas season, how are you going to respond to the message of Jesus?

(I believe Christmas is all about Jesus and who he is.)

(No matter who you are, you want to enjoy Christmas the right way.)

- I. The story of the Magi teaches us how to respond to Jesus this Christmas. (v. 1-2)
  - a. Magi saw something that caused them to ride into Jerusalem looking for a king (gk: "magos").
  - b. They were wise men, astronomers, and astrologers who believed the stars foretold the birth of a king.
  - c. The author Matthew is writing to a bunch of Jewish people who won't have believed in astrology.
  - d. The inclusion of this story is somewhat embarrassing to that culture so it's probably true.
  - e. The magi could have seen a supernova, comet, planetary conjunction, or something else entirely.
  - f. The Chinese took careful astronomical records and observed a tailed comet for over 70 days in 5BC.
  - g. Kepler's Three Laws of Planetary Motion tell us the solar system runs "like a great clock."
  - h. You can use software to track some interesting planetary patterns around birth of Jesus.
  - i. The other possibility is that this star is really an angel (Rev 1:20 translates same word as angel).
  - j. We don't know what they saw, but we do know how they responded to the news of Jesus' birth.

(There are three different ways to respond to Jesus, as #1 chief priests, #2 king Herods, or #3 magi.)

II. Chief priests are religious people who don't need Jesus. (v. 3-6)

- A. Chief priests are religious people who don't need Jesus.
  1. When the magi come, Herod (more about him later) calls the chief priests and teachers of the law.
  2. The chief priests served in and around the temple and were the religious elite. (pastors)
  3. The "teachers of the law" are scribes who were experts in Gen thru Deut. (seminary professors)
  4. They were responsible for copying the Old Testament and invited the "synagogue service."

5. They know a Messiah or “anointed one” (kingly term) will come (Micah 5:2, 2 Sam 5:2)
6. They know the right verses but won’t travel five miles to Bethlehem to see if he has arrived.
7. In v. 3, the news of the Messiah threw the city into a panic or confusion (agitation).
8. They wanted order and comfort—they had religious power and were in Herod’s pocket (no risk).

(They had their religion, and didn’t need Jesus to mess it up for them.)

(Are you a religious person who doesn’t really need Jesus?)

B. Religious people don’t need Jesus.

1. A couple years ago the Huffington Post hosted a “Create Your Own Religion Competition.”
2. “You’ve got the long hair, the nice bushy beard, and lots of beliefs, but you don’t have the 2.2 billion adherents worldwide. Or perhaps you’re chubby and like to sit cross-legged, but no one is making statues of you. Or maybe you’re a mediocre sci-fi writer that wants people speaking your pseudoscience. Well now you can be the next Jesus, the next Buddha, or even the next L. Ron Hubbard.” (They received 906 religious submissions and posted their favorites online.)
3. *Friends of the Almighty Thumper the Rabbit* believe a bunny created the universe (sneeze).
4. *Church of Latte Saints* believe that’s life’s essence is imprisoned in the fallen god, Dee Caf.
5. *Elfianity* is the religion that a tiny elf rules everyone and you have to do what he says or else.
6. Religion is anything we do in order to justify our existence before God.
7. Religion can also be any system we create to get a spiritual fix.
8. When the end goal is knowledge, performance, or any cause, and not Jesus, that’s religion.

(Religious people don’t need Jesus.)

III. King Herods are non-religious people who don’t like Jesus. (v. 7-8)

A. King Herods are non-religious people who don’t like Jesus.

1. Herod the Great wasn’t born into royalty and ascended to power through military conquest.
2. He feared the royal family would remove him so he murdered them (wife and three sons).
3. When the Magi came announcing one “born king of the Jews” (v. 2) he was afraid.
4. The Roman senate had given Herod the title “king of the Jews” but now that was threatened.
5. It’s especially threatening because Magi in the Persian empire were known as “king-makers.”
6. You had to have the approval of the wisemen in order to become king in the Persian empire.
7. So for king makers to ride in looking to crown a new king was incredibly threatening to Herod.
8. The only religion or king Herod believes in his himself.

(Are you a non-religious person who doesn’t need Jesus?)

B. Non-religious people don’t like Jesus.

1. When I was going through seminary school to become a pastor, I cleaned fish tanks.
2. I had to clean a fish tank at a Danvers bowling alley and when I arrived, there was a film crew.
3. I got to talking with a man whose job it was to do pretty much anything needed (location scout)
4. He asked me what I was doing and I shared I was going through seminary to become a pastor.
5. That’s when he told me it’s not what you have faith in that matters, but that you have faith.
6. In other words, “It doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you believe.”
7. Jesus preaches a radically different message—that he is the way, the truth and the life.

8. He tells us no one can come to God except through him.
9. Herod searched for Jesus, but didn't like what he found.
10. When you encounter Christ for who he really is, what are you going to do?

(Religious people don't need Jesus.)

(Non-religious people don't like Jesus.)

#### IV. Magi are gospel people who recognize Jesus as king and worship him. (v. 9-12)

##### A. Magi are gospel people (gospel means "good news").

1. To understand the magi, you need to know Babylon took Judah into captivity in 597BC.
2. Some young Jewish men were taken to serve Nebuchadnezzar as wisemen (stars, dreams).
3. The book of Daniel tells how God gave Daniel supernatural power to interpret the king's dreams.
4. In Dan 5:11 the king appoints him "chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners."
5. I believe Daniel used his authority to teach the Babylonians and Persians the Old Testament.
6. He would have taught them about God's promise to send an anointed deliverer.
7. The magi are likely influenced by Daniel and believed in portions of the OT.
8. Gospel people believe the good news that the Messiah has come.

##### B. Gospel people recognize Jesus as king and worship him.

1. When the king-makers find Jesus, my translation says they "rejoiced exceedingly with great joy!"
2. Then it says "they fell down and worshipped him"—they paid a little boy kingly homage.
3. They rejoice in the king, worship the king, and give their riches to the king.
4. It says they "opened their treasure boxes" and gave him kingly gifts (held nothing back).
5. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh are all highly valuable and often belonged to royalty.
6. Jesus is a different type of king, he doesn't come to overthrow Herod through war.
7. The only other use of Myrrh in the NT is in John 19:39 which Nicodemus wraps Jesus' body in it.
8. Jesus is a king who came to die for our sins, but praise God our king doesn't stay dead.

(Are you a religious chief priest who doesn't need Jesus?)

(Are you a non-religious Herod who doesn't like Jesus?)

(Or are you a gospel magi who worships Jesus as king?)

(Worship king Jesus this Christmas season.)

##### C. Here are "Three Ways to Worship Jesus This Christmas"

1. Seek to find Jesus (If you don't know Jesus yet, come talk to me after the service.)
2. Treat Jesus as a king (show respect and honor to Jesus on Christmas day, Xmas story)
3. Hold nothing back (open treasure chest: time, money, family, area of your life, give all)

(Worship king Jesus this Christmas season.)

#### Conclusion:

1. We're going to end by lighting our candles and singing Silent Night together.
2. In 1816, a young priest named Joseph Mohr wrote the poem "Silent Night."
3. Two years later his organist Franz Gruber composed a melody to fit the poem.
4. Some stories say mice ate the organ so they had to compose a guitar medley.

5. What's more important is the message "Christ the Saviour is born."
6. How are you going to respond to this message?
7. As a religious person who don't need to be saved because you're good enough.
8. Or are you a non-religious person who doesn't care what Christ really has to say?
9. Or are you a gospel person who is completely transformed by Christ the king?
10. The candle is a symbol of being transformed from the darkness of sin into the light of Christ.
11. Please dip the unlit candle into the lit one and we'll all blow them out together at the end.
12. Raise your candles high as you... *Worship king Jesus this Christmas season.*