



## MATTHEW 2:1-12

**1** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of *King Herod, Magi* from the east came to Jerusalem **2** and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born *king of the Jews*? We saw his star when it rose and have come to *worship* him.'

**3** When King Herod heard this he was *disturbed*, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** When he had called together all the people's *chief priests* and *teachers of the law*, he asked them where the *Messiah* 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 *shepherd* my people Israel.'"

**7** Then Herod called the Magi *secretly* and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8** He sent them to *Bethlehem* and said, 'Go and search *carefully* for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'

**9** After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose *went ahead* of them until it *stopped* over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they were *overjoyed*. **11** On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their *treasures* and presented him with gifts of gold, *frankincense* and *myrrh*. **12** And having been *warned* in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

### CLOSING PRAYER

written by Kris, <http://revgalblogpals.org/>

Radiant Morning Star,  
you are both guidance and mystery.  
Visit our rest with disturbing dreams,  
and our journeys with strange companions.  
Grace us with the hospitality to open our hearts  
and homes to visitors filled with unfamiliar  
wisdom, bearing profound and unusual gifts.  
Amen

### COMMENTARY

primary source: UBS Handbooks for New Testament

**v.1 King Herod:** Herod the Great, reigning from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C. **v.1 Magi:** Persian priests who were experts in astrology and the interpretation of dreams. **v.2 king of the Jews:** see Matt 27:11, 29, 37. **v.2 worship:** pay homage to, pay our respects to, honour because he is king. **v.3 disturbed:** upset, troubled, alarmed. **v.4 chief priests:** the executive committee within the Jewish Council, including the High Priest. **v.4 teachers of the law:** experts in Jewish religious law. **v.4 Messiah:** the Promised Saviour King. **v.6 Micah 5:2.** **v.6 least:** least in the eyes of. **v.6 shepherd:** lead, guide or rule. **v.7 secretly:** called to a private meeting. **v.8 Bethlehem:** eight kilometres from Jerusalem. **v.8 carefully:** with utmost care and diligence. **v.9 went ahead:** moved in the sky in front of them, leading the way. **v.9 stopped:** stopped moving or stood still. **v.10 overjoyed:** extreme happiness, joy, delight. **v.11 treasures:** treasure containers. **v.11 frankincense:** a valuable incense made from the sap of a certain tree, probably imported from Arabia. **v.11 myrrh:** a sweet smelling resin of an Arabian shrub, used for medicinal purposes (Mark 15:23) and for preparing bodies for burial (John 19:39). **v.12 warned:** the Greek verb refers specifically to a revelation from God.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What caught your attention? Why?
2. Reflect on the clash of cultures as the Magi arrive in Jerusalem.
3. Why are the people in Jerusalem troubled when the Magi enquire about the new-born 'king of the Jews'?
4. Compare and contrast the Magi with King Herod.
5. What is the significance of the title, 'king of the Jews' (v.2)? Read Matt 27:11, 29, 37.
6. What is the significance of the 'gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh' (v.11)?
7. What does it mean to be 'overjoyed' (v. 10)? Do you know the feeling?
8. What do the Magi and the star add to the Christmas story?
9. **In Summary: How does this passage reflect the theme of 'light in the darkness'?**
10. What did you learn? What do you want to explore further?