

## Responding to Jesus Mt. 2:1-12

All people, believers and unbelievers alike will respond to Christ with anger, apathy, or adoration.

- For the believer, even though we have initially responded to Christ with adoration and acceptance, we still have the responsibility to properly respond to him in our daily lives.
- We can show hostility to the Word of God and not obey what He has commanded us to obey.
- We can be apathetic to the discipline of prayer and not practice it even though we know it makes a difference in our lives.
- We can accept God's Word and the power of submitting to Him and our lives can be transformed into a marvelous display of His glory and grace.

### I CAN CHOOSE TO RESPOND TO JESUS IN ANGER-LIKE HEROD

*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." <sup>3</sup> When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'" <sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them he exact time the star appeared. <sup>8</sup> And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him." (MT. 2:1-8)*

- Romans ruled most of the known world at this time and what they would do is place governors over different cities to have them ruled by someone they could control. King Herod was sitting on a religious and political boiling pot at this point in history. It was

not too long before he came to power that the Jews revolted, and a war broke out between the Jews and Rome.

- Herod was very scared and did not want this to happen again because if it did Rome would remove him from power. He feared any uprising and brutally put any rebellion down. With any mention of a new king or any sign of the slightest disagreement with his rule Herod did not hesitate to kill any opposition.
- He has been described as a madman who killed any opposition, even his family, even his own wife! Imagine his surprise and hostility when the magi came from the east asking about a new king that was born, Herod would be extremely interested in this.
- Verse 3 notes that Herod was “troubled.” This word gives the image of Herod being not only troubled but confused, frightened, startled, and terrified. He was in a panicked rage. If the Romans found out about a new king they would surely question Herod’s power and possibly remove him.
- His being troubled and frightened caused him to devise a plan to kill the newborn king. Herod is so paranoid about finding this new king that in verse 16 he issues a decree ordering that all male children 2 yrs. and under in Bethlehem be killed. Talk about hostile!
- Herod was angry because Jesus challenged his authority. He was angry because Jesus was going to change his situation. He was angry because the truth of a new King would mean things in his life would not be the same.
- Responding to Jesus in anger keeps you from experiencing the blessings of an intimate relationship based on infinite grace and unimaginable love.

### **I CAN CHOOSE TO RESPOND TO JESUS WITH APATHY-LIKE THE SCRIBES AND CHIEF PRIESTS**

*<sup>4</sup> Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.’”*  
(Mt. 2:4-6)

- The chief priest and scribes were the religious ruling class of the day. They made the rules and had the power. The chief priests were Jewish leaders from the line of the first high priest Aaron.
- They served various functions within the religious and political realm. They were in close contact with King Herod about the state of the kingdom.
- At this point in history they did not want any problems from Rome so they would placate the King. They had become a disgrace to the office of priest. They would take bribes and try to move the people to the sway of Rome.
- These priests could tell you what to wear, what to eat, how far to walk on the Sabbath. They could have control over every area of your life. And if something in your life fell outside of their reach, they would get the secular authorities involved to get you where they wanted you.
- They also read the Scriptures; they knew the prophecies. They knew that the news the magi brought matched the prophecies of the long-foretold Messiah.
- They also knew that the new King would have all the power; there would be no need for them anymore. He would fill the office of priest perfectly and they did not want to lose out.
- Instead of giving up their life for eternal rewards, they wanted to hold on to temporary pleasures of this life.
- Their corruptness caused them to only be concerned for their own success and status. They were not necessarily hostile toward Jesus at this point, but they were not too excited either. They were apathetic.
- Apathy toward Jesus leads to death; death of the lost soul; death of a once vibrant walk with the Savior.

### **I CAN CHOOSE TO RESPOND TO JESUS WITH ADORATION-LIKE THE MAGI**

*<sup>1</sup>Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw a star in the east and have come to worship Him.” ---*

<sup>9</sup> After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. <sup>11</sup> After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way. (Mt. 2:1-2; 9-12)

- These magi were a special group of wise men from the east, probably Persia. They were a royal priesthood within themselves. They were extremely well taught in astrology, astronomy, history, agriculture, politics, religion, and mathematics. There were some of the highest-ranking officials in their part of the world. They were also known for prophesy and dream interpretation.
- They traveled with a huge caravan of people, so they made a big scene. This was no small event when they came to Jerusalem. Think of it like a presidential motorcade.
- The magi had a proper response to the King, even as pagans. God revealed a star to them while in their homeland and they followed the star to Jerusalem to worship the King.
- These magi didn't have all the details, but they responded to his call with a proper attitude of Worship.
- As the magi arrived at Joseph and Mary's house they were overjoyed. Verse 10 says, *"They rejoiced exceedingly with great joy."*
- By this time Joseph and Mary have found a house. Jesus was a few months old, possibly a year old at this point.
- The number of magi is never mentioned, but we always assume 3 because of the number of gifts. It is likely that there were more than 3 of them because of the size of the group they would have traveled in.
- When the wise men come to Jesus, they bring three gifts: Gold, which is the gift for royalty, a gift for a king. Incense, which was for divinity, a gift you give a God. And myrrh, which is a funeral gift, a gift used for burial. Their gifts show amazing insight.

- Our lives are meant to bring honor to Christ. The entirety of our being is to adore the King of Kings.

Consider these questions:

- 1. Do I respond to Jesus with acceptance and obedience?**
- 2. Do I allow my life to be affected by Christ's life or am I apathetic in my walk?**
- 3. Do I realize that Christ's birth and death mean that I can have everlasting life?**
- 4. Is there anything holding me back from fully giving my obedience and acceptance to Jesus? Is it worth it?**