

Matthew 2:1-12
Jesus, Lord At Birth

Earlier this week I found out that it was Ladislao José Biro's birthdate. Who is he? He create one of the most used and under-noticed revolutionary items the world has seen - the ballpoint pen. I wonder how many life changing contracts have been signed using the ballpoint pen. I wonder how many relationships have started and ended all at the end of a pen designed by a man that no one knew. Such little things of great significance makes me wonder how many other things happen right under our noses that go unnoticed.

I'd love for you to turn with me to Matthew 2, and in our text today we get to glimpse the most important birth in all history. This story confirms what we already know, that Jesus is Lord at his birth, but what is most astonishing about this story is who it is that is making that declaration - not just wise men but wise men from the east. Let's read the text together, pray, and then let's learn what our Lord is telling us today from this text

READ TEXT

Let's walk through this text together to learn the important truths the story is telling us, the story of this Jesus who was born already the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Let's learn two truths together that tell the story of Jesus, Lord At Birth.

1. Jesus Has Come to Set the Captives Free

Where are we? Bethlehem of Judea. There was an expectation for a Savior to come to rule the world. The Savior to come and rule the world would come from a distant and small land, a place that seems so insignificant, but a place that has become the center of God's self-disclosure of himself. It is from this little place on the map, Judea that salvation would be proclaimed to the rest of the world.

It is in this little place that the Christ, the Lord's anointed, (Psalm 2) would come to rule. His rule would not be an ordinary rule but a specific rule, look at the prophecy from Malachi in verse 6, this ruler will be a shepherd, a shepherd whose sheep will never want. He will make them lie down in green pastures, leading them beside still waters. He will restore the souls of his sheep and leads them in righteous paths. This shepherd will walk with them even in the valley of the shadow of death and because of his presence, his sheep will trust in him. Because of this shepherd his sheep have goodness and mercy as companions following them all the days of their life. This shepherd will lead his sheep into the house of the LORD where they will stay with him forever.

But this ruler who will shepherd his people is born into a world where his reign is not yet fully known. He is the long awaited for King but there are many powers and authorities whose rule has to be shattered. Look at the text, here is Jesus who we are told is *born king of the Jews*, but he is born in the shadow of another king - Herod. Herod is not even Hebrew. Herod is from Idumea which is in the Kingdom of Edom - the people of Esau, the brother of Jacob. Herod's kingship is a harsh reminder that though the people of Israel are in the borders of the Promised Land they are far from the promise that God laid out for them. The promise of God was not just

to give the people a piece of land, the promise of God was to give the people liberation from sin's domain, to seal them with his Spirit and give them a heart of worship.

Herod is a king that had been appointed by the occupying force in Jerusalem - the Romans. The seed of David's race, the lineage of the throne seems to have ceased, the promise of God a distant memory. During these dark days, the hope for Israel seems as far as the east is from the west, but little did they know, the people who were dwelling in darkness were about to see a great light, but not just any light a darkness penetrating, darkness overcoming light. As the Christ child is born King of the Jews, the sun of righteousness is rising with healing in his wings.

But as we look at this story we are shocked at who takes notice of this event first - Wise Men from the East. This teaches us:

2. Jesus Has Come to Receive the Praise of All Men

Where are the wise men coming from - the East. So what direction are they coming - West? We all still remember our east and west right? Righty tighty, lefty loosey - got it! Don't miss the significance of this. The Old Testament ends with the anticipation of the return from exile (2 Chronicles). When we open the pages of the New Testament we find Matthew and Matthew chooses to tell the story of Jesus by telling us about these men from the East.

Don't miss this. Who was it that took the Jewish people away from Israel? Men from the East - the Babylonians. Here we see men coming from the same people that took Israel into captivity, now embarking on a lengthy and costly journey following a light burning in the night sky to declare to those in captivity that salvation is here.

These wise men are fulfilling Scripture. The first ones that we see to worship Jesus are the least likely - Gentiles, but not just any Gentiles, Gentiles who at one time were the enemies of Israel. All of this fulfilling Scripture. I want to read a portion of Isaiah for you and you tell me if you think this is what is going on. Now before we read this remember when Isaiah is writing. The tides of trouble are churning for Israel (before exile) and the word of the Lord came to his people through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah wrote of a coming King who would bring light to the world. Listen to Isaiah 60:

*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of
the LORD has risen upon you.
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.
And nations shall come to your light, and kings
to the brightness of your rising.
(Isaiah 60:1-3 ESV)*

*...the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
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 60:5-6
ESV)*

In Jesus we see the dawn of that day being spoken about by Isaiah rising as his star rose in the Western sky prompting wise men from the east to come and visit Jerusalem to find a king who had been enthroned in Jerusalem to direct them to the king of the universe. Paranoid Herod knew what the wise men were saying, they were speaking of a King who had been born who would dethrone Herod and not only Herod but every king in every kingdom as every person would one day bow before this one who was born and declare him Lord.

But notice how these wise men come and worship. They have so many guides. First we see a star supernaturally guiding them. Then we see Scripture guiding them. Of course we see Herod guiding them from Micah but there is another reference written that made them look at this star in the night and wonder. There was a prophecy that was yet to be fulfilled. A prophecy not only in Micah, not only in Matthew, but a prophecy by an unlikely prophet - Balaam who says in Numbers 24 that in the last days *a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel...* (24:17).

These witnesses, the star, Scripture, all seem to be silent witnesses to an event unnoticed unless someone was seeking them. And those who seek that which is going on unnoticed learn that there is something greater than the wise men's seeking, behind the scenes, almost unnoticed is an all wise God arranging all heaven and earth, all time and space, so that he could come and seek and save.

I wonder what they must have thought when they entered the house. Being guided as they were with such great expectation, I wonder if they were disappointed. What was underneath the beam of the star? All the signs pointed to the Savior and they found what was significant. Can't you see Matthew building the momentum as they see the star, rejoice, and then enter the house and they gaze upon *the child with Mary his mother*, and then they fall down and worship. They gave him gold for a King, Frankincense for a priest, and Myrrh for the death of the King-priest. Strange gifts, but gifts that tell the story of how God saved the world.

Let me show you. Go back to verse 2. See what they call Jesus? These wise men use a title for Jesus that we will not see again in Matthew until this Savior who is Lord at his birth is stretched between two thieves. When this moment comes Gentile Soldiers will call him King of the Jews and they will give him a crown, a crown of thorns and his throne will be a cross. On this day instead of the brightness of a star darkness will fill the land and from the darkness a Roman soldier will declare *truly this was the Son of God*.

The way this King showed us his crown was by the cradle and the cross. Jesus who was Lord at his birth was upholding the universe while in the cradle, upholding the universe while on the cross, upholding the universe while in the grave. Only this one is worthy, only this one will be crowned with the adoration of every tribe and every nation as they sing a new song to him

*And they sang a new song, saying,
"Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,*

*For you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
And you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.”*

(Revelation 5:9-10 ESV)

Our weeping is over; he has freed us from our bondage. We have found the longing of our hearts and we worship the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Jesus being King changes everything. Learn from the wise men:

- Recognize him as King
- Do whatever it takes to get to him -
Bring him your best

What is the best that you can give him? All that you have.