

Day One – Recap of Matthew 2:1-23

As you probably gathered from the direction of the questions this week, Matthew 2 is a classic example of just how much our culture can influence our knowledge of the Bible. How many wise men were there? How long after Jesus was born do they appear? The text itself doesn't offer a lot of information to help us, but we usually don't even give it a second thought. We take what we "know" about the Christmas story from our culture and then we mesh it together with the Bible, creating something that is just a mixture of both, without much regard for what details are actually necessary. Now, this isn't a cause for some sort of crusade to remove any images depicting the arrival of the wise men during Jesus' infancy or the fact that there were exactly three wise men. We don't know the truth about either one of these details, but we should at least be careful enough in our reading to notice that the Bible leaves the issue up to the reader's interpretation/imagination. There could have been 2 or 3 or 5 or 8, or 300,000, for that matter.

If you'll recall our discussion about the genealogy, we talked about some important larger issues in Matthew that appear in condensed form there. Well, he's at it again with the wise men story. We can understand Matthew's big picture in a number of ways, but one of the most important ideas driving this book is the simple fact that Jesus came to Israel and offered himself freely, but Israel chose poorly and rejected both him and his message. Israel didn't get it. The irony here is that while Israel didn't get it but should have, a lot of people on the outside seemed to understand when they really shouldn't have. As we shall see later in the book, Jesus chose to reveal himself to many of these on the fringe of religion while many of the super-religious stumbled around in darkness.

God chose to reveal himself to some pagan Gentiles who made the journey of a lifetime in order to see a toddler-king. They brought riches and lavished them upon this special child, despite his having been oblivious to their efforts and unable to offer them anything in return. They simply came to worship. Contrast this reaction to that of Israel. Jesus was one of their own, a direct descendant of Abraham and David. He came and offered religious freedom and insight to them, and yet they sought to kill him. The Gentiles worshipped Him when He had nothing to offer them, but Israel tried to kill him after he had offered them everything. The irony was there from the beginning.

Don't miss the connection between Israel and Jesus here. I know we've talked about it, but it's sort of a weird way to think about this passage so I thought I'd remind you. Matthew is going to build a case for Jesus as the new Israel. Just like Israel sojourned in Egypt, so also does Jesus. Just like Moses, Jesus was a refugee from a paranoid ruler. Matthew wants us to see the similarities, if only so he is able later to point out the differences. Israel failed. Jesus succeeded.

Day Two – Read 3:1-12

Write a summary statement for these verses.

Define the word *repent* in verse 2.

Define the *kingdom of heaven*.

Is the *kingdom of heaven* different than the *kingdom of God* mentioned in the other gospels?

What did John mean when he said the *kingdom of God* ***is at hand***?

Day Three – Read 3:1-12

According to verse 3, what was John's mission?

Why do you think Matthew mentions the clothes John wore and the food he ate?

Why did Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan go out to John?

Why were they baptized?

Day Four – Read 3:7-10

Why did John say the things he did to the Pharisees and Sadducees?

How do you think the Pharisees and Sadducees received the words of John?

How do you respond when you are confronted with your sin either by a sermon, the Word of God, or one of your friends?

Day Five – Read 3:11-12

How did John compare himself to the *one who is coming*?

Why did he say Jesus was more powerful?

What does the contrast between *water* and *the Holy Spirit* tell us about Jesus' ministry?

Does the Holy Spirit have a role in a believer's life today? Explain.

What is the message of verse 12?

Day Six

If you are looking to go a little bit deeper in your understanding of the text for this week, try one of these resources:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/index.php?action=getBookSections&cid=1&source=1>

<http://www.evangelibrary.org.uk/members/com/nt/jcr/mt/mat-Index.html>

Sermons Transcripts:

Ligon Duncan - http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/matthew/matthew_vol_1-2/matthew_vol_1-2/index_Matthew_vol_1-2.html

Audio:

John Piper - <http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/14/>

S. Lewis Johnson -

http://sljinstitute.net/sermons/new%20testament/gospels/matthew/matthew_master.html