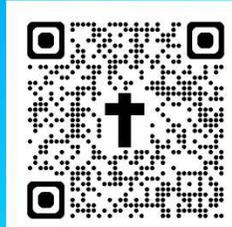


Matthew 2

Bible Study

By Gary Eugene Howell



Verses 1-3

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 2:1-3 aloud.

Observation: Jesus Christ was born King of the Jews. All of the apostles were Jewish. Jesus himself was Jewish. Yet salvation has come to the gentiles.

Ask for a volunteer to read Romans 9:30-33. **Discussion:** Why has salvation come to the gentiles? What is the difference between pursuing righteousness by faith vs pursuing righteousness by the law? Why is it that we can not get into heaven by being a good person who goes to church every Sunday, or volunteers at the local food pantry?

Verses 4-8

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 2:4-8. **Observation:** Jesus fulfilled the prophecy about being born in Bethlehem. Jesus fulfilled over 300 prophecies from the Bible. Many of which were spoken hundreds and even thousands of years before Jesus was born. **Discussion:** How does Jesus fulfilling prophecy encourage your faith? (Note to study leader: if the group struggles with this question, you can offer a few of the following prompts: It validates Jesus as the true Messiah, it demonstrates God's sovereignty, it builds confidence in God's promises, it confirms the reliability of scripture).

Verses 9-11

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 2:9-11. **Observation:** The magi fell down and worshipped Jesus, not Mary. Catholics would argue that they do not worship Mary, however, Catholics pray to Mary. **Discussion:** How is prayer worship? What does the act of praying (particularly silent prayer) assume about the one being prayed to? (**Hint:** In order to hear the prayer, the one being prayed to must be both omnipresent - everywhere at once. (They must be able to hear everyone's prayer at once, no matter where they are geographically) and omniscient - all knowing. (They must know when every person on earth is praying at every given moment, and they must know every language on earth, and must fully understand everything that the person praying is talking about or referring to. For example, if a person prays for aunt Sally to be healed, the one being prayed to must know who aunt Sally is).

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*While the above questions were not crafted explicitly to bash Catholics, (there are some Catholics who will be saved, in the same way that there will be some protestants who will not be saved). But why would you worship with a group that hinders your chance for salvation? Imagine if you were running a marathon but you signed up to run with a group that made you wear flip flops in the marathon, instead of quality running shoes. You're chances of finishing the race would be effectively reduced.

Verses 12-15

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 2:12-15. **Observation:** God warned the magi not to return to Herod because God already knew that Herod was plotting evil.

Ask a volunteer to turn to and read Isaiah 46:10.

I declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and all My good pleasure I will accomplish.' (Isaiah 46:10)

Discussion: How does God knowing everything that's going to happen (knowing the end from the beginning), encourage your faith?

Verses 16-18

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 2:16-18

Discussion: Why do you suppose the soldiers were willing to carry out Herod's order? Maybe it was their being accustomed to violence. a type of numbness toward violence. Perhaps the soldiers of that time were frequently involved in wars and killing.

Ponder this: Many (if not most) Hollywood action movies deal with the theme of revenge. The writers and director want you, the audience, to hate the movie's villain. So the movie will show the villain doing something which you, the audience, feel strongly against (i.e. the director is trying to manipulate your emotions). Then the writers and director want you to celebrate when the villain is killed at the end of the movie.

If you watch dozens and dozens of Hollywood action movies, you might descend to a place where, in your heart, you believe that people you're strongly opposed to, getting killed, is a good thing and something to be celebrated. This is purely Satanic.

Ask for a volunteer to turn to and read Philippians 4:8 and then discuss the implication of what we allow into our minds and hearts.

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Verses 19-23

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 2:19-23.

Observation: These interactions between God and Joseph are a rare occasion in which God explains the reasons for his instructions. God told Joseph to Go to Egypt **because** Herod was going to search for the Child to kill Him. And later God told Joseph to go back to Israel, **because** those seeking the Child's life were dead.

In most cases, however, God does not explain himself. For example, Philip was in Samaria preaching the good news and crowds of people all paid close attention to Philip's message. But then, seemingly out of nowhere and for no apparent reason God told Philip to,

“Get up and go south to the desert road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (Acts 8:26)

No reason why; no explanation given. Just get up and go.

Discussion: Today, when God issues an instruction to someone, it is very often without any explanation whatsoever. So then, we must ask ourselves, “Do we trust God?”

If God told you to get up and go to a certain location in your town, or to get up and move your family to another state, or to get up and become a missionary, but offered zero explanation as to why he wanted you to do those things, would you be willing to obey? Would you be willing to walk in the faith of believing that God knows what he's doing?

However, here is an important caveat to consider with your group. When pondering these questions, some people in the group may silently conclude to themselves that if God asked them to pack up and become a missionary to the most dangerous place in the world such as Somalia or Sinaloa Mexico, they would refuse.

Obedience to God should be sincere and faith-filled, but people shouldn't falsely condemn themselves over hypothetical scenarios which God hasn't asked of them.

Some people may think to themselves, “Oh I wouldn't be willing to do that, therefore I must not be faithful to God”. But God has not asked them to do such a thing. God has each person where they currently are, and in the circumstances they currently have, for the purpose of glorifying God. Most people are never going to be asked to move their family to Africa or Mexico.

So do not condemn yourself by concluding you would not be willing to do something which God has not asked you to do.

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Free Bible Study Resources for Bible Study Leaders

By Gary Eugene Howell

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Dear Bible study leader: Here are a few tips on how to conduct a good Bible study that will foster spiritual growth in those attending.

First: Prepare for your Bible study by spending quality time in prayer in the days or week ahead of the study. Seek not to rely upon your own strengths and abilities, but instead rely upon the Lord.

Second: Begin your group bible study by taking prayer requests. If you have less than 25 people in your group, be bold by asking every individual, by name, what they would like prayer for. Then ask the group members to pray for one another. (You can ask, “who would like to pray for John?” or you can ask that everyone pray for the person on their left), however you choose to organize it is fine. Make sure you take notes on what people are asking prayer for. Then, before you begin the group prayer, ask if anyone needs a reminder of who and what they are praying for. If your group spends the whole hour praying and you never get to discuss the bible study, that’s perfectly fine.

Third: Do not take the route of preaching a sermon. Your Bible study attendees can hear a sermon on Sunday. Instead, set a goal loosely to be the person who speaks the least during your Bible study session. When you ask the group a question, you may have to sit in silence for several seconds until someone offers a response. If after 20 seconds, no one has said anything, try rephrasing the question and asking it again another way. Then give the members time to contemplate their response.

Fourth: Many Bible study sessions are shallow. Shallow Bible studies are produced by asking simple questions which require only one or two-word answers. Your goal, however, is to take your Bible study attendees deeper into God’s word. Lead your group in examining the context and meaning of the verses or chapter being studied. Then discuss the application but remember, the Bible is not a self-help book for behavior modification. Rather, the Bible tells us about Jesus. What he did for us, is doing within us, and how he saves us.

Fifth: Hopefully you will have two or three attendees who carry the discussion. These will be the individuals who are ready to talk about the word of God. However, be prepared (figure out what you’re going to say ahead of time), if one individual attendee seeks to dominate the discussion. If one attendee desires to monologue for five or ten minutes without giving anyone else a chance to speak, you will need to find a nice and polite way to keep that individual in check.

Sixth: It’s perfectly okay if you don’t get to all the questions presented in this bible study. If you ask the first question and your group spends the remainder of the hour discussing it, your job is done. You had a successful bible study. Don’t be concerned that you didn’t get to the rest of the questions.