

INTRODUCTION 引言

Christmas is a time when we will take a break from work and celebrate with family and friends. Some people will spend much money on decorations, parties and gifts. Then there are some super-rich people in our society who seem to live in a different world. They have unlimited resources to enjoy life. They like to receive gifts too. But what do you give to someone who has everything? Luxurious department-store Neiman Marcus publishes its Christmas gift catalog every year for big spenders. The most expensive item in this year's book is a 30-karat diamond ring that costs \$6.1 million! Those who love cars can consider the \$285,000 electric Hummer. It is different from any car you buy from a dealer. The interior is custom-made. The price will include a charging station installed at your home. The catalog does not only has things you can show off to others. It also sells unique experience that makes you feel special. There is a \$80,000 trip to a renowned ceramic design studio in Portugal. An artist will assist you to create your own vase or plate. Another tour will take you to London to meet with a famous author. She will work with you to write a story book about your family history. Those and many other gifts are beyond the reach of most people. The first Christmas in history was also celebrated with expensive presents. In our passage, a group of foreigners traveled to Israel to bring gifts to Jesus. Imagine you were among them. What gifts would be fitting to this new-born King?

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Expect the King 期待君王

Jesus Christ was the King the Old Testament prophesies about. However, in our story, only a handful of people expected this new King. Matthew gave us some historical background in the passage. First, Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. It was a small town about five miles to the south of Jerusalem. The second thing was about the timing for Jesus' birth. Matthew says Herod was the king at that time. Herod was more like a governor assigned by Rome to rule over the area. There are six people in the New Testament named Herod. They all belonged to the same family. Scholars called this particular leader "Herod the Great." He was a rich and talented administrator. However, he loved power and he was paranoid. Herod was hated by the Jews because he levied heavy taxes on them. To make himself look more friendly, Herod renovated and expanded the Jewish temple. It took 46 years to complete. On that particular day, a few Magi came from the east to see Herod. They asked him in verse 2: **"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."** The Magi thought they should consult the chief when something important happened in the region. But they asked the wrong person! The passage said Herod was disturbed by the news, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled too. How could there be a new king when Herod was the "king?" This Jewish king would surely become a threat to Herod. The Jews knew that Herod was ruthless. An unhappy leader would vent his anxiety on the people he governed. But who were those Magi? Bible scholars have different views. Some Bible translations call them wisemen. They might come from the region near the ancient Babylon. They were experts in astrology, interpretation of dreams and other mystical knowledge. They could be royal officials due to their special abilities.

They might be aware of the Old Testament because the Israelites were refugees in Babylon some 500 years before. Therefore, those Magi knew the coming of a Jewish king. On a certain day, they saw a special star. They interpreted that the king had been born. What was that “Christmas star?” Some scholars speculated that it was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, a comet or an explosion of a star that produced great light. But the phenomenon was so significant that it caught the attention of the Magi. All these years, Christmas cards tell us that there were three Magi. The assumption was based on the fact that they brought three gifts. But the Bible does not specify how many Magi there were. By their status and the precious gifts they carried, they might come with an envoy of personal guards. Herod was clueless about a new-born king. Therefore, he consulted some Jewish religious leaders. They paraphrased Micah 5:2 in their response. The original text reads: **“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”** Prophet Micah foretold that a leader would appear in Bethlehem. Those religious leaders knew what the Bible said. They taught people about it too. However, they did not expect the prophecy would come true in their lifetime! Their knowledge did not affect their life. Today, God calls us to be His followers, not scholars. Most of us will agree that the Bible is God’s truth. Do you read it daily? If so, does it affect your life? Your mindset, your values and your conducts should grow to be more like the Lord. Compared to the religious leaders, the Magi might not have the full knowledge about the new-born King. They traveled a long way to search for Him. Many of us come from overseas several thousand miles away. You look for a better life in this country. Then someone told you that there is a one true God named Jesus. For one reason or another, you went to a church. You met some Christians who were kind and warm. The Bible stories sound more like fairy tales to you. You conclude that either those believers are religious fanatics who are fooled by an ancient book, or they have found the answer for life. God has been sending you signals like the star the Magi saw. He draws you to Him. God wants you to know Him, receive Him and follow Him.

2. Respect the King 尊敬君王

The Magi were the only people who were expecting the King. In fact, they came all the way to pay Him respect. After Herod consulted the religious leaders, he summoned the Magi. He told them to go to Bethlehem in verse 8: **... “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”** Did Herod really want to pay respect to the King too? Verse 16 reveals his true intent: **When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.** God told the Magi afterward to go home by a different route. Therefore, they did not report to Herod after seeing Jesus. Herod was so mad that he ordered to kill all the male toddlers that fit the description. By God’s Providence, Jesus was preserved. Herod wanted to get rid of Jesus. Even today, the world wants to suppress the truth. Some merchants say “Happy Holidays” instead of “Merry Christmas.” It is acceptable to put Santa, snowmen and deer on your front yard. A nativity scene will offend some people. How should we as Christians react? First, we should not be afraid. God will protect us just like He protected His people in our passage. Second, we need to stay alert to Satan’s lies. We ask God for discernment to separate truth from falsehood. Third, we need to be wise and gentle when we interact with non-believers. They may not be ready to hear the gospel yet. But they will be attracted by the genuine love, joy and peace

in us. Following Herod's advice, the Magi went to Bethlehem. Verse 9 says: **After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.** The star now reappeared and moved! That reminds us of the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire God used to guide the Israelites after they left Egypt. Matthew describes Jesus as a "child." The Greek word can mean a toddler. It might be months ago when the Magi first saw the star in the east. They needed time to prepare for the journey and to travel. Therefore, this visit did not take place on the night Jesus was born. He was perhaps one to two-year-old when the Magi arrived. We have been fooled by Christmas cards that show the Magi came to a stable to see baby Jesus. Verse 11 gives us another clue: **On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.** The family was in a house, not in a shed anymore. Perhaps Joseph and Mary got married and stayed in Bethlehem after Jesus was born. When the Magi saw Jesus, they bowed down and worshipped Him. They paid respect to the boy, not His parents. Mary was only a servant chosen by God to conceive Jesus. Next, the Magi presented their gifts to Jesus. There may be symbolic meanings in the gifts. Gold is fit for the royalty. Both incense and myrrh were fragrance made from tree extracts. Incense could reflect Jesus' deity. Myrrh is a spice that is used for embalming a dead person to cover the bad smell. Those were expensive presents. But they were not useful to a two-year-old boy! Your little grandson or nephew will prefer toys or candies for his birthday. But the Magi came not to visit a toddler, but a King. A royal figure deserves the best treatment. What can we learn from the Magi? They came to pay respect to Jesus. We are here every Sunday to worship the Lord. Do we come prepared? It is more than combing your hair or wearing tidy clothes. Are we ready to meet with the King of kings? Or do we come into the sanctuary casually like walking into a movie theater? I encourage everyone to have a moment of silence after greeting your friends. The Greek word for "worship" in this passage means to kneel or prostrate in front of an important person. We stand as we sing, and some people raise their hands. But do we humbly bow down inside, knowing that God is in our midst? The Magi brought costly gifts for the King. What do you bring every Sunday? It is more than money offering. Do you come with joy? Do you bring thanks to God? He provides for you, protects you and gives you good health. Do you come with expectation to learn from the Bible? God may give you some new insights or good reminders from His Word. Do not just come, but come prepared.

CONCLUSION 結論

The King had arrived. People in the story show various responses. Herod was insecure. He was afraid that his power would be affected. The religious leaders were indifferent. To them, the Messiah was only information to study but not to believe. In comparison, the Magi displayed interest to look for the King. They brought expensive gifts to worship Him. What gifts would they have presented had they known He was the King of all kings? What do you give to someone who has it all? During Christmas time coworkers and family members like to play gift exchange. Every person brings a gift to exchange with another person. No one knows what is inside. People who get something better at the end will be happy. On the first Christmas God initiated the best gift exchange with us. He gave us His Son. This salvation gift is valuable because it is priceless. What does God want from us in return? Everything! God does not need your money. He wants your heart. Jesus came to be your King. Worship is no longer only a Sunday meeting. It is a mentality and a choice. You put God first in whatever you do. You honor Him as your King.

INTRODUCTION 引言

聖誕節是我們暫時撇下工作與家人和朋友一起慶祝的時候。有些人會花很多錢來佈置、開派對和買禮物。社會上有一些超級富豪，他們似乎生活在一個不同的世界。他們擁有無限的資源來享樂。他們也喜歡收到禮物。但是當一個人已經擁有一切時，你會送甚麼禮物給他呢？豪華百貨公司 Neiman Marcus 每年都會為這些有錢人設計聖誕禮物目錄。今年的清單中最昂貴的物品是價值 610 萬美元的 30 克拉鑽石戒指！喜歡汽車的人可以考慮售價 285,000 美元的電動悍馬 (Hummer)。這部汽車當然跟你在車行買到的車子不一樣。裡面的配備是定造的。那個費用也包括安裝在你家中的充電站。禮品的目錄中不僅有一些你可以向他人炫耀的東西。百貨公司還出售獨特的體驗，讓你感到超人一等。你可以花 80,000 美元到葡萄牙一所著名的陶瓷設計工作室。一位藝術家將幫助你製作自己的花瓶或盤子。另外你可以前往倫敦與一位著名作家會面。她會和你一起寫一本關於你家族歷史的故事書。這些和許多其他禮物是大多數人無法負擔的。歷史上第一個聖誕節也是用昂貴的禮物慶祝的。在我們的經文中，一群外國人遠道而來到達以色列，送禮物給耶穌。如果你是他們其中的一員，你會為這位新生的君王準備什麼禮物？

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Expect the King 期待君王

耶穌基督是舊約預言的君王。然而，在我們的故事中，只有少數人期待這位新的王。馬太在這段經文中給了我們一些歷史背景。首先，耶穌出生在猶太的伯利恆。那是耶路撒冷以南約五英里的一個小鎮。第二件事是關於耶穌誕生的時間。馬太說當時希律是王。希律只是羅馬委派的總督，負責管理該地區。新約中有六個人名叫希律。他們都屬於同一個家族。學者們稱這位領袖為「大希律」。他是一位富有而才華橫溢的行政官。然而，他愛抓權，而且他有點神經質。希律被猶太人憎恨，因為他向他們徵收重稅。為了讓自己看起來更友善，希律翻新並擴建了猶太聖殿，耗時 46 年才完成。那天，有幾個博士從東方來見希律。他們在第 2 節問他：「那生下來作猶太人之王的在那裡？我們在東方看見他的星，特來拜他。」博士們認為，當某地區發生重要事情時，他們應該諮詢首長。但是他們問錯人了！經文說希律被這個消息所困擾，耶路撒冷的居民也都感到不安。當希律是「王」時，怎能有另一位新王呢？這位猶太人的王肯定會成為希律的威脅。猶太人知道希律是個無情的人。一個不快樂的領袖會把他的焦慮發洩在他所統治的人民身上。但那些博士是誰？聖經學者有不同的看法。一些聖經譯本稱他們為智者。他們可能來自古代巴比倫附近的地區。他們是占星術、解夢和其他神秘知識的專家。由於他們的特殊能力，他們可能是皇家官員。他們可能接觸過舊約，因為大約 500 年之前以色列人是巴比倫的難民。因此，那些博士知道一個猶太

人的王將會出現。某一天，他們看到了一顆特別的星。據他們的理解，王已經誕生了。那顆「聖誕之星」到底是什麼？有學者推測，那是木星和土星同時的出現，一顆彗星或一顆恆星的爆炸，產生了巨大的光。但是這個現象是如此的顯眼，引起博士的注意。這些年來，聖誕賀卡告訴我們有三位博士。這個假設是基於他們帶了三件禮物。但是聖經沒有具體說有多少博士。以他們的身份和攜帶的貴重禮物，他們可能有侍衛的陪同。希律對那位新生的王一無所知。因此，他尋問了一些猶太宗教領袖。他們在回應中引述了彌迦書 5:2。原文是這樣說的：「伯利恆、以法他啊，你在猶大諸城中為小，將來必有一位從你那裡出來，在以色列中為我作掌權的；他的根源從亙古，從太初就有。」先知彌迦預言一位領袖會出現在伯利恆。那些宗教領袖知道聖經怎麼說。他們也教導人們這件事。然而，他們卻沒有想到，這預言竟然在他們有生之年應驗了！他們的知識並沒有影響他們的生活。今天，神呼召我們成為他的跟隨者，而不是學者。我們大多數人都會同意聖經是神的真理。但是你每天都看聖經嗎？如果有的話，它影響你的生活嗎？你的心態、你的價值觀和你的行為應該變得更像主。與宗教領袖相比，博士可能並不完全了解新生的王。他們長途跋涉尋找祂。我們當中的許多人來自幾千英里之外的海外。你到這個國家尋求更好的生活。然後有人告訴你，有一位真神，名叫耶穌。基於某種原因，你去了教堂。你遇到了一些善良溫暖的基督徒。聖經故事對你來說像是童話故事。你得出的結論是，這些信徒要不然是被一本古書愚弄的宗教狂熱分子，要不然他們真的找到了人生的答案。神一直在向你發出信號，就像博士看到的星一樣。神吸引你靠近祂。神希望你認識祂、接受祂並跟隨祂。

2. Respect the King 尊敬君王

博士是唯一期待君王的人。事實上，他們是專程來尊敬祂的。希律徵詢宗教領袖的意見後，他召集了博士。他在第 8 節告訴他們去伯利恆：…「你們去仔細尋訪那小孩子，尋到了，就來報信，我也好去拜他。」希律真的也想尊敬王嗎？第 16 節揭示了他的真正意圖：希律見自己被博士愚弄，就大大發怒，差人將伯利恆城裡並四境所有的男孩，照著他向博士仔細查問的時候，凡兩歲以裡的，都殺盡了。後來神告訴博士從另一條路回家。因此，他們在見到耶穌後沒有向希律報告。希律非常生氣，於是下令殺死所有符合描述的男嬰。因著神的保護，耶穌逃過了危機。希律想要除掉耶穌。即使在今天，世界也想壓倒真理。一些商家說「節日快樂」而不是「聖誕快樂」。把聖誕老人、雪人和鹿放在你的前院是可以接受的。耶穌誕生的場景會冒犯一些人。作為基督徒，我們應該如何回應？首先，我們不應該害怕。神會保護我們，就像祂在經文中保護祂的子民一樣。其次，我們要警覺撒但的謊言。我們求神幫助我們辨別真假。第三，我們在與非信徒接觸時需要有智慧和溫柔。他們可能還沒有準備好聽福音。但他們會被我們內心真正的愛、喜樂和平安所吸引。博士聽從了希律的指示，前往伯利恆。第 9 節說：他們聽見王的話就去了。在東方所看見的那星忽然在他們前頭行，直行到小孩子的地方，就在上頭停住了。那顆星再次出現並移動了！這讓我們想起了在以色列人離開埃及後，神曾用雲柱和火柱來引導他們。馬太描述耶穌是個小孩子。這個希臘詞可以指蹣跚學步的孩子。博士可能是幾個月前第一次在東方看到那顆星。他們需要時間來準備並花時間在路上。因此，他們並不是在耶穌出生的那天晚上

到達的。博士來的時候，耶穌可能已經是一、兩歲了。我們被聖誕賀卡愚弄了，上面描繪博士來到馬棚來看嬰兒耶穌。第 11 節給了我們另一個線索：**進了房子，看見小孩子和他母親馬利亞，就俯伏拜那小孩子，揭開寶盒，拿黃金、乳香、沒藥為禮物獻給他。**約瑟一家是在一所房子裡，而不是馬廄裡。也許約瑟和馬利亞在耶穌出生後結婚並留在伯利恆。博士們看見耶穌，就俯伏敬拜祂。他們尊敬這個男孩，而不是祂的父母。馬利亞只是神揀選的一個僕人，懷上了耶穌。接下來，博士將他們的禮物獻給耶穌。禮物可能有象徵意義。黃金與皇室相配。乳香和沒藥都是由樹木提取物製成的香料。乳香可能反映耶穌的神性。沒藥是用作處理遺體以掩蓋其難聞的臭味。那些都是昂貴的禮物。但它們對一個兩歲的男孩沒有什麼用！你的小孫子或侄子過生日時會喜歡玩具或糖果。但是博士不是來拜訪一個蹣跚學步的孩子，而是一位君王。皇室人員應該得到最好的待遇。我們可以從博士身上學到什麼？他們來敬拜耶穌。我們每個星期天都在這裡敬拜主。我們準備好了嗎？這不僅僅是梳好頭髮或穿著整齊的衣服。我們準備好與萬王之王見面嗎？還是我們像走進電影院一樣隨意走進大堂？我鼓勵大家在跟你的朋友打招呼後安靜片刻。這段經文中「敬拜」這個字的希臘文意思是在重要人物面前跪下或俯伏。我們唱歌時站著，有些人喜歡舉手。但我們的內心是否謙卑地向主鞠躬，知道神就在我們中間？博士為王帶來了昂貴的禮物。你每個星期天都帶什麼來？這不僅僅是金錢奉獻。你帶著喜樂的心來嗎？你帶著對神的感謝來嗎？祂供應你的需要、保護你、賜給你健康。你帶著期望來學習聖經嗎？神可能會從祂的話語中給你新的亮光或是提醒。不要只是來聚會，而且要做好準備才來。

CONCLUSION 結論

君王已經來到了。故事中的人物表現出不同的反應。希律沒有安全感。他怕自己的權力受到影響。宗教領袖對此漠不關心。對他們來說，彌賽亞只是用來研究而不是去相信的信息。相比之下，博士則表現出尋找王的興趣。他們帶來了昂貴的禮物來敬拜祂。如果他們知道祂是萬王之王，他們會贈送什麼禮物給祂？當一個人已經擁有一切時，你會送甚麼禮物給他呢？在聖誕節期間，同事和家人喜歡玩交換禮物這個遊戲。每個人準備一份禮物與另一個人交換。沒有人知道裡面是什麼。最後得到更好的東西的人會很高興。在第一個聖誕節，神主動地與我們交換最好的禮物。祂把自己的兒子給了我們。這份救恩禮物是貴重的，因為它是無價的。神希望從我們得到什麼？所有一切！神不需要你的錢。祂是要你的心。耶穌來是要成為你的君王。敬拜不再只是星期日的聚會。敬拜是一種心態，也是一種選擇。無論你做什麼，你都把神放在首位。你尊崇祂為你的君王。

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 in the east 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 Christ 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 be the shepherd of 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 make a careful search 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 in the east 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 worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.