

INTRODUCTION 引言

What you decide to look for may limit your focus. A surprise at the end will surpass your expectation. When I was a little kid, one time my dad told me that he would buy me a train if I did well on the final exam. That was a great motivation for a small boy. I went to a toy store and imagined what kind of train I might get. I saw a locomotive on a shelf. That would be a nice gift. Eventually, I got good scores and I got my prize. The toy was better than I had hoped for. It was a train set with tracks and connecting cars powered by batteries. Sure enough, I was a very happy kid. On the first Christmas, God gave the best gift He could give to mankind. God gave us His Son. We will revisit a familiar story in the book of Matthew. A few wise men came from the east to look for baby Jesus. Before we study the passage, we need to correct a few misconceptions. All our life, we have been fooled by Christmas cards and decorations. Error #1: The Bible does not say how many wise men came. The fact that they brought three gifts does not necessarily mean that there were three messengers. We are even influenced by the hymn “We Three Kings” for centuries! Error #2: This incident did not happen on the night when Jesus was born. We see two hints in the passage. First, Jesus and His parents were in a house, not in a manger. Second, verse 16 says Herod ordered to kill all the boys in Bethlehem two years old and under. Jesus could be a few months old to two years of age. Brothers and sisters: do not believe in all you hear and see. Always do a fact-check with the Bible. Our attention today is on how various people in the story reacted to the birth of Jesus. We find the same responses today. It all comes down to two contrasting decisions: The Savior was born; will you receive Him or reject Him?

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Perceptive 敏銳

First we look at the wise men. I will describe them as perceptive people. They were aware of unusual things in the surrounding. They then investigated what had happened. Who were they? The Chinese Bible seems to imply that they were PhDs. They might not have a college degree, but they were well-educated people. Your Bible may translate them as Magi. The word refers to experts in astrology, medicine and dream interpretation. They could be advisors to kings. The “east” might be Persia or Babylon. Verse 2 tells us the reason for their visit: ...“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” Those star-observers saw a particular star. They understood that a king of the Jews was born. How did they get that? Remember Israel had two mass exiles in the Old Testament? The northern kingdom was defeated by Assyria in 732 BC, and the southern kingdom was conquered by Babylon in 586 BC. As a result, the Jews mingled with foreigners. It was quite possible that some scholars in those nations came across the Old Testament. They read those books and learned that God would send a ruler. Now the wise men thought of those passages when a special star appeared. Perhaps it was unusual in its

color, brightness or location in the sky. All in all, the wise men were perceptive of what they saw. They noticed something out of the ordinary had taken place. A Jewish king was born. Therefore, those non-believers traveled several hundred miles to Jerusalem to worship Him. Dear friends: God may be using some signs to catch your attention too. Perhaps you hear something remarkable in the news, something happened to your friends or something you encountered. It can be someone escaping from a disaster, surviving an incurable disease or finding a long-lost family member. You say to yourself: "That cannot be true. It cannot be just luck." God is telling you that He is still working in the world. He wants to draw people to believe in Him. Do not let your curiosity fade away. Look for this King just like the wise men did. We are very blessed today because we have the whole Bible. I encourage you to read it with an objective mind. Look for proof whether or not those stories are fact.

2. Deceptive 詭詐

The wise men came a long way to search for the King. However, they asked the wrong person for directions after they arrived in Jerusalem. They went to King Herod. He was a deceptive person. Herod was assigned by Rome to oversee the area. History tells us that Herod was a paranoid person. He even eliminated his own family members to secure his power. That was why he was troubled when the wise men asked him where to find the King of the Jews. In Herod's mind, a new King was a threat to his authority. Therefore, he came up with a plan. Herod told the wise men in verse 8: **...“Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”** Herod was deceptive. He had no interest in worshipping the Jewish King. He hoped to locate the child so that he could get rid of him. Even though Herod did a lot of wrong things, he had a correct understanding of Jesus. In verse 4, he called this new-born King “the Christ.” The title in Hebrew is “Messiah,” which means the anointed one. In the Old Testament, a priest smeared oil on the head of a king to crown him. The symbolic meaning is to set the person apart for God's use. Herod was greatly concerned that the birth of a Jewish King would take away his throne. But he was right! Jesus is doing the same thing in our lives. When He enters into our hearts, He does not want to be a resident only. He intends to become the President. Therefore, the Bible describes Jesus as our Lord. He should be the Boss in every aspect of your life. You still maintain routine duties as a student, an employee, a housewife or a retiree. But you serve Lord Jesus through all you do and you give Him glory in all things. Without a doubt, admitting Jesus as Lord is the biggest obstacle to salvation. Non-believers love to receive God's blessings in this life and go to heaven after they leave the world. The question is: what position does Jesus hold for the rest of your life? If you only pray to Him when you need something or when you face troubles you cannot solve, then you are only replacing the statues you used to worship with a cross. If you only attend church when you have free time, then you see this place as a hotel and not your spiritual home. Do not deceive yourself! Either Jesus is your Master or you are still in control. There is no middle ground.

3. Insensitive 麻木

So far we see that the wise men were perceptive and Herod was deceptive. The next group of characters we will introduce are the insensitive religious leaders. Herod referred the question from the wise men to the Jewish teachers. They were Bible experts. If anyone knew where the Jewish King would be born, it would be them. Those elite replied Herod by quoting Micah 5:2 – “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” Ephrathah is another name for Bethlehem. It was a small town about six miles to the south of Jerusalem. It was also the hometown of David and the place where he became a king. The religious leaders were spot-on! They heard that the Messiah, the King they and their ancestors anticipated, had arrived. The problem was that they showed no emotions nor motions to the news. Why not? In the gospels, those leaders saw Jesus as an enemy. The Lord rebuked them for their hypocrisy. They put up a religious show to win people’s acceptance but they had no love for God. Jesus even convicted them for putting a stumbling block between people and God. Those teachers knew the Bible. They taught people its contents but they did not believe in the messages. The information was irrelevant to them. We can be insensitive to God like them too. You see churches everywhere. People in politics and sports mention God. Even merchants bombard you with advertisements about Christmas. You should know something about Christianity unless you live in a cave. God came into the world as a human. He died on the cross for your sins. But He came back to life after death. Knowledge is the foundation of our faith. However, knowledge cannot save you. You must make a commitment to Jesus and make Him your Savior and Lord. You read the Bible and apply those principles to your daily life. Faith must be demonstrated by actions. Otherwise, it will be like a power outage. You have food in the fridge but you do not have electricity to cook it. The raw meat cannot feed you. Even after we become Christians, we must continue to feed on God’s Word. The more we know Him, the more we should love Him. We do so by obeying Him and following Him.

4. Festive 慶賀

Finally, the wise men found Jesus. God used the same star to direct them to the house where Jesus and His parents were. That triggered a festive celebration. Everyone had joy. Look at verse 11: **And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.** Notice the wise men bowed down to Jesus, and not His parents. The King was the focus. Suppose you attend a one-month-old party for a baby. The little guy will be under the spotlight. Guests bring gifts for the baby. Likewise, the wise men presented gifts to Jesus. But they did not give Him clothes, toys or diapers. Instead, they offered Jesus gold, frankincense and myrrh. Joseph and Mary must be surprised by those items. Remember the time when you opened an “unwanted gift?” It was something you did not need. You reluctantly squeezed out a smile and thanked your friend. Jesus could not use those gifts yet. But they have symbolic meaning. Gold is a precious metal. It reflects Jesus’ royalty as King. Both frankincense and myrrh are perfumes made from tree extracts. Frankincense is burned

in worship. It points to Jesus' divinity as God. Myrrh is used in burial to cover the bad smell of decaying bodies. It foreshadowed Jesus' mortality as a man. The wise men prepared expensive gifts for Jesus. Compared to them, what do you bring as you worship the King of kings? Your money offering shows your love for the Lord. Besides that, how should you prepare yourself to worship Him? It can be as simple as getting your clothes, Bible and Sunday school material ready on Saturday. Do not stay up too late either. I usually wash the coffee pot and fill it with water at bedtime. Planning ahead will cut down hassles. Sunday morning can look like a war-zone at home! Do not let small accidents turn into conflicts and ruin everyone's mood for worship. I learned enough lessons from that! When you enter the sanctuary, turn your phone off and remain silent. If ordinary worshippers need to prepare themselves, how much more should we expect from those who serve? While we are far from perfect, we should pursue excellence. I make mistakes all the time. Those humbling moments motivate me to do better next time. I encourage those who are assigned a role on Sunday to do your best. Know your duties, rehearse at home and come on time are just the basics. You serve the Lord by serving people. God will reward your faithfulness.

CONCLUSION 結論

The Savior was born; will you receive Him or reject Him? In today's story, three groups of people reacted differently to Jesus the King. The deceptive Herod was disturbed by Jesus' birth, so much so that he planned to get rid of Him. The insensitive religious leaders knew the Messiah would come. But they disregarded Him when He was born. Only the perceptive wise men paid tribute the King of the Jews. They traveled a long way and brought expensive gifts to worship Him. True worship comes from the heart. It demands nothing in return. The following story illustrates a man-centered and not a God-centered worship. In October of 1977, Maria Rubio was making burritos as breakfast for her husband. Suddenly, she noticed a burnt mark on a tortilla that resembled the face of Jesus. The image was about one inch by one inch in size. Maria thought it was a sign from God. She even took the bread to her priest and asked him to bless it. Though reluctant, the father did it anyway. Maria testified that the miracle bread changed her family. She became a happier and submissive wife, and her husband overcame alcohol addiction. News quickly spread from a small town in New Mexico. In the next few years, tens of thousands visitors rushed to see the tortilla. Many pilgrims believed that it had healing power. They brought flowers and pictures of loved ones with sicknesses and asked Maria for prayer. Later, Maria turned a shed in her backyard into a shrine. People kept coming from early morning to midnight. The frenzy finally came to an end in 2005. Maria's grand-daughter took the tortilla to school for a show-and-tell. Unfortunately, she dropped it and it was broken into a few pieces. The shrine was then closed and the remains of the tortilla was stored in a drawer. It sounds silly for people to worship a piece of bread. Jesus does not want us to see Him as a vending machine. We worship Him because of who He is, not because we can get something from Him. This Christmas, let us declare Him as the King of our lives. Jesus came to save you. He welcomes you to receive Him today if you do not know Him. You must confess your sins and accept His free gift of salvation with a simple faith. Will you receive Him or reject Him?

INTRODUCTION 引言

你所決定要尋找的事物，可能會限制你的視線；而最終的驚喜，往往會超越你的期待。我小時候，有一次爸爸告訴我，如果期末考考得好，他會買玩具火車送給我。對一個小男孩來說，那是極大的動力。我跑到玩具店，想像自己可能會得到什麼樣的火車。我在架子上看到一輛火車頭，認為那是一份很棒的禮物。結果，我真的考到好的成績，也得到了獎勵。那一個玩具比我所期待的還要好。它是一組用電池驅動的火車，有軌道、並有可以連接的車廂。當然，我非常快樂。在第一個聖誕節，神賜給人類一份最好的禮物——神把祂的獨生子賜給我們。我們將回顧馬太福音中一個熟悉的故事。有幾位博士從東方而來，尋找嬰孩耶穌。在研讀這段經文之前，我們需要先糾正一些錯誤的觀念。一直以來，我們被聖誕卡片和裝飾所誤導。錯誤一：聖經並沒有說來了幾位博士。雖然他們帶來了三樣禮物，並不表示一定有位使者。然而，幾個世紀以來，我們甚至受到詩歌〈東方三博士〉(We Three Kings)的影響！錯誤二：這件事並不是發生在耶穌出生的那天晚上。經文中有兩個線索。第一，耶穌和祂的父母住在一間房子裡，而不是在馬槽。第二，第 16 節說，希律王下令殺害伯利恆境內兩歲及以下的男孩。因此，當時的耶穌可能是幾個月大到兩歲的年紀。弟兄姐妹，不要凡聽見、凡看見的都照單全收；要從聖經中核對事實。今天我們的重點是放在故事中不同人物對耶穌誕生的反應。今天我們仍然可以看到同樣的反應。最終，一切歸結為兩個截然不同的抉擇：救主已經降生——你要接納祂，還是拒絕祂？

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Perceptive 敏銳

首先，我們來看那幾位博士。我會把他們形容為敏銳的人。他們察覺到周遭發生了不尋常的事，並且進一步調查事情的真相。那麼，他們究竟是誰呢？中文聖經似乎暗示他們是有博士頭銜的人。他們未必擁有大學學位，但他們是受過教育的人。有些聖經版本稱他們為「智者」。這個用詞指的是精通占星學、醫學和解夢的人，他們也可能是君王的顧問。「東方」可能指波斯或巴比倫。第二節告訴我們他們來訪的原因：「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。」這些觀星的專家看見了一顆特別的星，明白有一位猶太人的王誕生了。他們是如何得知這件事的呢？還記得舊約中以色列曾經有過兩次大規模的被擄嗎？北國在公元前 732 年被亞述打敗，南國則在公元前 586 年被巴比倫征服。結果，猶太人與外邦人混雜在一起。很有可能，當地的一些學者接觸過舊約聖經，閱讀了那些書卷，得

知神將要差派一位統治者。當那顆特別的星出現時，博士們便想起了這些經文。那顆星或許在顏色、亮度，或在天空中的位置上不尋常。總而言之，博士們對所看見的事情非常敏銳。他們察覺到一件奇異的事發生了一位猶太人的王誕生了。因此，這些非信徒的外邦人，走了幾百英里的路程，來到耶路撒冷敬拜新生王。親愛的朋友，神也可能用一些徵兆來吸引你的注意。也許你在新聞中聽見一件不可思議的事，或是這些事情發生在一個朋友，甚至是你自己身上。也許是有人在災難中死裡逃生、從不治之症中存活下來，或是找回了失散多年的家人。你心裡會想：「這的確是難以置信，這不可能只是運氣。」神正在告訴你，祂仍然在這個世界中工作，祂要吸引人來相信祂。不要讓你的好奇心漸漸淡忘，要像那些博士一樣，去尋找這位君王。今天我們實在是有福，因為我們擁有整本聖經。我鼓勵你用客觀的心態來閱讀它，查考這些記載是否是真實的事情。

2. Deceptive 詭詐

博士們遠道而來，為了尋找那位君王。然而，當他們抵達耶路撒冷後，卻向錯誤的人問路——他們去找希律王。希律是一個詭詐的人，他是羅馬政府所委派、負責管理那一地區的領袖。歷史告訴我們，希律是個神經質的人，為了鞏固自己的地位，他甚至連家人都不惜除掉。因此，當博士們詢問他「猶太人的王」在哪裡時，他心中十分不安。在希律看來，一位新王的誕生，正是對他權力的威脅。於是，希律想出了一個計謀。他在第 8 節對博士們說：...「你們去仔細尋訪那小孩子，尋到了，就來報信，我也好去拜他。」希律其實十分詭詐，他根本無意敬拜這位猶太人的王。他只是想要找到這個孩子，然後將他除滅。雖然希律做了許多錯事，他對耶穌卻有一個正確的認識。在第四節中，他稱這位新生王為「基督」。這個稱號在希伯來文中是「彌賽亞」，意思是「受膏者」。在舊約中，祭司會把油抹在君王的頭上，為他加冕；這象徵著把這個人分別出來，歸給神使用。希律深知，一位猶太王的誕生，會奪走他的王位。他的認知其實是正確的。耶穌也在我們的生命中做同樣的事。當祂進入我們心中時，祂並不是要成為一位住客，而是要成為老闆。因此，聖經稱耶穌為我們的主；祂應當在你生命的每一方面作主作王。你仍然履行日常的角色與責任，無論是學生、員工、家庭主婦，或是退休人士；但你所做的一切，都是在服事主耶穌，並在凡事上榮耀祂。毫無疑問，承認耶穌為主，是一個人得救的最大障礙。非信徒都希望在今生得到神的祝福，將來離世後又能上天堂。問題在於：在你一生當中，耶穌究竟佔據什麼樣的位置？如果你只在有需要、或遇到自己無法解決的困難時才向祂禱告，那麼你不過是用十字架取代了過去所拜的神像；如果你只有在有空的時候才來教會，那你只是把教會當成旅館，而不是屬靈的家。不要欺騙自己！不是耶穌作你的主，就是你自己仍然當家；在這件事上，沒有任何中間地帶。

3. Insensitive 麻木

到目前為止，我們看見敏銳的博士，並詭詐的希律。接下來要介紹的第三組人物，是麻木的宗教領袖。希律把博士提出的問題轉交給猶太人的老師，他們都是聖經學者。因此他們必然知道猶太人的王會出生在哪裡。這些宗教菁英引用了彌迦書 5:2 來回答希律：「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。」以法他是伯利恆的另一個名稱。伯利恆是一個位於耶路撒冷以南約六英里的小城，也是大衛的故鄉，以及他被立為王的地方。宗教領袖的回答完全正確。他們聽見了彌賽亞已經來到的消息，他們和祖先一直所盼望這位君王。然而，他們對這消息沒有情感上的反應，也沒有行動上的回應。為什麼會這樣呢？在福音書中，這些宗教領袖視耶穌為敵人。主責備他們的虛偽：他們用宗教的表現來博取人的認同，他們內心卻不愛神。耶穌甚至指責他們在人與神之間放下絆腳石。這些老師熟悉聖經，也教導百姓聖經的內容，但他們自己卻不相信其中的信息。對他們而言，這些真理只是知識，與生活無關。我們也可能像他們一樣，對神麻木。你到處都能看見教堂，一些政治人物和運動員也會提到神，連商家都用聖誕節的廣告不斷轟炸你。除非你住在山洞裡，否則你多多少少都應該知道一些基督信仰的內容：神成為人來到世上，為你的罪死在十字架上，並且在死後復活。知識是信仰的基礎，但知識不能拯救你。你必須委身給耶穌，接受祂作你的救主和生命的主宰。你要閱讀聖經，並將其中的原則實踐在日常生活中。信心若沒有行為，就毫無益處；就好像停電一樣。冰箱裡雖然有食物，卻沒有電可以煮食，生肉無法餵飽你。就算成為基督徒之後，我們仍然需要不斷以神的話作為屬靈的糧食。我們越認識神，就應當越愛祂；而這份愛，是藉著順服祂、跟隨祂來表達出來的。

4. Festive 慶賀

終於，博士們找到耶穌了。神再次使用同一顆星，引導他們來到耶穌和祂父母所住的房子。於是引發了一場慶賀。眾人都充滿喜樂。請看第 11 節：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。請注意，博士們是向耶穌下拜，而不是向祂的父母敬禮。這位君王才是主角。假設你去參加一個嬰孩滿月的慶祝會，焦點一定是那個小傢伙。客人為小孩預備禮物。同樣地，博士們把禮物獻給耶穌。然而，他們送的不是衣服、玩具或尿布，而是黃金、乳香和沒藥。約瑟和馬利亞看到那些禮物肯定十分驚訝。你是否也有曾經收過「不合用的禮物」？那些東西是你根本用不上的。你也只好勉強擠出笑容謝謝朋友。當時的耶穌也還用不上那些禮物，但它們帶著象徵的意義。黃金是貴重的金屬，表達耶穌作王的尊貴身分；乳香和沒藥都是由樹脂製成的香料。乳香在敬拜中點燃，指向耶穌的神性；沒藥則用於安葬時遮蓋屍體腐敗的氣味，它預表耶穌的死亡。博士們為耶穌預備了昂貴的禮物。相比之下，當你來敬拜萬王之王時，

帶來的是什麼呢？你的金錢奉獻表達了你對主的愛。除此之外，你又該如何預備自己來敬拜祂呢？最簡單的是在星期六就把衣服、聖經和主日學資料準備好，也不要熬夜。我通常會在睡前把咖啡壺洗乾淨並加好水。事先計劃能減少許多手忙腳亂的情況。星期天早晨，家裡常常看起來像戰場一樣！不要讓一些小意外演變成衝突，破壞了大家敬拜的心情。這些功課我已經學得夠多了。當你進入大堂時，請關掉手機，並保持安靜。若一般會眾尚且需要預備自己，那麼事奉的人豈不更應該如此？雖然我們無法達到完美，但我們應當追求卓越。我經常犯錯，錯誤使我謙卑下來，激勵我下一次要做得更好。我鼓勵所有在主日服事的同工，都要盡力做好自己的本份：清楚自己的職責、在家預備與練習、準時到達，這些都只是最基本的要求。你是藉著服事人來服事主，而神必然賞賜你的忠心。

CONCLUSION 結論

救主已經降生—你要接納祂，還是拒絕祂？在今天的故事中，有三組人對君王耶穌作出了截然不同的反應。詭詐的希律因耶穌的誕生而心中不安，甚至計劃要除掉祂；麻木的宗教領袖早就知道彌賽亞要來，他們卻在耶穌降生時對祂置之不理；唯有那群敏銳的博士，對猶太人的王表達尊敬。他們遠道而來，帶著貴重的禮物來敬拜祂。真正的敬拜是出自內心的，不求任何回報。接下來的故事，說明了一種以人為中心、而不是以神為中心的敬拜。1977年10月，瑪麗亞·魯比歐 (Maria Rubio) 正在為丈夫做墨西哥捲餅作早餐。忽然她注意到一片玉米餅上有一塊燒焦的痕跡，看起來像耶穌的臉。那個影像大約只有一英吋見方。瑪麗亞認為這是神所給的記號。於是她把那片餅拿給神父，請他祝福。神父雖然心中遲疑，最後還是照做了。瑪麗亞見證說，這塊「神蹟之餅」改變了她的家庭：她成了一位更快樂、更順服的妻子，而她的丈夫也戒掉酒癮。消息很快從新墨西哥州的一個小鎮傳開。接下來的幾年裡，成千上萬的人湧來觀看那片餅。許多朝聖者相信它具有醫治的能力，他們帶著鮮花和生病親人的照片，請瑪麗亞為他們禱告。後來，瑪麗亞甚至把後院的一間小棚子改成了聖壇，來訪的人從清晨到深夜絡繹不絕。這股狂熱在2005年終於告一段落。瑪麗亞的孫女把那片餅帶到學校做「展示與分享」。她不小心把餅掉在地上，碎成了好幾塊。聖壇因此關閉，餅的碎片被收在一個抽屜裡。人們敬拜一塊餅，聽起來實在可笑。耶穌並不希望我們把祂看成一台自動販賣機。我們敬拜祂，是因為祂是神，而不是因為我們能從祂那裡得到什麼。在這個聖誕節，讓我們宣告：耶穌是我們生命的君王。耶穌來到世上是為了拯救你；若你還不認識祂，祂今天歡迎你來接受祂。你必須承認自己的罪，用單純的信心接受祂白白賜下的救恩。救主已經降生—你要接納祂，還是拒絕祂？