

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 December 2024

Preacher: Jeremy Martinson

[0 : 00] starting today and all the way right up through the last Sunday of this year, we're going to take a little phrase out of that Charles Wesley hymn, and then we're going to see where he found that phrase in Scripture, and we're going to explore that particular Scripture.

So today, Matthew chapter 2 and also Micah chapter 5. Corey, would you please come and serve us this morning?

Corey's going to read Matthew chapter 2, starting in verse number 1 and down through verse number 6. Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, the wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?

For we saw his star when it rose, and we have come to worship him. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

They told him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for it is written by the prophet, And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah.

[1 : 13] For from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. Thank you. Father, we are grateful to have your word. We're grateful for the privilege of gathering together, and we do desire to learn from this text and from the book of Micah what you have for us today.

Thank you for warming our hearts and stirring our affections for Jesus as we have had the privilege of singing songs together that remind us that he is the light of the world who has come and will come again.

Thank you for the reminder that our Savior Jesus is Emmanuel, God, with us. And now, as we turn our attention to the preaching of your word, would you help us consider the Lord Jesus, our Savior, as the long-expected one.

We ask that you would move in our hearts, stir up worship, appreciation, help us to believe the things that we read here and study here in your word, and to take these things and leave this place changed because we have learned and grown and believed your word together.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. You can think about world history as a series of arrivals of leaders.

[2 : 38] It's almost like the waves coming up on a beach. A particular leader will show up on the scene, make some kind of a mark, and then recede back into the ocean.

Some make bigger marks than others, of course, but you can explore history this way as the recurring arrival of various world leaders.

Some of these leaders are marked by humility and kindness and graciousness and gentleness and benevolence and a particular care for the people that they are leading.

Some do what is best for those that they lead, but far more often history has shown that leaders are self-centered.

They are often doing what is best for themselves, and this leads regularly, as history has shown, to aggressive behavior when they don't immediately get what they want.

[3 : 44] Now, most people, most of us, want to follow a leader who is good, the first kind of leader, a leader who is humble and gracious and kind and concerned about the well-being of others.

And yet, a brief review of history reveals that that kind of leader may often be less influential, less powerful, less hasty, and also less successful at accomplishing the immediate goals of those that he is leading.

And so we should not be surprised when populations lean towards that second kind of leader, those who can immediately give the populace what they want, even if that requires an amount of

aggression towards others.

The prophet Micah served when God's people were desperately in need of a leader. This was a tumultuous time, both in the north and in the south.

Both kingdoms were living under a threat of attack by Assyria. But people were understandably anxious, understandably afraid, but also stubbornly unwilling to repent.

[5 : 18] Micah warns God's people about their sin, about coming judgment. And he also offers them hope in the form of a promised future leader.

Look at Micah chapter 5, verse number 1. And let me just warn you that the language here is going to sound a little bit like the book of Lamentations that we studied earlier this year.

Micah chapter 5 and verse number 1. Now, daughter who is under attack, you slash yourself in grief.

A siege is set up against us. They are striking the judge of Israel on the cheek with a rod.

Bethlehem.

Ephrathah. You are small among the clans of Judah. One will come from you to be ruler over Israel for me.

[6 : 26] I love the language that comes out here. One will come from you to be ruler for me. The idea here is that Micah is commenting on the humble origins of where this promised leader will arise from.

One will come from you, from Bethlehem. One of the smallest. A village. Not where you would expect the king, the Messiah, to arise from.

And yet, the end of verse 2. His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times.

Now, it is possible that these two phrases are intended to point our attention to the eternality of this Messiah. That this Messiah is going to be one who doesn't have a beginning and doesn't have an end.

But I think it's better to understand this as connecting in the context of Micah to Bethlehem. He's saying this about Bethlehem. He's commenting on the size of Bethlehem.

[7 : 39] The obscurity of Bethlehem. And then he says this one is from ancient times. Micah seems to be making a connection both with Bethlehem, but also with an old dynasty from Bethlehem.

Do you remember who that was? It was King David. He seems to be making a connection here. This, and it would cause the people to wonder, right?

Because David's dynasty, that dynasty is long since dead and over. It's like a stump. And yet, the prophet Micah says, from you, from this little town in Bethlehem, one is going to arise, and from, he is from antiquity.

Do you see that? He is from ancient times. He seems to be making a connection back to King David. Therefore, Israel, verse 3, language like lamentations again.

Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor has given birth. And then the rest of the ruler's brothers will return to the people of Israel.

[8 : 50] He will stand and shepherd them in the strength of the Lord, in the majestic name of the Lord his God. They will live securely.

For then his greatness will extend to the ends of the earth. He will be their peace. Verse 3, exile is predicted, and then restoration is promised, and then there is this coming one who is going to stand.

The idea is he will be installed as the king. But then notice this connection back to David again. It's a little pointer back to David. This one who is installed as the king, the one who is standing as the king, is going to do what?

What's the verb? Shepherd. Shepherd. A ruler who will shepherd?

As predicted, God turned his people over to the Assyrians and the Babylonians, but in his mercy, they did eventually return to their land. But life was never quite the same.

[10 : 05] And they certainly did not experience the security, the glory, and the peace that is promised here in the book of Micah. God's people wait for 700 years.

But waiting on God is never a waste. King Herod is a classic example of a self-centered, aggressive, and cruel leader like I mentioned earlier.

When he came to power, he slaughtered the remaining family of the previous ruling dynasty. He executed half of the Jewish Sanhedrin.

Think about if someone were to come to power in the United States and execute half of Congress and half of the Supreme Court. He put to death 300 court officials.

He murdered his own wife and his mother-in-law and three of his own sons. And then, on his deathbed, Herod arranged for the mass murder of influential men in Jerusalem so that when his death was announced, the people of Jerusalem would have something to cry about.

[11 : 31] This was a cruel, self-centered, aggressive person. Matthew introduces us to King Herod in chapter 2 of his gospel.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem saying, Where is he who has been born King of the Jews?

For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him. Wise men. These are likely Persian astrologers. They study the stars.

They watch the planets. They're looking for signs that could indicate some type of an important event happening on the earth. The wise men see a star and they believe that it corresponds to the birth of a Jewish king.

Perhaps they were referencing Numbers chapter 24 and verse 17. I was thinking about this this week. How kind and gracious of God to send a star and not a volcano.

[12 : 43] You know? Or a blizzard. How kind of God. The wise men see a star and they follow this star for hundreds of miles.

This was not a short journey. This was not an overnight trip. They follow this star likely for hundreds of miles. Baghdad for reference is 547 miles away.

It would have taken them a long time in other words. Perhaps assuming that the king of the Jews will be born in the capital city of the Jews they arrive in Jerusalem.

And I wonder if when these wise men arrive in Jerusalem they are surprised because they seem to be the only ones who have noticed this star. They seem to be the only ones discerning enough to understand its meaning.

And they know enough of Hebrew prophecy to recognize this means something among the Jews and yet they don't know where the king will be born. So they start asking around.

[13 : 52] Can you imagine the stir that this creates in King Herod's Jerusalem? when these foreigners start asking about the new king of the Jews and they seem to have no shame at all asking about this king?

Well as you might expect when word gets out that there's another king King Herod is going to hear about it and he is going to do something about it. Verse number 3 When King Herod heard this he was deeply disturbed deeply disturbed and all Jerusalem with him.

So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah will be born. I love that. The Messiah literally the anointed one.

It's the word Christos. I find this interesting because I think Matthew is letting us in on a little secret. Herod knows something but he doesn't want to own up that he's the king.

And so he refers to him as the anointed one. The Messiah. Where is this Christos?

[15 : 20] I don't think Herod wants to admit that he feels threatened. And so I wonder if Herod's question to the chief priests and the scribes sounds something like this.

Look I have my own ideas about the Messiah and all that but let's just hypothetically say you believed that there was going to be some kind of a Messiah who was going to arise you know based on one of those old prophecies.

If you believed such things I know what I think but where do you think this Messiah would be born? Asking for a friend. Verse 5 In Bethlehem of Judea they told him because this is what was written by the prophet and you Bethlehem in the land of Judah are by no means least among the rulers of Judah because out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.

Does that language sound familiar? A ruler who will shepherd when Matthew quotes Micah you may notice in your Bible a little distinction there and it's probably worth just briefly commenting on Matthew adds this phrase by no means least among the rulers of Judah why would Matthew add that little phrase into his quote of the text from Micah and I think the answer is because Matthew knows that Jesus has already been born he is after all writing his gospel writing the story of Jesus and he has already laid out for us in chapter one of his gospel the very beginning of his gospel Jesus is lineage Matthew knows that Jesus is the legitimate king and he knows that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and so when he comments and quotes the book of

[17 : 39] Micah he wants to make sure that Bethlehem is honored because while it is a small little village Matthew now also knows it is the place where the king was born we might say last but not least verse seven then Herod secretly summoned the wise men I don't think this is a secret meeting I think the idea here is that Herod was being deceitful he was not letting them in on his true intentions Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared I was just thinking again you know about that anointed one when did you say that you first saw that star verse eight he sent them to

Bethlehem and said go and search carefully for the child and when you find him report back to me so that I too can go and worship him after hearing the king they went on their way and there it was the star that they had seen at its rising and it led them until they came and stopped above the place where the child was when they saw the star they were overwhelmed with joy entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother and falling to their knees notice they worshipped him then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts gold frankincense and myrrh and being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod they returned to their own country by another route verse 16 then

Herod when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men flew into a rage he gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men now as horrifying as this end of the story is and it is horrifying we should not be surprised by King Herod's hostility directed towards Jesus the anointed one Jesus threatened Herod's plan Jesus was a threat to Herod's grip on power he was a threat to his livelihood his status his position and people will attack what they perceive to be threats to themselves and not just people out there we can do this too you and

I can sin in this way too we want our plan we want our influence we want our career our status our position and when that gets threatened we are often all too willing to do whatever is necessary to deal with whatever we perceive to be a threat even if that means hurting others in the process herod's hostility though heartless and cruel it is reasonable in the sense that Jesus is a very real threat to him there's a second response to Jesus in the text think with me about the chief priests and the scribes that we met up in verses 4 and 5 and 6 when I was growing up our church that we were in did not have an

Awana program for kids but we did have a kids program we called it sunrise sunrise and we had a thing that we did at sunrise every year about the time of the Super Bowl we called it the quiz bowl and we would take home a list of questions about the Bible trivia questions and so on I kind of hesitate to use that term trivia but you know what I'm going with there this list of 200 300 questions about the Bible and we would look at these questions and learn and try to memorize these questions so that we could show up and we kind of had this time where we would be quizzed and we called it the quiz bowl I have an uncle named Harry he is very smart sometimes he reminds me of MacGyver and my uncle Harry made us a buzz box he took two by six I think that's right two by six give or take chunks of wood and he glued a doorbell onto it and strung a wire from that doorbell up to this silver box that had lights on it and would buzz so then when you pushed your doorbell button because you knew the answer it was like you were really on a game show and it made the quiz bowl all that more authentic and generally speaking this buzz box worked really well but on occasion there was a bit of a bug in the buzz box in which multiple people would light up on this buzz box that seems to me like what must have happened here when

[24 : 16] Herod asked the chief priests and the scribes where the anointed one is going to be born don't you kind of want them to have to go look this up to go do some research you know to go and have to ask the oldest most learned scribe or Pharisee or rabbi among them but that seems not to be the case at all he asks these religious elite where will the anointed one be born and it's like they all buzz in at exactly the same time they all know the answer to the question and yet the religious elite don't seem to care they are indifferent the most religious people in

Jerusalem can answer this most obscure question about the Messiah from a tiny portion of a small prophet Micah it's one verse and yet they are indifferent about the anointed one the Messiah's arrival they know the answer and they just simply seem not to care the wise men travel hundreds of miles to seek out the king and these most religious people can't even be bothered to follow them the last five miles to Bethlehem God has come in the flesh and they shrug their shoulders and bury their noses in the very scriptures that are intended to point to him now maybe you don't have bad blood with

Jesus like Herod and perhaps your response is not hostility but I wonder if you are indifferent like the religious leaders perhaps you know the gospel like the back of your hand and yet you are unwilling to go all in in believing in Jesus maybe you know all sorts of answers to the most obscure questions about scripture but despite your knowledge of what the Bible says something holds you back from following Jesus with your whole heart now maybe for you that's doubt maybe you're just not sure maybe for you it's disillusionment maybe there is pain in your past from some church hurt maybe there is fear about the future and you're not sure it's worth it maybe for all you know for all of the scripture that you can quote and all the phrases of the gospel that you have right on the fresh part of your brain and right on the tip of your tongue maybe for all that you know you're just not sure that you really believe that it's true dear one knowledge about

Jesus is not the same as trusting Jesus I wonder if you would be bold enough to ask the Holy Spirit to clarify for you whatever it is that is holding you back from going all in in believing in Jesus and then I wonder if you would be humble enough to repent and believe the gospel if you are not sure whether your belief in the past was real that's understandable maybe you're just not sure if your belief in the past was the real thing then let me invite you settle it today settle it today know today I believe in Jesus it is perfectly acceptable to say Lord I believe help my unbelief that is a perfectly appropriate response for a follower of

Jesus hostility! Indifference and a third response worship worship worship these wise men arrive at the house where Jesus is growing up and they are beside themselves with joy and they worship look again at verse number 11 entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother and falling to their knees they worshipped him these are not part of God's people the Jews this should feel sort of strange to us these are Persian astrologers magicians wizards and chanters probably not the most spiritually likely people to believe in Jesus and yet here he is

[30 : 27] God in the flesh and seeing Jesus drops them to their knees and then we remember what Paul writes to the Philippians at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father my friend if Jesus is the rightful king then King Herod is illegitimate he is not the rightful king he is not the king born king of the Jews that's Jesus Herod is a usurper and so are you and I we become usurpers when we put ourselves on the throne and act in hostility towards Jesus if in

Jesus the kingdom of God has come then I urge you to believe this gospel Christ has come Christ has died Christ is risen and Christ will come again Jesus is the way and the truth and the life and he is worthy of your trust repent and believe the gospel and if you're not sure what that means maybe because you hear it all the time and those words repent and believe the gospel are now just sort of words that you can say back but you're not sure what they mean would you ask someone someone nearby you who loves you and cares about you perhaps you find yourself like the people Micah wrote to anxious about cultural shifts insecure because of political instability lonely because your values don't align well with what the majority seem to be looking for in a leader maybe there is a longing deep inside of your soul to follow someone who is motivated by love rather than insatiable thirst for power

I have good news for you Christ died Christ is risen Christ will come again 700 years pass from the time of Micah's prophecy to Jesus first coming and perhaps 2000 years have passed since Jesus came the first time and what has happened world leader after world leader have come like waves on a sea they've come they've made their mark and they have receded but Jesus has remained it's hard to wait on God's promise of a ruler who will shepherd but waiting on God is never a waste waiting tests our patience waiting tests our willingness to release control to get ourselves off of the throne of our lives and commit ourselves to watching for

Jesus and giving him all of the authority that is already rightfully his waiting tests our endurance but waiting also gives us time to tell others to testify of the hope that we have in Jesus waiting anchors our hope not in this life not in any world leader who is going to come and go but in as Hebrews 10 tells us the coming one who will come and will not tarry he will not delay do you believe that as Micah prophesied in chapter 5 one day God's people will live we will dwell securely and Jesus glory will extend to the very ends of the earth and he will be our peace are you looking forward to that day when we have a ruler who will shepherd us if you are then you can say right along with me and the hymn writer come come thou long expected

Jesus let's pray father we are grateful to be alive in your world and we are humbled to be among those who have been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone and we need

faith to help us endure father would you anchor our hope in the coming one as we are reminded that your promise 700 years in the making was fulfilled when Jesus came encourage us and comfort us and strengthen us and stir us up to continue believing in your promise 2000 plus years in the making that

[36 : 29] Jesus will return we believe that this is true and it is our privilege to be among those in the church today crying out come thou long expected Jesus father would you please help us as we examine our own hearts give us insight by the Holy Spirit where there is hostility towards you where there is hostility towards others because we perceive them as a threat or we perceive you as a threat father would you please help us by the power of the Holy Spirit to see where there is indifference in our hearts where we have become so accustomed to hearing the gospel and hearing the word of God preached and being around it in our homes that it's almost like we're inoculated against belief and we have become indifferent father would you make us like these wise men overcome with joy full of worship falling on our knees and testifying that Jesus is worthy of our faith worthy of our worship father we pray as those from among the bride of Christ as the bride of Christ herself prays at the end of revelation even so come Lord Jesus thank you in Jesus name amen