

READ

Matthew 2:1–12

CONSIDER

Have you noticed there is always something new to be discovered in God's Word? The text for this week's sermon from Matthew 2 is so well known that we likely come to it thinking it is not possible for anything new to be found. This insight may not be new exactly, but in my study for the sermon for December 17, I was struck by something that had escaped me until now.

Isn't the grace of God wonderful? Consider this—the magi were astrologers. That's right, they occupied at least part of their time with something that God considered sinful. God told his people, Israel, to avoid looking to the stars for direction and for the will and purposes of heaven. But God also, in the sending of his Christ or Messiah, purposed to call the nations beyond Israel into a relationship with him. God then used some sort of heavenly phenomenon to summon the magi first to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem.

I know more about the Bible and Christian theology now than I knew at age 12 when I committed my life to Jesus. But I certainly do not now know everything! Those who come to Jesus today cannot be expected to know all there is to know about God's will; it may be that all they know is this—that God has called them to worship his Son and to offer the gift of their hearts to him. That's where they begin and because of the grace of God, that's enough.

It will be wonderful for me to be with you, my sisters and brothers from SCBC, in worship again this Sunday. It will be wonderful to see many of you in person and I hope those not able to be in the sanctuary will watch the live stream. See you then.

Rev. Dr. Bill Norman

PRAY

Advent God, we journey with you, to Bethlehem's stable and a new-born King, ears attuned to the song of angels, eyes alert for Bethlehem's star. Forgive us if on our journey we are distracted by the tempting offers of this world. Keep our hearts aflame with the hope of Christmas, and the promise of a Saviour. Amen.

DIVING DEEPER

What do you know about Bethlehem? Why did it matter that Jesus was born in that place?

What do you know about King Herod? Why would the story about the star told by the magi cause him such concern?

What does it say to you about God that the magi were directed toward Jesus while doing something that in the Hebrew Scriptures God says is wrong? What or who is it in your life that has been the most influential in directing you toward Jesus?