

# GraceCity Advent Study

## Prepare Him Room



Week #1

November 26-December 2, 2018

“Prepare for the Journey” (Matthew 2:1-10)

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Joy to the world, the Lord is come! The promise of a coming Savior begins directly after the Fall in Genesis 3 when God declares the seed of a woman will smash the head of the serpent’s offspring (Genesis 3:15). Then, through feast and famine, freedom and captivity, God speaks through the prophets to His chosen people, the Israelites, of the Savior that will provide freedom once and for all. In this first study, we look at the story of an unlikely group of seekers as we prepare for the journey to receive our King.

### Preparation:

Reflect on what attracted you to Jesus. What happened in your journey on the way to meeting Him? How did your life change after meeting Him?

**Read:** Matthew 2:1-10

### Definitions:

Magi from the east – also translated wise men; astrologers by profession who observed the stars and planets looking for meaning; unclear whether the Magi were Jews or Gentiles

King Herod – Herod the Great; declared king of the Jews by the Roman Senate in 40 BCE and ruled over Judea from 37 BCE to 4 BCE; revered for being fierce in battle; also known for his paranoia and cruelty

Messiah – also noted as “the Christ,” meaning anointed and promised deliverer

Jerusalem – capital city of Judea; a civil and cultural center for the people of Israel; notably destroyed by Babylonian invaders in 587 BCE (2 Kings 25:8-12) and rebuilt beginning circa 516 BCE (Ezra 1:1-4, 6:13-18; Nehemiah 2)

Bethlehem – literally “house of bread,” a small town six miles to the south of Jerusalem; hometown of King David (1 Samuel 16:1, 4)

### Questions:

1. Review the context of the passage given in verse 1. Note the timing, location, and characters, some of which are defined above.
2. Jesus’ birth came with a relative anonymity that no royal birth would carry today. Scholars believe the Magi speaking with King Herod occurred up to two years after Jesus’ birth. King Herod then informed the chief priests and teachers of the law. What is unique and unexpected about Jesus’ entry to Earth?
3. In the birth narrative found in Luke, Jesus’ birth is declared to shepherds as they watched their flocks by night. (See Luke 2:8-20. More on the Shepherds to come in the Week 4 study.) In this passage in Matthew, the Magi learn of the birth through a star. How does God personalize his presence to each of us in a way that aligns with our occupation and experiences?

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This study has been developed for personal reflection and group discussion. To participate in the conversation, join a GraceCity small group. For more information on times and locations, email [smallgroups@gracecitybaltimore.org](mailto:smallgroups@gracecitybaltimore.org).

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4. Verse 3 states that King Herod and all of Jerusalem were disturbed to hear that the king of the Jews had been born. What might have caused this fear in King Herod? Who would be discouraged by Jesus' disruption to the existing world order? Who would be encouraged by it?
5. While we do not have kings in the sense of King Herod, Jesus is our king. What does it look like for us to submit to Jesus' authority? What "kings" do we worship in the place of Jesus?
6. Verses 6 and 7 refer to the prophecy in Micah 5:2, 4. What makes Bethlehem an unlikely spot for the Savior to be born? What does this prophecy foretell about Jesus' purpose?
7. Why was King Herod interested in the timing of when the star had appeared? What did King Herod do with that information? Refer to Matthew 2:13-18.
8. The Magi were overjoyed when the star reappears in verse 10. At this point, they know their destination is near. They are about to become face-to-face with God in the flesh. How do you feel near the end of a long journey? How do you feel when you are in the presence of God?
9. The culmination of the Magi's journey to Jesus marks both an ending and a beginning. How is our journey to God different than our journey with God? Reflect back to your responses to the Preparation questions above.

### **Closing Prayer:**

*Pause for a moment in advance of the holiday season to prepare your heart for Advent and the celebration of Jesus' birth. Praise God for the transformation that has occurred in you since you met Him. Pray for eyes to see, ears to hear, and wisdom to know how God continues to lead us and be present in our lives, our city, and our world. Pray for those seeking God this Advent season and the courage to be a witness to them. Invite others to join you on Sundays and in this study.*