

**Where Can We Find The Newborn King?
In Worship
Matt. 2:2**

During this season of Advent, we have been talking about where we find Jesus. We have looked at a simple verse from Matthew's Gospel from The Message ... "Where can we find the newborn King?" (Matt. 2:2). Pastor Jerry shared with us how we find Him in each of us individually through repentance and faith. Next we looked at how we find Him as we serve others in the name of the Lord. Today I would like to look at how we find Him in worship. Let's look at this entire verse as our starting point.

Matt 2:2 – *"Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We have seen his star as it arose, and we have come to worship him."* NLT

Why would they come to worship this newborn King? What do you think of when you hear the word "worship?" Many think immediately of music of some sort. The style of music changes from month to month, so what is really at the heart of worship in the church? Why do we worship? What is the purpose of worship and how does it relate to finding the newborn King – Jesus?

To be able to worship God is a privilege. The fall of humanity turned our worship toward ourselves and to the things of this fallen world. "The Holy Spirit, who dwells in the life of every believer, has opened our eyes to the reality of who God is and how we are to live in reference to Him. He is constantly turning our hearts to the throne of God and to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has restored us to our original destiny as children of God." (Why We Worship – track).

People love to celebrate memorable events in their lives – life-events. We celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, and a host of holidays (religious and National). The time of Advent is a preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus, and even though we may not know the exact day of His physical birth, we celebrate the event of when God incarnate came to this earth to redeem humanity. We celebrate our personal spiritual events whenever we share the testimony of our faith in Christ. We retell the life-event story to others and renew the significance of the event to ourselves too. Worship is about remembering the event.

Back in 1992 when the Dallas Cowboys were preparing to play the San Francisco 49ers for the NFC Championship in San Francisco, the Cowboys had a pep-rally at Texas Stadium. The audience cheered wildly for each player when he was introduced. The fans carried banners. They painted their faces and proudly wore blue and white outfits. They tried to get autographs. Not one fan walked away saying, "That event was a dud. It did nothing for me." The event was a success, not because the performance was great (they didn't play any football at all) or the players' speeches were inspiring (most of them weren't very good speakers), but because everyone understood why they were there. The purpose was not to please the fans but to honor the team. The people walked away saying, "That was great! I hope the team understands how much we appreciate and support them!"

Why did you come to church today?

Our primary reason for attending church should be to worship God, to honor Him and show Him how much we appreciate Him (Ps 95:6-7). We sang earlier - Come let us bow down before the Lord. Worship is more than just singing a few songs, performing a few rituals, and enduring a sermon. We come to experience the presence of God, to acknowledge His authority in our lives, and to worship him as our Creator.

We come to pledge our faith and obedience and to seek His honor. Even though this is obvious it's often the missing ingredient in churches today.

Robert Webber wrote, **“Worship is about celebrating events. Worship celebrates God’s saving acts in history.”** God has been actively saving His creation, His people since the beginning.

GOD TAKES THE INITIATIVE

It is **“God who initiates a saving action toward a creation and people are in desperate need of healing and salvation.”** Throughout the Bible we read of examples of God taking the initiative to establish or re-establish a relationship with His people. Let’s look at how God initiated a relationship with Abraham, with Israel, and now with us through Jesus Christ. We recall this story in worship, and it is **the salvation story retold that calls us to worship** Him always.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, God took the initiative to look for them and call to them. He always wants to restore the relationship because God is relational and desires all to be in relationship with Him. Although our sin separates us from a proper relationship with the Almighty, He seeks us by His grace to repent and restore the relationship.

GOD INITIATES A RELATIONSHIP WITH ABRAHAM

What has God ever asked you to do that was so unusual and required you to act completely on faith? Abraham was doing just fine with his family in the land he came from. Then one day his life would be changed forever as God broke into History and initiated a relationship with him.

Gen 12:1-3 – *Then the LORD told Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. 2 I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you."* NLT

How would you react if God suddenly said to you He wanted you to quit your job and pack up your family and belongings and move West, but He didn’t tell you exactly where – just start moving until He said so? What would your spouse think or say about that? OK – so you think – *well if God told me, then I would just obey.* How do you know how God spoke to Abraham? We only have the account that He did. Maybe it was the same for him as it is for us. Whatever way God speaks to us, He initiates the encounter and we are required to respond. That’s what **worship is – our response to God.** Think about this as a response to God ... The Bible tells us in Gen. 22:1 that **“God tested Abraham’s faith and obedience.”** - God asked him to take his son and sacrifice him to the Lord.

Look at Abraham’s response...

Gen 22:3-5 – *The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son Isaac. Then he chopped wood to build a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place where God had told him to go. 4 On the third day of the journey, Abraham saw the place in the distance. 5 "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the young men. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."* NLT

Did you notice the last line there? “We will worship there, and then we will come back.” Faced with the most excruciating task imaginable – killing his only beloved son – Abraham considered this worship. As the story continues we see that Abraham’s obedience was rewarded by God providing the sacrifice in the form of a ram and sparing Abraham the horrifying task of sacrificing his own son. He went to worship and found God.

God brought salvation by leading Abraham to the Promised Land.

Worship is this salvation event remembered and retold. What a story to tell over and over.

GOD INITIATES A RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL

The next major event that God did in history was when He delivered Israel from captivity and bondage in Egypt and led them miraculously through the Red Sea. God revealed Himself to the people of Israel in such a real and personal way that the Jewish people celebrate this event annually to this day. The instructions for this celebration are detailed in Exodus 12:1-14. In this passage the people are told how they are to setup and carry out the Passover celebration of God’s salvation. The passage ends with this instruction from the Lord: **Ex 12:14 – You must remember this day forever. Each year you will celebrate it as a special festival to the LORD.** NLT

If you ask any Jew what the most important event is in Jewish history, they will most likely answer – the Exodus event or Passover. Today, more than 4000 years later, Jews all over the world recall and celebrate this event as Passover.

In this event God delivered His people from the power of Pharaoh. He became their God and they became His people. This was **salvation** for Israel. **God brought them from slavery and bondage to the Promised Land.** People **worship God as this great salvation story is remembered and retold.**

GOD INITIATES A RELATIONSHIP WITH US THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

Christians see the **Exodus event as a foreshadowing of the Christ event** in history. All people are in bondage to evil, to the power of sin in their lives and in this world. God does not leave things this way. He took the initiative by sending His only Son to redeem us from sin’s power. He did not leave us in our sin.

2 Cor 5:19 – “For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others.” NLT

Jesus Christ binds and dethrones the powers of evil, and one day He will ultimately destroy all evil as we read in Revelation. God initiated His saving action toward sinful humanity.

Rom 5:8 – “But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.” NLT

We didn't have to clean up our act first or be worthy of His love – He took the initiative.

Gal 4:4-5 – *“But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.”* NLT

So God brought **salvation** to humanity collectively and to each of us individually by **saving us from the bondage of sin and death and leading us to the Promised Land.** **Worship is remembering and retelling the greatest salvation act of God through Jesus Christ.**

WORSHIP REMEMBERS THE SALVATION STORY

Jewish worship has always been rooted in memory. They tell and retell of the saving acts of God in the salvation of Israel from the oppression of Egypt. The Exodus story is the great story of God bringing His people out of Egypt, forming them into a community, and entering into a covenant relationship with them. The Exodus was the event upon which Israel was founded. Jewish worship is a continual reminder of that event in history.

Christian worship follows the same pattern. We remember the event that is central to what the church is as a people of God. That event is **Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection.** When we gather together for worship or worship on our own, we remember this event in history and its meaning and impact to our lives. We were once lost in our sins and a people separated from a relationship with God. Peter tells us ...

1 Peter 2:9 – *“But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.”* NLT

So we celebrate this great salvation story every chance we get. When we worship, we remember and reflect on this event that has changed our lives forever. When I worship I am reminded of Jesus and all He did to redeem humanity as a whole and me personally.

Where can we find the newborn King?

We find Him within us by repentance and faith. He takes up residence in our hearts.

We find Him as we serve others in His Name – for whatever we do for the least of these, we do for Jesus.

And..

We find Him in worship as we reflect on God's saving act toward us in Christ.

When you worship, what do you reflect upon? What you experience will be determined by your perception.

The English poet William Blake stood looking at a sunrise with a London merchant. The poet asked the shopkeeper, "What do you see?" The merchant replied, "I see a yellow disk which looks to me like a golden coin. What do you see?" The poet replied, "I see a host of angels, and they are crying, 'Holy, Holy, Lord God almighty, heaven and earth are filled with Your glory. Glory be to You, O God, Most High.'..."

God intended to be King from the beginning of creation. He is the King of the Kingdom – His Kingdom. God then promised through the prophets to send His Messiah to come as King of His people. Jesus was born in Bethlehem just as the prophets had said, but Israel already had a king – Herod, King of the Jews – as appointed by Rome. Jesus came to usher in a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, but He will come again at the end of the age to finalize the realization of His Kingdom.

On the Isle of Patmos, John experienced a vision of many things yet to come. Included in his vision is a glimpse of God as King of His Kingdom, on His throne, and everyone worships Him.

I would like you to close your eyes for a moment while I read from Revelation chapter four. Try to visualize what John is writing. He wrote with very visual style to get our attention and help us to experience God in all His glory. Listen to what John sees ...

Rev 4:1-11

Then as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, and the same voice I had heard before spoke to me with the sound of a mighty trumpet blast. The voice said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after these things." 2 And instantly I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it! 3 The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones--jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow. 4 Twenty-four thrones surrounded him, and twenty-four elders sat on them. They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads. 5 And from the throne came flashes of lightning and the rumble of thunder. And in front of the throne were seven lampstands with burning flames. They are the seven spirits of God. 6 In front of the throne was a shiny sea of glass, sparkling like crystal.

In the center and around the throne were four living beings, each covered with eyes, front and back. 7 The first of these living beings had the form of a lion; the second looked like an ox; the third had a human face; and the fourth had the form of an eagle with wings spread out as though in flight. 8 Each of these living beings had six wings, and their wings were covered with eyes, inside and out. Day after day and night after night they keep on saying,

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty--
the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come."*

9 Whenever the living beings give glory and honor and thanks to the one sitting on the throne, the one who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one who lives forever and ever. And they lay their crowns before the throne and say,

*11 "You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power.
For you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created."*

NLT

In Jesus we have victory over the power of sin and death. We will be there in God's Kingdom worshipping the King. Until then we worship by reflecting on God's saving act toward humanity. When we reflect on that – we find Jesus the true King – born of a virgin – in Bethlehem as the prophets had said – and the Magi (Wise Men) saw His star and came to worship Him. Where can we find the newborn King? – If we worship by remembering and reflecting on the salvation event, we can only see one thing – Jesus Christ. What do you see?

"Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King."