

**Conversations on
Matthew 2:1–12**

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Listen together to “Home by Another Way” by James Taylor. Discuss: How is James Taylor’s interpretation of the magi’s journey consistent with Matthew 2:1–12? When is it necessary to “go home by another way”?

WHAT is important to know?

The account of the magi announces at the beginning of Matthew’s story of Jesus that he is the king of the Jews (v. 2), the Christ (v. 4), and the promised ruler of Israel (v. 6). The assembling of the Sanhedrin here anticipates such action on the part of Jesus’ enemies at the time of his passion (26:3, 57; 27:17, 27, 62) and serves with the Great Commission (28:16–20) to bracket the story of Jesus with the acknowledgment of his universal import. Astrologers from a foreign land are the first to acknowledge Jesus as God’s anointed king, and the final command of the risen Jesus is to carry the gospel to all nations, including them via baptism into God’s new chosen people. (*Paul J. Achtemeier*)

- ✧ What are the implications of Matthew’s claim that Jesus is king, Christ, and promised ruler of Israel?
- ✧ What is the meaning of this Gospel’s bracketing of Jesus life with the assemblage of the Sanhedrin?
- ✧ Since this account is only in Matthew, what might it signal to us?

WHERE is God in these words?

In the Gospel of Matthew discipleship is often likened to a kind of shining, which recalls the light from the star that shined on the Christ child. Jesus tells his disciples, “You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (5:14, 16). That disciples are called to shine is important to remember in the season of Epiphany, for now that Christ has ascended and the Spirit has been given, we are the ones through whom this light shines forth. (*William J. Danaher Jr.*)

- ✧ How is a shining star a metaphor for God’s love?
- ✧ Where is God’s presence evident in this Scripture story?
- ✧ How does the use of Hebrew Scripture in this New Testament passage signal the continuation of God’s covenant?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

Everyone who happens to worship on Epiphany has their own idiosyncratic story to tell concerning their pathway to the manger. Some may have no idea who lies there. Others have mistaken ideas about the swaddled child. Nevertheless, all are present due to the prompting of God, who initiates our asking, our seeking, and our finding. The magi’s journey to Bethlehem exposes God’s intention to welcome everyone “into the joy of [God’s] home not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens,” and, remarkably, on earth as well. (*Stephen Bauman*)

- ✧ What is the story of your pathway to the manger?
- ✧ How does God initiate “our asking, our seeking, and our finding”?
- ✧ How do you experience God’s welcome, and what does it mean for your discipleship?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

Preachers will ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten them, helping them recall the ordinary and extraordinary ways in which the light of Christ has appeared to them in their own lives and the lives of those they love. They might also think of four or five people they would like to ask the same question: by what light do you see God? The church has a word for this. When we tell the stories of our encounters with God—in community, in nature, in relationship, in the chambers of our own hearts—we give testimony to the ongoing revelation of the Word made flesh. (*Barbara Brown Taylor*)

- ✧ What are the “ordinary and extraordinary ways in which the light of Christ has appeared” in your life?
- ✧ How has the light of Christ affected your life?
- ✧ What is the light of Christ calling you or your congregation to do in this new year?

Sovereign God, as we move boldly into 2019, help us understand our lives as a journey toward the light of your love. Amen.