



INTRODUCTION

This is the time of year we celebrate the greatest gift that has ever been given by anyone for anyone. God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son. God is with us—Immanuel.

God's plan was to have His Son take on flesh and blood, to be born into this world that He might become our spiritual deliverer or savior. It would be He—the one without sin—who would die in our place and for all the things we have done wrong. If we place our trust in Him—the Risen Lord Jesus Christ—we will receive forgiveness of sins. We'll be adopted into God's family, receiving the free gift of eternal life with God in Heaven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you think most people believe the Christmas story really happened? Explain your answer. How do we know the story is true? Why is it important that we believe it is a true story?
2. Read Matthew 2:1-13. How would you describe the responses of the various people or groups to the announcement that Christ had been born?
3. Why do you think Herod wasn't favorable to the idea that another king had been born? Do you think it would have made a difference if he had realized that Jesus was going to rule over a spiritual kingdom, and not a physical one (at least for the time being)?
4. Why do you think the religious leaders didn't bother to investigate the story of the Magi?
5. The religious leaders knew the Scriptures, and yet it didn't impact their lives. Why do you think this was the case?
6. Read Luke 2:1-10. How was the response of the shepherds similar to the response of the Magi to the birth of Christ?
7. What do we learn from the Magi about a proper response to a king? Do you think most Christians are willing to allow Jesus to reign in their lives? What about you? What are some things you might be tempted to hold back from Jesus?
8. What practically can we do to make sure Jesus is reigning in our lives?

APPLICATION

Although Jesus' birth and identity were revealed ahead of time through the prophets, not everyone responded well to God's gift to the world when the baby Jesus finally arrived. In the Bible, in the second chapter of Matthew, there were three responses revealed which are similar to the responses people have today toward the gift of Jesus to the world today: hostility, apathy and adoration.

Faith in Christ is about a relationship with Jesus. We can respond like the Magi and offer Him committed, sacrificial adoration; we can be apathetic and make no effort to know or find Jesus like the religious leaders of His time; or we can show hostility toward Jesus like Herod did, as we contemplate our life plans.

We have access to a God who is with us. God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, so that whoever puts their trust in Him will receive eternal life. This is Immanuel; this is the One we celebrate at Christmas; *this is Jesus*.

KEY VERSES

Isaiah 7:14	Micah 5:2
Isaiah 9:6	Philippians 3:20
John 3:16-18	John 6:35
Matthew 2:1-13	John 4:14
Luke 2:1-10	John 1:11-12