

Matthew 02 - The Childhood of Jesus; Visit of the Magi; Massacre at Bethlehem; Flight to Egypt; Return to Nazareth

I. Presentation of the King (Matt 1:1–10:42)

- (1) Birth (Matt 1:1–2:23)
 - (C) Reception by the wise men (2:1-12)
 - (D) Opposition by Herod (2:13-23)

Matthew 2

(C) Reception by the wise men (2:1-12)

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of **Herod the king**, behold, **magi** from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

1 After Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea during the reign of King Herod, wise men arrived in Jerusalem from the east

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

- "...Herod the king" - a wicked, cruel, power-hungry man, best known for ruthlessly murdering his closest family members, including one of his nine wives. He was also famous for his building projects, especially for the reconstruction of the Jewish temple.

- "...magi" - where we get the English word "magician" but that gives the wrong connotation of these men. "Wise men" is a much better translation.

— We don't actually know how many magi/wise men came to seek Jesus. It was likely many more than three, but the traditional number of three is because of the three gifts mentioned in v11.

Timing of the Magi

There are several factors that point to the magi visiting Jesus about a year after His birth:

1. Matthew described Jesus as a "child" (*paidion*, v11), not in "infant" (*brephos*, Luke 2:27)

2. Jesus' family was living in a house (v11), not beside a manager (Cf. Luke 2:1-20)
3. Herod's edict to destroy all male children two years old and younger (v16) suggests Jesus fell into this age span
4. Joseph and Mary brought the offering of poor people to the temple when they dedicated Jesus about 40 days after His birth (Luke 2:24). After receiving the Magi's gifts, they could have presented the normal offering (Cf. Lev 12).
5. Joseph and Mary's decision to return to Judea from Egypt (v22) implies that Judea is where they had lived before they took refuge in Egypt.

2 "Where is He **who has been born** King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

2 "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

2 and asked, "Where is the one who was born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

— "...who has been born" - not "who is to become" King of the Jews; Jesus' status as Israel's King did not come to Him later in His life...He was born with it (Cf. 27:37). In this way, He was superior to Herod.

— Their question to Herod was intended as an insult. Herod was named "King of the Jews" by Caesar Augustus, yet they are asking "where is He who is born King of the Jews."

— "...we saw His star" - God provided a special star in the sky to direct the wise men

— Israel was guided to the Messiah through the OT/Hebrew Bible, but the religious leaders turned that into a hindering maze of legalism, which was not helpful in finding God. It was a religious system of their own choosing.

— To find Christ today, we don't use a telescope or look to the skies...God guides us to His Son through Scripture (Cf. Jer 29:13; Heb 11:6).

— "His star" - it is often referred to as the "star of Bethlehem" but in actuality it was the "star of the Messiah"

— "...the east" - always refers to the area "between the rivers": Mesopotamia (Cf. Gen 2:8; 11:2)

3 When **Herod the king** heard *this*, he was **troubled**, and **all Jerusalem with him**.

3 When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

3 When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed, as was all of Jerusalem.

3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

- "...Herod the king" - Herod was an Idumaean in race, a Jew in religion, a heathen in practice, and a monster in character (Cf. v1)
- "...troubled" - Herod was aware of the Jews' desire to throw off the Roman yoke, and his own rule in particular
- "...all Jerusalem with him" - everyone else was troubled because the king was troubled. The rest of Jerusalem's citizens also became disturbed because they realized that this news might lead Herod to take further cruel action *against them*. This is exactly what happened (v16).
- Based upon background and history between Rome and Parthia, and based on who the magi were, this is understandable
- This wasn't simply a group of 3 guys on camels that had the entire city afraid; this was a large, military-escorted group, which had direct access to Herod

4 And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where **the Messiah** was to be born.

4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

4 He called together all the high priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

- "...the Messiah" - notice that Herod perceived the King, whom the Magi spoke of, as "the Messiah"

5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, because that is what was written by the prophet:

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

- The attitude of the Jewish religious leaders was sad, but instructive. They had the right answer to the question from the wise men. They searched the Scripture, which correctly told them that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem.

— It's interesting that this truth assisted the wise men, but didn't help the religious Jews. The wise men traveled a great distance, yet the religious leaders in Jerusalem were only about six miles from Bethlehem. They could've walked there in less than two hours.

— The wise men came from afar to worship, but the religious Jews who were very close couldn't have cared less

6 'AND YOU, **BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH**, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR FROM YOU WILL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'

6 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'

6 'O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, because from you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'

6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

- Quoted from Micah 5:2, written about 700 years before Christ

- "...**BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH**" - or "Bethlehem Ephratah"; there were two Bethlehems...one in the north and one in the south; this clarifies that it will be Bethlehem in Judah, the one in the south.

— Such a prediction that Israel's King would be born in this insignificant town could never be possible apart from supernatural revelation. It's interesting that He'll be born in Bethlehem, but He's been around forever.

— Matthew's rendering of the Micah 5:2 prophecy adds the fact that the "Ruler" would "shepherd" the Israelites

- It's interesting that the Jewish religious leaders knew where to find the Messiah, but they refused to search for Him and find Him. Herod searches for the Child for the wrong reasons (v13) but does not find Him.

— God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6)

7 Then Herod secretly called for the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared.

7 Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared.

7 Then Herod secretly called together the wise men, found out from them the time the star had appeared,

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

- Evidently Herod summoned the magi "privately" to avoid arousing undue interest in their visit among Israel's religious leaders

— He wanted to know when the star appeared so he could determine the age of the child King. He clearly viewed the coming King as a "ruler" over Israel, and viewed His coming as a threat to his political position.

— The magi's answer to his question is not recorded, but in v16 we learn something of what they wise men may have said. In order to ensure the Child was caught in the slaughter, Herod ordered all babies two years old and younger to be killed. Jesus was likely much younger than that.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found *Him*, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him."

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found *Him*, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him."

8 and sent them to Bethlehem. He told them, "As you go, search carefully for the child. "When you find him, tell me so that I, too, may go and worship him."

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

- Herod sent the magi as his representatives on the pretext of desire to worship the new King, with orders to report back what they found to him. Herod's hypocritical humility deceived the wise men.

— It is remarkable that the Jewish religious leaders (chief priests and scribes) apparently made no effort to check out Jesus' birth as the Magi did. It is strange how much the scribes knew, and what little they made use of it.

— Their apathy would continue throughout Jesus' life and ministry, until it turned into antagonism (Cf. John 1:11; 3:19-20)

9 After hearing the king, they went on their way; and behold, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on ahead of them until it came to a stop over *the place* where the Child was *to be found*.

9 After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over *the place* where the Child was.

9 After listening to the king, they set out, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

- Notice this wasn't astronomy (which existed and was known at that time)...the star "went on ahead of them" meaning it actually moved in the sky to lead the Magi to Jesus

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

10 When they saw the star, they were ecstatic with joy.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

- God's provision of direction gave them "great joy"
- When the wise men were in the East, they saw this star (v2), but then at some point they lost sight of it. It disappeared from view. Then in v10 the star reappeared. From the point of view of the wise men, this star appeared, disappeared and reappeared.
- The star could not have been far away in the distance like normal stars because it was able to lead them to the very house where the Christ Child was (v9,11). Verse 8 tells us that the star would both move ("went before them") and stop ("stood over where the young child was").
- We assume from Herod's question in v7 that the star first appeared to the wise men at the time Christ was born

11 And after they came into the house, they saw the Child with His mother Mary; and they fell down and **worshiped Him**. Then they opened their treasures and presented to Him **gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh**.

11 After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

11 After they went into the house and saw the child with his mother Mary, they fell down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasure sacks and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.

- The "star" directed the wise men to the actual house where Jesus lived
- "...worshiped Him" - their reaction to discovering Jesus was to bow and worship Him. Notice that they did not worship Mary, nor did they worship Jesus *through* Mary. The first people to worship Jesus in Matthew's Gospel were Gentiles.
- "...gifts" - it was customary to present gifts when approaching a superior (Cf. Gen 43:11; 1 Sam 9:7-8; 1 Kings 10:2)
- The three gifts likely weren't the only gifts, just the ones that were mentioned; these are mentioned because they are prophetic...
- "...gold" - deity; kingship. Jesus is the King of Kings.
- "...frankincense" - priesthood (mixed into the shewbread by the priests)
- "...myrrh" - when crushed, it is an ointment used for burial (Cf. John 19:39)
- Prophet, Priest, King - 3 primary offices uniquely in One Person
- In Is 60:6, a millennial passage, Gentiles will bring gold and frankincense to King Jesus, but not myrrh.

— This act by Gentile leaders also prefigures the wealth that the OT prophets said the Gentiles will one day present to Israel's Messiah (Ps 72:10-11,15; Is 60:5,11; 61:6; 66:20; Zeph 3:10; Haggai 2:7-8)

Suppose that 33 plus years later the wise men returned to Jerusalem and asked a question similar to what they asked in Matt 2:2, "Where is He that was born King of the Jews?" At that time, they would find the King of the Jews with a mock crown of thorns on His head (Matt 27:29). They would find Him crucified on a tree (Matt 27:31). No star would be needed to point Him out because over His head was a sign which clearly read: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matt 27:37). And not long after this, Nicodemus would come along and present his gift of myrrh in order to embalm the body of the King for burial (John 19:39).

12 And after being warned *by God* in a dream not to return to Herod, *the magi* left for their own country by another way.

12 And having been warned *by God* in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

12 Having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they left for their own country by a different road.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

- God supernaturally intervened to ensure the magi did not return to Herod and provide information on the Child's whereabouts. Notice how God spoke to them in a form of communication they were comfortable with: dreams.

— The Persians of the Mesopotamian region were skilled dream interpreters (Cf. Daniel)

(D) Opposition by Herod (2:13-23)

13 Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord *appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the **Child and His mother** and flee to **Egypt**, and stay there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to kill Him."

13 Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord *appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."

13 After they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt," he said. "Stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and kill him."

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be

thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

- The second time an angel appeared to Joseph (Cf. 1:20)
- "...Child and His mother" - note the order; typically, the parent would always be listed first
- "...Egypt" - its border was just 75 miles from Bethlehem, and the nearest town was about 150 miles. Egypt provided an escape from Herod's hatred, as he had no authority there.
- There was a large Jewish population in Egypt, as well as a substitute for the Jerusalem temple
- Joseph was to keep the family in Egypt until receiving further word; that came when Herod died (v15)

14 So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.

14 So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.

14 So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left at night for Egypt.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 He stayed there until the **death of Herod**; *this happened* so that what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be **fulfilled**: "**OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON.**"

15 He remained there until the death of Herod. *This was* to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

15 He stayed there until Herod's death in order to fulfill what was declared by the Lord through the "prophet when he said, "Out of Egypt I called my Son."

15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

— "...death of Herod" - Herod died in 4 BC

— Josephus recorded that he died a horrible death, his body rotting away and consumed by worms; his grandson, Herod Agrippa, later suffered a similar fate (Acts 12:23)

— "...fulfilled" - *pleroō*, has a broader meaning that simply "to make complete"; it essentially means "to establish completely"

— In prophetic utterances that dealt with the past or present, the *complete establishment* of what the prophet said took place when another event that was similar happened. This is the sense in which Jesus' departure from Egypt fulfilled Hosea's prophecy (Cf. James 2:21-23).

— Basically, Jesus was the Son of God. The history of Israel, the "son of God" in a different sense, anticipated the life of the Messiah. This was a literal event with typological fulfillment.

- "...OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON" - quoted from Hosea 11:1: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."
- This quote is difficult to understand because in Hosea 11:1, the prophet did not predict anything; he simply described the Israelites' exodus from Egypt as the departure of God's son (Israel was God's chosen "son" by adoption, Ex 4:22). OT writers frequently used "son" to describe Israel in its relationship to God.
- In Hosea 11, the context clearly is speaking to the nation Israel...it's not a Messianic passage. Yet Matthew applies that verse to this event.

Matthew is implying that there is a symbolic validity to the history of Christ in terms of the history of Israel. As Israel was driven into Egypt and then called out, and that concept is tied up with the Passover Lamb, likewise, Jesus Christ, as a babe, was sent to Egypt for a while is called out and then goes into the wilderness (like Israel). Jesus fasted 40 days in the wilderness; Israel was in the wilderness 40 years.

The Massacre of the Infants

- 16** Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent *men* and killed all the boys who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.
- 16** Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.

16 Herod flew into a rage when he learned that he had been tricked by the wise men, so he ordered the execution of all the male children in Bethlehem and all its neighboring regions, who were two years old and younger, according to the time that he had determined from the wise men.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

- Moses had also been the target of the ruler of his day, who sought to destroy him and all the other male Hebrew babies by ordering them slain (Ex 1:15-22)

- 17** Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:
- 17** Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:
- 17** Then what was declared by the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled when he said,
- 17** Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying,
- Matthew is the only NT writer who quoted Jeremiah

18 "A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN; AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE."

18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; And she refused to be comforted, Because they were no more."

18 "A voice was heard in Ramah: wailing and great mourning. Rachel was crying for her children. She refused to be comforted, because they no longer existed."

18 In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

- Quoted from Jer 31:15

- Rachel was buried near Bethlehem; Matthew is building a link between her burial site and the death of the Jewish babies

— She died in childbirth; Gen 35:18 calls her newborn son "the son of my sorrow." Jacob renames him Benjamin, "son of my right hand."

In the original context, Jeremiah was referring to the Babylonian Captivity. As the young Jewish men were being taken into captivity, they passed by the town of Ramah, close to where Rachel was buried (she was the symbol of Jewish motherhood). As the young men marched toward Babylon, the Jewish mothers of Ramah came out weeping for sons they will never see again. Jeremiah pictured the scene as Rachel weeping for her children. The verse is quoted as an application. The one point of similarity between Ramah and Bethlehem is that once again Jewish mothers are weeping for sons they will never see again.

Jesus Returns to Nazareth from Egypt (Matt 2:19-23; Luke 2:39)

19 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord *appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said,

19 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord *appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said,

19 But after Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt.

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

- This is the fourth "dream" and third mention of the "angel of the Lord" appearing to Joseph so far in Matthew

20 "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead."

20 "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead."

20 "Get up," he said. "Take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead."

20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

21 So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

21 So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

21 So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went into the land of Israel.

21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned *by God* in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee,

22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned *by God* in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee,

22 But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, after having been warned in a dream. So he left for the region of Galilee

22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

- While Joseph was responding obediently to the Lord's command, he learned that Herod the Great's son Archelaus began to rule over Judea, Samaria, and Idumea

— Evidently, God warned Joseph not to return to Archelaus' territory, so Joseph chose to settle in Nazareth of Galilee instead. This was his residence before Jesus' birth (13:53-58; Luke 1:26-27; 2:39).

— He turned out to be just as brutal as his father; Caesar Augustus banished him for his poor record in 6 AD

— The rest of Herod the Great's kingdom went to his sons Antipas, who ruled over Galilee and Perea (4 BC—39 AD), and Philip

23 and came and settled in a city called Nazareth. *This happened* so that what was spoken through the prophets would be fulfilled: "He will be called a **Nazarene**."

23 and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene."

23 and settled in a town called Nazareth in order to fulfill what was said by the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."

23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

- "...Nazarene" - implies an ignorant man, partly due to being a Gentile area. It is a figure of speech that implied contempt.