



Matthew 2 | "Wise Men Still Seek Him"

INTRO: Around Christmas time, you see all kinds of Nativity sets displayed on church lawns, your neighbor's yard, or in your friend's house on the mantle. They all tend to look alike. You have the barn as a three-sided structure (though in first-century Israel, no Jewish person would have recognized it as that). In front of the barn, or inside it, are three people: Joseph and Mary, and Baby Jesus. Facing them on one side are a group of shepherds, and on the other side three kings. However, these Nativity sets don't line up with the Biblical narrative. The shepherds actually never met the so-called three kings, and their arrivals to Bethlehem were separated by about 2 years!

I. **HIS INFANCY IN BETHLEHEM (v. 1-12)**

THE MAGI ARRIVE IN JERUSALEM (v. 1-2)

A. (v. 1-2)

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

a. "when Jesus was born"

1) It is broadly accepted that Jesus was born in 4 B.C., primarily from incorrect conclusions derived from Josephus' recording of an eclipse, assumed to be one on March 13, 4 B.C., "shortly before Herod died," but was most likely the eclipse of December 29, 1 B.C. It appears that Herod died on January 14, 1 A.D., which lines up with the Early Church Fathers, who place the birth of Jesus at 2 B.C.

2) Also, we have the date from information about the birth of John the Baptist.

a) John's father Zacharias was of the "course" of Abijah in his priestly service in the Temple, which would have ended on July 13, 3 B.C. Thus, John was born around Passover around that next year (April 19-20, 2 B.C.)

b) Also, John's ministry began in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar (A.D. 29) at the age of 30.



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- c) Since John was 6 months older than Jesus, this places the birth of Jesus around the autumn of 2 B.C.

- b. *"in Bethlehem of Judaea"*
 - 1) *"Bethlehem"* - Heb. - *"House of Bread"*
 - a) Located about 6 miles South of Jerusalem.
 - b) It was near this area that Jacob buried Rachel ([Gen. 35:20](#); [48:7](#)).
 - c) It was here that Ruth had lived when she married Boaz ([Ruth 1:22](#)), and they were the grandparents of King David, thus Bethlehem became known as the home and city of David ([1 Sam. 16:1](#); [17:12](#); [20:6](#))

- c. *"wise men from the east"*
 - 1) *"wise men"* - Gr. *magoi* - plural form of *magos* - *"Magi; astrologers"*
 - a) This Greek term *magoi* is a translation of the Hebrew word *chakkim* (*"wise men"*), and transliterated from the Persian, for a select sect of priests. The *magoi* was later the Latinized as *Magi*.
 - i. We get our English word *"magic"* from this Greek word.

 - 2) Tradition tells us there were Three Wise Men, but the Bible doesn't say how many there were.
 - a) The old English carol traditionally sung at Christmas time says, "We three kings of Orient are."
 - i. There are 2 Biblical errors in that line:



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- a. The number "three."
 - i. The Bible only says that there were at least 2 since the word is plural. However, there were enough to make a stir in the whole city of Jerusalem, so there could have been twenty, two hundred, or two thousand! We don't really know.
 - b. The word "kings."
 - i. The Bible does not call them "kings," but Magi or *wise men*.
- 3) The *Magi* were the Priesthood of the Medes in the areas of Persia and Babylon.
- a) The Magi was both a religious role as well as a governmental office. Part of these "magistrates" duties included the absolute choice and election of the king. Thus, these Persian-Parthian "king-makers" were the ones that entered into Jerusalem during the reign of Herod. No wonder Herod reacted the way he did with the Roman-Parthian rivalry that prevailed during his lifetime.
- d. **Q** = How did the Wise Men know that the Jewish king had been born?...
- 1) It was connected with the "*star in the east*" (v. 2).
 - a) **Q** = What was the "*star*"?...
 - i. Some try to explain it astronomically, like a supernova or conjunction of planets.
 - a. However, it's clear that this is something other than a literal star:



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- i. This star is given the possessive pronoun "his," which means this star belongs to Jesus.
 - ii. It appears and disappears at least two times (v. 2, 7, 9).
 - iii. It moves from east to west (v. 1 - Persia to Israel).
 - iv. It moves from north to south (v. 9 - Jerusalem to Bethlehem).
 - v. It hovered over one house in Bethlehem (v. 9).
 - b. If a literal star (like our sun) hovered over a house in Bethlehem, it would have destroyed the entire planet Earth!!
 - ii. I believe this star was the same Shechinah glory that also appeared to the Jewish shepherds (Luke 2:9) that is now appearing to these Gentile astrologers.
- 2) The Magi would have known the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.
 - a) The prophet Daniel was a Magi and one of the titles given to him was *Rab-mag*, the Chief of the Magi (Dan. 4:9; 5:11).
 - i. After the Babylonian captivity, many Jews stayed in Babylon while others went back to Jerusalem, and Babylon became a major center of Judaism. Thus, the Magi would have known the Messianic prophecies of the O.T., especially Daniel's prophecies.
 - b) They may have already known, but Daniel would have taught them about the famous Babylonian prophet Balaam (Num. 22:6, 12) and his Messianic prophecy (Num. 24:17).



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- i. Cf. **Numbers 24:17** - *"I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: **there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.**"*
- c) **Q** = It was a Babylonian prophet that connected a *Star* with the Jewish Messiah as a King (*"Scepter"*). Yet, Balaam did not say WHEN this King would come. So, how did they know WHEN to look for the star?...
 - i. No doubt they got the timing of the coming of the King from the prophet Daniel, who gave the exact timeframe for the first coming of the Messiah (**Dan. 9:24-27**)!!
 - d) **NOTE:** Balaam connected the star with the kingship of the Messiah, while Daniel provided the messianic timetable!
- 3) **KEY:** The Magi knew that a star that would announce the coming of the Messiah from the prophecies of the Gentile astrologer Balaam (**Num. 24:17**) and they knew the approximate timing from the Chief of the Magi, Daniel (**Dan. 9:24-27**), so when they saw this unusual brilliance in the sky, they took it to be a signal that Messiah was born!¹
- e. *"Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"*
 - 1) *"saying"* - Gr. present participle, which conveys the idea of continuous action.
 - a) These Magi were going around the city of Jerusalem questioning everyone they met, asking them where He is *"that is born King of the Jews?"*

HEROD'S MEETING WITH THE MAGI (v. 3-8)

¹ Arnold Fruchtenbaum. *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective, Volume 1*, p. 424.



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THE MAGI BRING GIFTS TO THE KING (v. 9-12)

B. (v. 11)

1. "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."

a. "the house"

1) The family is no longer in the cave-stable where the shepherds found them, but in a private *house*.

a) The Shepherds and the Wise Men never saw each other. There were about 2 years between those two events!

b. "young child" - Gr. *paidion* - "little boy"

1) Jesus would have been under 2 years old at this time (v. 16).

a) From Luke's Gospel, we know that Jesus was circumcised at 8 days old (Luke 2:21), and Mary went through her 40 days purification (Luke 2:22-24), therefore we know that the Magi didn't show up the day of His birth like the shepherds, but we know that Jesus would have been between 41 days and 2 years old!

c. "fell down, and worshipped Him"

1) This is the first Gentile worship of the Messiah!

d. "they presented unto him gifts"



1) I wonder if they told Jesus, "These gifts are for your Birthday and Christmas!!" 🤪

e. "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh"

1) "gold" = symbol of ROYALTY and KINGSHIP.

a) Jesus is KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev. 19:16).

2) "frankincense" = symbol of PRIESTHOOD and DEITY.

a) Jesus is our Great High Priest as the God-Man.

i. Cf. **1 Timothy 2:5-6** - "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

3) "myrrh" = symbol of DEATH and SACRIFICE.

a) Jesus is the Final Sacrifice for sin.

b) **NOTE:** While the first line of the popular Christmas carol "We Three Kings of Orient are" is not Biblical, the last line is correct: "God and King and Sacrifice." It is the mention of the three gifts that led to the assumption that there were three wise men. But, more than one person can give the same gift.

II. HIS INFANCY IN EGYPT (v. 13-18)

THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT (v. 13-15)

A. (v. 13)



1. ***"And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth 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."***
 - a. *"be thou there until I bring thee word"*
 - 1) **NOTE:** This brings up a VERY IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE: DO NOT BE PRESUMPTUOUS, BUT WAIT FOR INSTRUCTION FROM THE LORD!

HEROD SLAUGHTERS BABIES (v. 16-18)

III. HIS INFANCY IN NAZARETH (v. 19-23)

A. (v. 23)

1. ***"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."***
 - a. "Nazareth"
 - 1) An obscure town about 70 miles North of Jerusalem.
 - 2) A place with a bad reputation ([John 1:46](#)).
 - a) Jesus was raised in the Hood, in the Ghetto!
 - b. *"that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene"*
 - 1) Some scholars believe that "Nazarene" is a reference to the Hebrew word for *Branch* ("Netzer") in [Isaiah 11:1](#).
 - 2) Other scholars believe that the prophets made this prophecy orally, but it was never recorded in the O.T.



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- a) There have been prophecies in the O.T. that weren't recorded until the N.T.
 - i. Cf. **Jude 14-15** - Enoch prophesied about the 2nd Coming of Christ, but it wasn't recorded until Jude wrote his epistle.
- b) Jesus said things that were not recorded in the Gospels, but were written later.
 - i. Cf. **Acts 20:35** - Paul said, "*...and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"
- 3) Other scholars believe that Matthew is using the word "Nazarene" as a synonym for SOMEONE DESPISED, thus a derogatory term.
 - a) Jesus was despised and ridiculed (**Ps. 22:6-8; Isa. 49:7; 53:3; John 1:46**).
 - b) The term "*Christian*", or "*Messianic*", was used as a derogatory putdown for this sect that believed in Jesus of Nazareth! (Acts 11:26)

IV. WISE MEN STILL SEEK HIM!

A. THIS CHRISTMAS, MAY YOU AND I BE LIKE THOSE GENTILE WISE MEN:

1. SEEK HIM AND FOLLOW HIS LEADING.
2. FALL DOWN BEFORE HIM IN WORSHIP AND ADORATION.
3. PRESENT TO HIM YOUR GIFTS.

a. You have gifts that you can present to Him:

- 1) Cf. **1 Peter 4:10-11** - "*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God*



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in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."