

# Matthew 2 Commentary

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Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
[Another Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED  
BY MATTHEW (shaded area)

Click chart to enlarge

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**Matthew 2:1** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

NET After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, in the time of King Herod, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem

GNT Το δ ἡσο γεννηθῆντος ἡ Βηθλεὲμ τῆς οὐδαῖας ἡμερῶν τοῦ βασιλέως, ἄστροι πρὸς τὴν πόλιν παρεγενόντο εἰς ἑρώσλυμα

NLT Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking,

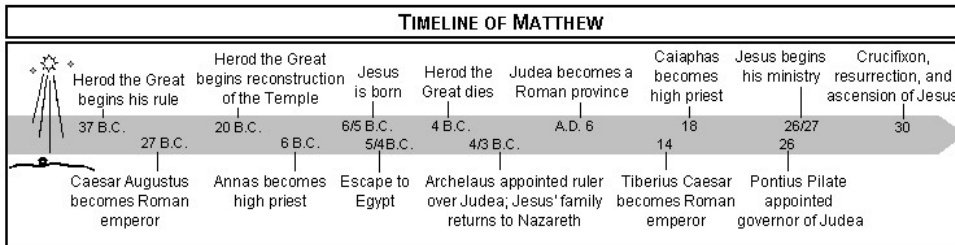
KJV Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

ESV Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from

the east came to Jerusalem,

NIV After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem

- "Fourth year before the account called Anno Domini."
- **Jesus** - Mt 1:25 Lu 2:4-7
- **Bethlehem of Judea** - Mt 2:5 Mic 5:2 Lu 2:11,15 Joh 7:42
- **Herod** - [Herod the Great](#). Mt 2:3,19 Ge 49:10 Da 9:24,25 Hag 2:6-9
- **from** - Ge 10:30 25:6 1Ki 4:30 Job 1:3 Ps 72:9-12 Isa 11:10 60:1-22



Source: Ryrie Study Bible

Jesus' Birth & Flight to Egypt  
Click to enlarge  
([ESV Global Study Bible](#))

## WISE MEN STILL SEEK MESSIAH

Then and now the truly wise man or woman seeks for Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior of the World.

Luke gives us more details of the birth of Jesus (keeping in mind that this account in Matthew may be up to 2 years after the actual birth event - see below)

Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. 6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Lu 2:4-7+)

**J C Ryle** speaks of the cost of the magi to seek Jesus - The conduct of the wise men described in this chapter is a splendid example of spiritual diligence. What trouble it must have cost them to travel from their homes to the house where Jesus was born! How many weary miles they must have journeyed! The fatigues of an Eastern traveller are far greater than we in England can at all understand. The time that such a journey would occupy must necessarily have been very great. The dangers to be encountered were neither few nor small. But none of these things moved them. They had set their hearts on seeing Him "that was born King of the Jews;" and they never rested till they saw Him. They prove to us the truth of the old saying, "Where there is a will there is a way." It would be well for all professing Christians if they were more ready to follow the wise men's example. Where is our self-denial? What pains do we take about our souls? What diligence do we show about following Christ? What does our religion cost us? These are serious questions. They deserve serious consideration. ([Matthew 2 Commentary](#))

**Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea** - Note the [expression of time after](#). The question is how long after Jesus was born? If we compare Matthew 2:1 with Matthew 2:7 and Matthew 2:16 this suggests that that the wise men evidently arrived around two years after the birth of Jesus. Why else would Herod kill all the male infants two years or younger? See additional support for this interpretation in [notes on Matthew 2:11](#).

**A T Robertson** - Matthew does not propose to give biographic details of the supernatural birth of Jesus, wonderful as it was and disbelieved as it is by some today who actually deny that Jesus was born at all or ever lived, men who talk of the Jesus Myth, the Christ Myth, etc. "The main purpose is to show the reception given by the world to the new-born Messianic King. Homage from afar, hostility at home; foreshadowing the fortunes of the new faith: reception by the Gentiles, rejection by the Jews" (Bruce).

**Robertson on Bethlehem** - There was a Bethlehem in Galilee seven miles northwest of Nazareth (Josephus, Antiquities XIX. 15). This Bethlehem (house of bread, the name means) of Judah was the scene of Ruth's life with Boaz (Ruth 1:1f.; Matt. 1:5) and the home of David, descendant of Ruth and ancestor of Jesus (Matt. 1:5). David was born here and anointed king by Samuel (1 Sam. 17:12). The town came to be called the city of David (Luke 2:11). Jesus, who was born in this House of Bread called himself the

Bread of Life (John 6:35), the true Manna from heaven. Matthew assumes the knowledge of the details of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem which are given in Luke 2:1–7 or did not consider them germane to his purpose. Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem from Nazareth because it was the original family home for both of them. The first enrollment by the Emperor Augustus as the papyri show was by families (κατ' ο κίαν [kat' oikian]). Possibly Joseph had delayed the journey for some reason till now it approached the time for the birth of the child.

#### Related Resources:

- [Is Micah 5:2 a Messianic prophecy?](#)
- [Why was Jesus born in a manger?](#)
- [What year was Jesus Christ born? When was Jesus born?](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Bethlehem](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Bethlehem](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Bethlehem](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Bethlehem](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Bethlehem](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Bethlehem](#) [Star of Bethlehem](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopaedia [Bethlehem](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Bethlehem](#)

**In the days of Herod the king** - The **Herod** mentioned here (Mt 2:1, 3, 7, 12, 13, 16, 19, 22) and Lk 1:5+ is known to history as **Herod the Great**, because of all the great works of building he accomplished, but in reality he was "Herod the Paranoid!" He ruled Palestine from 37 B.C. until he died in 4 B.C. His family was nominally Jewish but actually Idumaeen (Edomite, Ge 36:1). He was known for his extensive building projects (including the temple in Jerusalem) and for his cruelty. (See [Herod's Temple in the Time of Jesus](#) and [Temple Complex in the Time of Jesus](#)). The Romans had appointed his grandfather, Antipas (died 78 B.C.) governor of Idumaea, and Julius Caesar had made his father, Antipater, procurator of Judea (47 - 43 B.C.). The Roman triumvir, Mark Antony, appointed Herod the Great tetrarch of Galilee in 37 B.C. He greatly increased the splendor of Jerusalem, erecting the Temple, which was the center of Jewish worship in the time of our Lord.

**Robertson on in the days of Herod** - This is the only date for the birth of Christ given by Matthew. Luke gives a more precise date in his Gospel (2:1–3), the time of the first enrollment by Augustus and while Cyrenius was ruler of Syria. More will be said of Luke's date when we come to his Gospel. We know from Matthew that Jesus was born while Herod was king, the Herod sometimes called Herod the Great. Josephus makes it plain that Herod died B.C. 4. He was first Governor of Galilee, but had been king of Judaea since B.C. 40 (by Antony and Octavius). I call him "Herod the Great Pervert" in *Some Minor Characters in the New Testament*. He was great in sin and in cruelty and had won the favour of the Emperor. The story in Josephus is a tragedy. It is not made plain by Matthew how long before the death of Herod Jesus was born. Our traditional date A.D. 1, is certainly wrong as Matthew shows. It seems plain that the birth of Jesus cannot be put later than B.C. 5. The data supplied by Luke probably call for B.C. 6 or 7.

**Arnold Fruchtenbaum on Herod the Great** - He was a very clever, ruthless ruler who was constantly on the watch for insurrection and intrigue. His life reads like the worst kind of soap opera of villainy and murder. He became so evil that he killed three or possibly four of his sons, and his favorite wife Miriamne. He had ten wives, and offspring who were constantly conspiring against each other. He was so paranoid that he built incredibly elaborate fortresses in a planned escape route in a line towards Egypt, which included Masada (which he fortified in the 30's B.C.). He was an Idumean, a race forcibly converted to Judaism earlier in history, and while he practiced Judaism (not eating pork) he was not ethnically Jewish. This is one reason the Jewish people hated him.

**Barton on Herod the Great** (what a sad misuse of the word "great"! ) - Herod had expanded and beautified the Jerusalem temple, but he had placed a [Roman eagle \(picture\)](#) over the entrance and also had built pagan temples. When he helped the Jews, it was for political purposes and not because he cared about them or their God. Evil and ruthless, Herod the Great later ordered a massacre of infants (Mt 1:16-18) in a futile attempt to kill the infant Jesus, whom some were calling the new "king of the Jews" (Mt 2:1-2). Herod the Great ruled from 37 to 4 b.c. (Life Application Bible Commentary – Luke)

#### Related Resources:

- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Herod the Great](#)

- Wikipedia - [Herod the Great](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Herod](#) (includes Herod the Great)

**BEHOLD** - Again the NASB and NET both omit the important demonstrative particle ([idou](#)) which means "Lo and behold!", serving to call attention to something external or exterior to oneself. **Behold** (2400) is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of eidon which means to see, perceive, look at. In the NT **idou** is used as a demonstrative particle that draws attention to what follows. **idou** in the [middle voice](#) means "you yourself look, see, perceive!" The [aorist imperative](#) is a command emphasizing "Do it now! Don't delay!" In 2Cor 5:17 Paul uses **idou**, to get his reader's attention as he introduces the truth that the one who in now **in Christ** is a qualitatively new person. (see also notes above on "behold") **Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!" **Behold** is used by Matthew 62 times.

**(Behold) Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem** - Thinking that the King of the Jews would be born in the royal palace, they went to Herod. **From the east** is the picture "from the rising of the sun" in this case to the east of Israel, the "orient", the direction east; the part of the horizon where the sun first appears. I see a slight play on words here for men coming from the rising sun were coming to see the newborn Son! Fruchtenbaum adds that "In the Bible the east is always the area of Mesopotamia, so there are at least two astrologers from Babylonia." Luke makes no mention of the **magi**. Notice first that they are **magi** or wise men, not kings. The **magi** had in some way (NOT SPECIFIED) been made aware of this divine birth and had come seeking the **KING OF THE JEWS**. Notice also that in Mt 2:2 they asked "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" but Herod did not know as we see in Mt 2:4 for he himself gathered "together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, **he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.**" Apparently, the magi were ignorant of the prophecy in Micah 5:2 as was Herod. Fruchtenbaum agrees noting that "The Magi come to Jerusalem, since they did not have the book of Micah which predicts where Messiah was to be born (Micah 5:2). They would have assumed that the Messiah would be born in the capital of Israel, Jerusalem." So how did the magi find their way to **the King of the Jews**? Mt 2:10-11 tell us "**they saw the star (HIS STAR)...and they came into the house and saw the Child**"

Many writers seek to locate where the **magi** were from and how many there were, but the Bible is silent on both accounts. The beautiful worshipful hymn [We Three Kings of Orient](#) has led many to believe there were 3 magi, but that is not absolutely certain. They probably base this presumption on the fact that Matthew mentions 3 gifts. Here is what we can say with certainty -- There were at least two because the word magi is in the plural, but this may have been two or two thousand for the Bible does not say. They were men. They were directed. They came. They acknowledged. They worshipped. And this is what every "wise" man (and woman) should do while today is still called today (cf Jn 9:4).

**Magi** (wise men)([3097](#))([magos](#)) is derived from the Persian word [magus](#) meaning "great" (thus "great, powerful men") and in the plural ("magi") as in Mt 2:1, 7, 16, **magi** referred to the high priestly caste Persians (also Medes and Babylonians) who are affectionately called the "wise men." The other sense of magos is that of a magician or sorcerer, one who used magic crafts or "witchcraft." We know that the **magi** were not kings because this specific title means "wisemen" or more specifically, "astrologers." **BDAG** adds that **magos** referred to "a Persian and then also Babylonian wise man and priest, who was expert in astrology, interpretation of dreams and various other occult arts (Herodutus, Josephus 20.142). The [Septuagint](#) uses **magos** in Daniel 2:2 when King Nebuchadnezzar desired to know the meaning of his dream and called "the magicians (epaoidos - one that uses charms or incantations), the **conjurers** (magos), the sorcerers (pharmakos)." Matt. 2:1; Matt. 2:7; Matt. 2:16; Acts 13:6; Acts 13:8

**East** ([395](#)) see note below on [anatole](#)

**John MacArthur** adds that the **magi** "were well-versed in astronomy and astrology, agriculture, mathematics, and history. They were involved in various occult practices and were famous for their ability to interpret dreams (cf. Da. 2:1ff.). Such was their political power and influence that no Persian ruler came to power without their approval...(and in his note on the use in Matthew adds) The **magi from the east** (the word literally means "from the rising" of the sun, and refers to the orient) who came to see Jesus were of a completely different sort. Not only were they true **magi**, but they surely had been strongly influenced by Judaism, quite possibly even by some of the prophetic writings, especially that of Daniel. They appear to be among the many **God-fearing Gentiles who lived at the time of Christ**, a number of whom—such as Cornelius and Lydia (Acts 10:1–2; Acts 16:14)—are mentioned in the New Testament. (For more on magi sermon [Matthew 2:1: Who Were the Wise Men?](#))

**J C Ryle** on the **magi** - Whether they were Chaldeans or Arabians we cannot say. Whether they learned

to expect Christ from the ten tribes who went into captivity, or from the prophecies of Daniel, we do not know. These verses show us, that there may be true servants of God in places where we should not expect to find them. The Lord Jesus has many "hidden ones" like these wise men. Their history on earth may be as little known as that of Melchizedek, and Jethro, and Job. But their names are in the book of life, and they will be found with Christ in the day of His appearing. ([Matthew 2 Commentary](#))

**THOUGHT** - The wise men (Magi) were scientists, yet they saw no conflict between science and Scripture or between searching for truth and worshiping the Savior. Devout Christians can worship the Lord with the mind as well as the heart (Matt. 22:37). "Science without religion is lame," said Albert Einstein. "Religion without science is blind." (Wiersbe)

**Guzik** - There was a general expectation of a Messiah or great man from Judea. Not very long after Jesus was born, the Roman historian **Seutonius** wrote: "There had spread over all the Orient an old and established belief, that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judea to rule the world." **Tacitus**, another Roman historian of the general period, wrote: "There was a firm persuasion ... that at this very time the East was to grow powerful, and rulers coming from Judea were to acquire universal empire." (Cited in Barclay) ([Matthew 2 Commentary](#))

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**John Piper summarizes Mt 2:1-12** noting that "There are at least five truths that Matthew wants us to see in this story about Christ and worship

1. Jesus is the Messiah, the King of the Jews, and should be honored as such.
  2. Jesus is to be worshiped not just by Jews, but by all the nations of the world, as represented by the wise men from the east.
  3. God wields the universe to make his Son known and worshiped. This is his great goal in all things—that his Son be known and worshiped.
  4. Jesus is troubling to people who do not want to worship him and brings out opposition for those who do.
  5. Worshiping Jesus means joyfully ascribing authority and dignity to Christ with sacrificial gifts. ([We Have Come to Worship Him](#))
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**POSB has a list of the "Unusual Events" Surrounding the Birth of Jesus**(Humanly speaking unusual yes, but divinely sovereign for sure!):

Jesus Christ, Birth: Jesus' birth was one of the most convulsive and disturbing events in all history (see Lu. 2:1–24).

1. There was Mary's pregnancy—the idea of her being an unwed mother (Mt. 1:18; Lu. 1:26f). Who of that day would ever believe her story? Required was a willingness to be available to God regardless of embarrassment and the opinions of family, friends, and neighbors.
  2. There was Joseph's discovery of Mary's pregnancy (Mt. 1:19). The shock of Mary's apparent broken trust and of personal embarrassment were more than Joseph could bear (Mt. 1:20). Required was a willingness to forget self completely.
  3. There was the child, the Son of God Himself, being born in a smelly manger (Mt. 1:25; Lu. 2:1f). Required was a willingness to be humble.
  4. There was the family's having to be uprooted and moved to a foreign nation, Egypt (Mt. 2:13f). Required was a willingness to obey at any cost.
  5. There was the slaughter of all children under two years of age (Mt. 2:16f). The heavy weight of feeling some responsibility was bound to attack Joseph and Mary. Required was a willingness on their part to bear anything.
  6. There was the visit of the wise men showing that the foreign relationships of nations were affected (Mt. 2:1f). Required was a willingness to bear the pressure of responsibility and the demands of being in the limelight.
  7. There was the uproar of Herod's household traumatically affecting the lives of both Joseph and Mary (Mt. 2:7–8, 15–16, 22). Required was a willingness to stand against all odds. (Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible)
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**John Butler - [Sermon Starters - Volume 7 - The Birth of Christ](#)**

- Matthew 2:1 "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" (Matthew 2:1).

The birth of Christ was a momentous event, yet the world by and large was unaware of the fact. Today the world is more aware of the event, but it does not seem interested in honoring the event. We note three important things about the birth of Christ.

**FIRST—THE PLACE OF HIS BIRTH**

"Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea." The birth of Christ came about just as it was predicted in Micah 5:2. It did not look like that would happen, for Mary was in Nazareth and that was not Bethlehem. But God moved the greatest power on the earth, the Roman government, to prescribe action (Luke 2) that would get Mary to Bethlehem for the birth of Christ. When God predicts, He will move heaven and earth if necessary to fulfill the prediction. Micah predicted the birth of Christ some 700 years before it happened. This would give the critics plenty of time to scoff at the prediction. The Bible also predicts the second coming of Christ. It has been many years since the prediction was first made, but you can count on it being fulfilled. Scoffers abound about the second coming, as they did about the first coming, but as Vance Havner said, when you see a scoffer you have just seen another sign of His coming (1 Peter 3:3).

## SECOND—THE PRINCE AT HIS BIRTH

"In the days of Herod the king." God could have picked any other time for the birth of Christ, and it would have been a better time. Herod was a vile, bloody king and did not hesitate to try and kill Christ by his decree to kill all the babies two years old and younger in the Bethlehem area (Matthew 2). God seems to delight to do His greatest works when the opposition is the greatest. This should encourage all of us, for sometimes it seems like all is against us and that God cannot help us as things are just too bad. Don't give up when in those situations, remember that Christ was born in the days of Herod. If Christ could be born during Herod's days and survive, God can deliver us regardless of how dire our situation is.

## THIRD—THE PIETY BECAUSE OF HIS BIRTH

"Behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem." When Christ was born, some special people came to worship Him. We note two important things about this piety.

- The wisdom of worship. "Wise men." The word translated "wise men" could also be translated "magician" or even "scientist." But the meaning involves wisdom, hence "wise men." People who worship Christ are wise indeed.
- The way of worship. "From the east to Jerusalem." A great effort was put out to worship Christ. Worship is not necessarily convenient. It can cost much effort and expense. However it is worth i

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## Wiersbe asks "What were the responses to His birth?"

- Creation responded by putting a miraculous star in the heavens to tell the world a King had been born (Nu 24:17).
- The Gentiles responded by worshiping Him and bringing Him gifts. Matthew shows early in his book that Jesus came to save Gentiles as well as Jews. The wise men were astrologer-scientists who studied the heavens. The star led them to the Scriptures, and the Scriptures led them to the Savior. (See Ps. 19.) God speaks to us in ways we can understand. (**ED:** But as noted below, they may have had access to the "Daniel Papers!")
- Herod responded with fear and deception. He wanted no new King to threaten his reign.
- The chief priests and scribes gave the right information but the wrong response. They were only five miles away from the Messiah, yet they refused to go to see Him! What good is it to understand Bible prophecy if it doesn't make a difference in your life? (With the Word Commentary)

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## Matthew 2:2 "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."

NET saying, "Where is the one who is born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

GNT λ γοντες, Πο στιν τεχθε ς βασιλε ς τ ν ουδα ων; ε δομεν γ ρ α το τ ν στ ρα ν τ ναπολ κα λθομεν προσκυν σαι α τ .

NLT Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, 2 "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him."

KJV 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.

ESV saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

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

- **born** - Mt 21:5 Ps 2:6 Isa 9:6,7 Isa 32:1,2 Jer 23:5 Zec 9:9 Lu 2:11 19:38 Lu 23:3,38 Joh 1:49 12:13 18:37 19:12-15,19
- **His** - Nu 24:17 Isa 60:3 Lu 1:78,79 Rev 22:16
- **worship** - Mt 2:10,11 Ps 45:11 Joh 5:23 9:38 20:28 Heb 1:6

## THE PURPOSE OF THE MAGI - WORSHIP!

**Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?** - This is the essence of the story - Jesus is to be **the King of the Jews**. In Mt 2:4 **the King of the Jews** is equated with the **Messiah**! Jesus did not assume His throne in His first advent, but rest assured He will be the **King of the Jews** in His Second Coming for He will return as **King of kings** (Rev 19:16+), set up His Messianic Kingdom and reign from His throne in Jerusalem. Imagine the threat that such a question posed to Herod the Great, for he considered himself **"King of the Jews."** (cf "Herod the king" in Mt 2:3) No wonder Herod was **"troubled"** (Matthew 2:3). While we do know that nature was a witness to the Creator (Ps. 19:1-6) and that He had set eternity in their hearts (Eccl. 3:11), that is only **natural revelation** which will not accomplish salvation (contrary to some having taught the Gospel is in the stars). The wise men would have needed wise, **special revelation**. (See also [How did people know about God before the Bible?](#))

King of my life I crown Thee now—  
Thine shall the glory be;  
Lest I forget Thy thorn-crowned brow,  
Lead me to Calvary.  
—Hussey

Jesus is King of our lives,  
so we must serve Him all of our lives.

Notice that for the **magi** to even ask this question about the **King of the Jews** clearly indicates that they had divine revelation from some source. They simply could not have known this of their own accord. What was the source? We cannot be certain. There are a number of prophecies that allude to Messiah as King and considering that Daniel was captive in Babylon (in the east), and wrote his prophecies while in Babylon, and Da 2:4-7:28 were in Aramaic, the common language of the land (cf Da 12:4+), it is certainly possible that the **magi** had access to his prophecies which would have included predictions of a great King such as the ones below:

I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven **One like a Son of Man** (THE MESSIAH) was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days (GOD THE FATHER) And was presented before Him. "And to Him (THE MESSIAH) was given dominion, Glory and **a kingdom** (CLEARLY INDICATING HE WOULD BE THE **KING** OVER THIS KINGDOM), That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And **His kingdom** is one Which will not be destroyed. (Da 7:13-14+)

'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; **His kingdom** will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.' (Da 7:27+)

**Arnold Fruchtenbaum** makes an interesting comment - Daniel saved the lives of all the astrologers by correctly interpreting the king's dream, and many must have become believers in Daniel's God through this. No doubt many of these men turned from worshipping the stars to worshipping the Creator of the stars. So this body of **"wise men"** most likely had Daniel's writings from which to determine the time of Messiah's coming. As to the knowledge of the star being the herald, they also may have had the book of Numbers. Read Numbers 24:17. Why may they have had this book? There is another Babylonian connection here. Balaam was a Babylonian astrologer (Deuteronomy 23:4 "Balaam son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia- that is on the banks of the Euphrates river in Babylonia). He was probably from the Babylonian School of Astrology.

One other point that is worth noting is that the magi could have known about when the Messiah would have been born from

studying (and having the Spirit open their eyes) Daniel's great prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27. However even Daniel's prophecies say nothing about **HIS STAR**, which must remain a mystery until Heaven (cf Dt 29:29 = **"The secret things belong to the LORD our God**, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.")

Da 9:24+ Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. Da 9:25+ "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be **seven weeks and sixty-two weeks**; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Da 9:26+ **"Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing**, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. Da 9:27+ "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

Compare Jesus fateful words of warning in Luke 19:41-44+

When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, 42saying, **'If you had known in this day** (JESUS' POINT IS THAT THEY COULD HAVE AND SHOULD HAVE KNOWN ABOUT THIS DAY - HOW? FROM DANIEL'S PROPHECY ABOVE!), even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, (ROMAN DESTRUCTION OF TEMPLE BY TITUS IN 70 AD) 44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

#### **In addition there are other OT prophecies which speak of Messiah as King:**

Psalms 2:6 "But as for Me (GOD THE FATHER), I have installed My **KING** (GOD THE SON, MESSIAH) Upon Zion, My holy mountain."

Psalms 48:1-2 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, In the city of our God, His holy mountain. 2 Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, Is Mount Zion in the far north, The city of the great **KING** .

Psalms 110:1-2 A Psalm of David. The LORD (GOD THE FATHER) says to my Lord (GOD THE SON, MESSIAH): "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your (MESSIAH'S) enemies a footstool for Your feet." 2 The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion (A **KING POSSESSES A SCEPTER**), saying, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies."

Isaiah 9:6; 7+ For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom (JESUS THE **KING**), To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Isaiah 32:1; 2 Behold, a **KING** (MESSIAH) will reign righteously And princes will rule justly. 2 Each will be like a refuge from the wind And a shelter from the storm, Like streams of water in a dry country, Like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land.

Jeremiah 23:5 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as **KING** and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your **KING** is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

**Comment** - Note that Matthew quotes this passage in Mt 21:4-5 (This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 5 "SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, 'BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.')" as fulfilled by Jesus as He entered Jerusalem riding a colt down the Mount of Olives (Lk 19:37+) to begin His "Passion Week" - "The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting (Ps 118:26), "Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS **HE** WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF



THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!" " (Mt 21:9). Luke has the crowd "shouting: "BLESSED IS THE **KING** WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Lk 19:38+)

#### Notice...

(1) Matthew omits part of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 = "He is just and endowed with salvation." (Mt 21:5)

(2) Matthew quotes Psalm 118:26 "BLESSED IS **HE**..." while Luke quotes it "BLESSED IS THE **KING**..."

But only a few days later the Jews denied Jesus was their **KING** and "cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your **KING**?" The chief priests answered, "We have no **KING**, but Caesar." " (Jn 19:15)

**Can you see the tragic irony - At the beginning of His life on earth, the Gentiles (magi) acclaimed Jesus as KING of the Jews, whereas at the end of His life, the Jews denied He was their KING!**

**Spurgeon** observes that "A stir begins as soon as Christ is born. He has not spoken a word; he has not wrought a miracle; he has not proclaimed a single doctrine; but 'when Jesus was born,' at the very first, while as yet you hear nothing but infant cries, and can see nothing but infant weakness, still his influence upon the world is manifest. 'When Jesus was born (PROBABLY NOT IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS BIRTH AS EXPLAINED ABOVE), there came wise men from the east,' and so on. There is infinite power even in an infant Savior."

**For (gar)** - Term of explanation. The magi explain to Herod why they have come to see **the King of the Jews**. Can't you just imagine Herod's jaw drop when they tell him how they were led to come! A star! And not just any **star**, but they refer to it as **'HIS star'**. Now if their mention of a **King** did not get Herod's attention, imagine Herod's reaction when he finds out this **King** has His Own **STAR**! In a sense, the magi actually have good theology, for we know it was the preincarnate Jesus Who created that **STAR** (Heb 1:2+, Col 1:16+, Neh 9:6)! So in that sense it is **'His star'**. (Dt 10:14) Oh, how mysterious is this truth.

**John Piper** writing on God's power in all the events surrounding His Son's incarnation points out that "Luke shows God influencing the entire Roman Empire so that the census comes at the exact time to get a virgin to Bethlehem to fulfil prophecy with her delivery. Matthew shows God influencing the stars in the sky to get foreign magi to Bethlehem so that they can worship him."

**We saw His star in the east** - The identity of **HIS STAR** is subject of much speculation as discussed below. The point of the **STAR** guiding the magi is that God is in some way exerting supernatural power to bring about the result that He desires, in this case the worship of His Son by these Gentile magi. Don't miss this because you are "star gazing" so to speak. Focus on the real "Star" of the story, Jesus Christ! **East** is anatole which is used in Mt 2:1 (magi from the **east**) and is also used Luke's account of Jesus' birth when John the Baptist's "father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied" (Lk. 1:67+) a prophecy which included the following description of Jesus "Because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the **Sunrise** (anatole) from on high will visit us (REFERRING TO THE BIRTH OF JESUS)." (Lk. 1:78+) As alluded to the Bible does not definitively tell us about HIS STAR but there is one passage that is worth noting and it comes from one of the four messianic prophecies from **Balaam** in the book of Numbers. Could the magi have had a copy of the Pentateuch? We cannot know for certain.

Numbers 24:17 "I see **HIM**, but not now; I behold **HIM**, but not near; A **STAR** shall come forth from Jacob, a **SCEPTER** shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab, and tear down all the sons of Sheth.

**COMMENT** - **Balaam** reluctantly was forced by God to prophesy of the coming of the Jewish Messiah and he related that to a **STAR** and a **SCEPTER**. Obviously this was not a literal star because it is described as coming forth from Jacob. He goes on to state that the **STAR** and the **SCEPTER** are essentially one and the same. Remember, that the term **scepter** is a symbol of royalty, of kingship. This **STAR** which would rise out of Jacob, is himself a **KING**. The Septuagint translates scepter with the Greek word for man (anthropos) and reads "a man shall rise out of Israel." It is fascinating to note that Balaam's occupation was that of astrology. Even more significant, he came from the city of Pethor, a city on the banks of the Euphrates River in Babylonia (Nu 22:5; Deut 23:4). It is therefore possible that the magi were exposed to the prophecies of Balaam. As intriguing as these possible associations are, they would still not explain the appearance of the star to the magi. And so we will have to wait until Heaven for the full revelation! Be patient, beloved. There will be many joys in store for us in Heaven!

**NET Note on His star** - Some have argued that it was a comet, but these are frequent and would hardly be associated with Israel or the Messiah. Most modern evangelicals probably take it as a special supernatural light that guided the wise men from Persia to Jerusalem. This theory, however, does not explain why they

followed it at all; there was little reason to connect a sudden, slow-moving light in the sky with the promised Jewish king. The magi, expert astronomers as they were, would hardly call such a light a star. The magi may have been familiar with Scriptures such as Ge 3:15, Nu 24:17 (promised "Star out of Jacob"), Isa 7:14 (promised "God with us").

ED: BUT NONE OF THESE PASSAGES PROPHESEY OF A STAR THAT WOULD GUIDE ONE TO THE KING OF THE JEWS. EVEN IF IT WERE A "SUPERNATURAL PHENOMENON," WHICH IS VERY POSSIBLE, HOW WOULD THE MAGI HAVE KNOWN TO FOLLOW IT UNLESS THEY HAD SPECIFICALLY BEEN GIVEN SUPERNATURAL INSTRUCTION? I PERSONALLY THINK WE MUST WAIT UNTIL HEAVEN TO LEARN ABOUT "HIS STAR.")

**What was the star of Bethlehem?** - (ED: NOTE THAT THE BIBLE NEVER CALLS IT THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM, BUT DOES CALL IT "HIS STAR") (Excerpt) - The star of Bethlehem is associated with the birth of Christ and the visit of the [magi](#) (wise men) as recorded in Matthew 2:1–12. The text implies the star of Bethlehem appeared only to the magi in the East (most likely the area of Persia, or modern-day Iran). There is no biblical record of anyone else observing the star of Bethlehem. The magi in the East saw something in the heavens—the star of Bethlehem—that alerted them to the fact that the Jewish Messiah was born. The magi do not call the star of Bethlehem by that name; in Matthew 2:2 they refer to it as being "HIS STAR" since it was a sign to them that a king was born. The star prompted the magi to travel to Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. This would be the logical place to start looking for the birth of the King of the Jews for someone who did not know of Micah's prophecy about Bethlehem. (click full article - [What was the star of Bethlehem?](#))

**Spurgeon** - - We believe it to have been a luminous appearance in mid-air; probably akin to that which led the children of Israel through the wilderness, which was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Whether it was seen in the daylight or not we cannot tell.

**Fruchtenbaum** - This passage contains the record of the visit of the Magi from the east who were led there by the visibility of a star. Because of this, even some Christians have stated that there is some validity to astrology, and some have even attempted to develop a doctrine of biblical astrology.

**John Piper** has a good exhortation regarding the natural human tendency to want to try to explain the nature of the **STAR** - The answer is: We do not know. There are numerous efforts to explain it in terms of conjunctions of planets or comets or supernovas or miraculous lights. We just don't know. And I want to exhort you not to become preoccupied with developing theories that are only tentative in the end and have very little spiritual significance. I risk a generalization to warn you: people who are exercised and preoccupied with such things as how the star worked and how the Red Sea split and how the manna fell and how Jonah survived the fish and how the moon turns to blood are generally people who have what I call a mentality for the marginal. You do not see in them a deep cherishing of the great central things of the gospel—the holiness of God, the ugliness of sin, the helplessness of man, the death of Christ, justification by faith alone, the sanctifying work of the Spirit, the glory of Christ's return and the final judgment. They always seem to be taking you down a sidetrack with a new article or new tape or book. ([We Have Come to Worship Him](#))

**East** (395) (**anatole** from **anatello** = to rise - **ana** = up, again + **tello** = to make to rise) means rising (as of a star or the sun). In some context **anatole** refers to the rising of the sun or "breaking of the dawn" which means East or Orient (used with this meaning especially in the Lxx - Ge 2:8, 10:30, 11:2, 12:8; used of the Magi from the **east** who saw the star in the **east** - Mt 2:1, 2, 9, those who come into God's kingdom will be from "east and west" = Mt 8:11, Lk 13:29, "lightning comes from the **east**" = Mt 24:27). Here Luke is using **anatole** to refer to the coming of Christ. John uses **anatole** to describe the "angel ascending from the **rising** of the sun." (Rev 7:2), to describe "kings from the **east**" as they assemble at Armageddon (Rev 16:12), and lastly to describe the "three gates on the east" of the holy city of Jerusalem that will come down out of heaven from God (Rev 21:13). **Anatole** - east(7), east\*(1), rising(1), Sunrise(1). 10v - Matt. 2:1; Matt. 2:2; Matt. 2:9; Matt. 8:11; Matt. 24:27; Lk. 1:78; Lk. 13:29; Rev. 7:2; Rev. 16:12; Rev. 21:13

#### Related Resource:

- [The Christmas Star | Biblical Science Institute](#)

**And have come to worship Him** - They had come to bow down in adoration & reverence to the King of kings. How is it that these Gentiles recognized what His own people refused to accept (Jn 1:11+, Mt 27:37)?

**Worship** (bow down) (4352) (**proskuneo** from **pros** = before + **kuneo** = kiss or adore) means to prostrate

one's self, to kiss the hand to (towards) one in token of reverence, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence (to make a salam), by kneeling or prostration to do homage to one or make obeisance, either in order to express respect or make supplication. When Jesus Christ was born into this world, He was attended and worshipped by angels. (Lu 2:13f+). **Proskuneo** represents the most common Near Eastern act of adoration and reverence and also carries the idea of profound awe and respect. Some believe that the root word **kuneo** may be related to **kuon** which is the Greek word for dog and which then could be picturing a dog licking his master's hand. **Proskuneo** literally means to kiss toward someone, to throw a kiss in token of respect or homage, to prostrate oneself in homage, to do reverence to, to adore and so to worship and show respect. In the ancient Oriental (especially Persia) the mode of salutation between persons of equal rank was to kiss each other on the lips. When the difference of rank was slight, they kissed each other on the cheek. When one was much inferior, he fell upon his knees touched his forehead to the ground or prostrated himself, and as he was bowing down he would be throwing kisses toward the superior. It is this latter mode of salutation that is intended by the Greek writers in the use of the verb **proskuneo**. Matthew's uses of **proskuneo** - Matt. 2:2; Matt. 2:8; Matt. 2:11; Matt. 4:9; Matt. 4:10; Matt. 8:2; Matt. 9:18; Matt. 14:33; Matt. 15:25; Matt. 18:26; Matt. 20:20; Matt. 28:9; Matt. 28:17

**THOUGHT** - And this should be our ultimate purpose in life even as we serve Him, doing so with an attitude of worship. And one cannot miss the striking contrast that while Gentile magi adore Jim as the King of the Jews, and the king of the Jews attempts to murder Him! It is interesting that Matthew gives few details surrounding the actual birth of Jesus but says more about what happened after His birth in Bethlehem.

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### Messianic Hope: The King of the Jews

The concept of the King Messiah who would one day come to deliver His people from oppression has been the sustaining hope of the Jewish people for generations. King Messiah is the instrument by whom God's king is to be established in Israel and the world. This hope runs throughout the Tanakh. This Messiah would be anointed by God to...

1. Restore the Kingdom of David (Jer 23:5, Jer 30:9, Ezek 34:33)
2. Restore the Temple (Isa 2:2, Micah 4:1, Zech 6:13, Ezekiel 37:26-28)
3. Regather the exiles (Isa 11:12, Isa 43:5-6)
4. Usher in world peace (Isa 2:4)
5. Spread Torah knowledge of the God of Israel, which will unite humanity as one. Zech 14:9 And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.

In the Tanakh, the key passage on which the idea of the Messianic King would rule is 2 Sa 7:11ff. This covenant could not have been fulfilled by Solomon and therefore refers to another anointed King.

### Rambam's View of Mashiach

The Medieval rabbi Maimonides ("Ramban") is considered to be the voice of traditional Judaism. His "12th Principle" of the Jewish faith is his affirmation that the Messiah is coming to restore Israel to greatness beyond even King Solomon. "I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though He may delay, nevertheless I wait for His coming every day." He went on to say "If a King will arise from the House of David who is learned in the Torah and observant of the mitzvot, as prescribed by the written law and the oral law, as David his ancestor was, and will compel all of Israel to walk in the way of the Torah and reinforce the breaches; and fight the wars of G-d, we may, with assurance, consider Him the Messiah. If he succeeds in the above, builds the Temple in its place, and gathers the dispersed for Israel, he is definitely the Messiah." (Mishneh Torah).

According to rabbinical Judaism (following Maimonides), this Messiah figure is not divine, though he certainly has divine powers and attributes.

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### Matthew 2:1-10 Wishing On Stars

A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel. —Numbers 24:17

On the night Jesus was born, the bright light of a single star announced His birth. It was an announcement that many had hoped and

prayed for, yet many missed.

Perhaps they were like me. Perhaps their hopes were more like dreams and their prayers were more like wishes. Maybe they were looking for a star that would grant every whim, not a light that would reveal their sin.

Every Christmas when I sing in our church's annual Festival of Lights program, I wish for several things. I wish for those few magic moments when the choir is so perfectly in tune that I can't hear anyone, yet I can hear everyone. I think that's what the music of heaven will be like.

Every night when people are laughing at the drama, I wish that I could see what's so funny. But I always get stuck in a part of the choir loft that's behind the set.

Yes, I wish for these things, but I know that instead of wishing to hear the pure strains of a few songs, I ought to pray that I will hear God when He speaks.

Instead of wishing I could see the drama, I should pray that my eyes would see Jesus and not be distracted by the world.

Wishing is hoping I'll get what I want from God. A prayer is a plea that God will get what He wants from me. By Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What Does God Want From Me?

- Trust (Psalm 37:3; Proverbs 3:5-6)
- Praise (Psalm 67:3; 100:3-4)
- Obedience (John 15:8-14; James 1:22-25)

Christmas is a time to think of what God gave to us and what we can give to Him.

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## **Arnold Fruchtenbaum on the Gospel of Matthew - Theme: Jesus the Messiah, **the King of the Jews****

- Prime Audience: the first believers who had need of a Gospel, Jewish believers.
- Emphasis: Matthew's emphasis was on Jesus' fulfillment of the role of Messianic King.
- The early days of the Church were spent primarily in Jerusalem, and the believers there had direct access to the apostles for information about Jesus. However, upon the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7, many of these Jewish believers were dispersed to places such as Syria and Lebanon.
- They then had need of an authoritative life of the Messiah, which Matthew gave them in his Gospel.
- Matthew's account supports the theme of Jesus the Messiah, **King of the Jews** in several ways.
- Matthew quotes the Old Testament, or the Tanakh (the 5 books of Moses, the Prophets, and the writings) over 60 times and makes extensive use of Messianic prophecies to show that Jesus was really the Messianic Davidic King.
- Many Jewish people were asking, and still ask today, if Jesus was the Messiah, where is the Messianic Kingdom promised?
- Matthew explains the Kingdom program and the delay of an earthly Messianic Kingdom.
- He also relayed Jesus' words which warned of the impending judgment of 70 A.D. (Matthew 22:7, 23:36-38), which uniquely concerned the Jewish nation.

## **THE OFFICE OF KING**

The third office of the Messiah is still future, the office of King. His first office was fulfilled in history by His First Coming; He presently holds His second office; His third office is future, and He will begin to function as King only with His Second Coming.

### **A. Description of the Office**

The office of King, as far as its relationship to Jesus is concerned, is His right to rule over Israel and the world.

Just as His prophetic and priestly offices were predicted by the Old Testament, His kingly office was also predicted by the Old Testament and much more frequently than the other two. That the Messiah would be King was predicted in Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:17; 1 Chronicles 17:10-14; Psalm 2:7; Psalm 45; Psalm 72; Psalm 119; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 33:17; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Daniel 7:13-14; Micah 5:2; and Zechariah 9:9.

### **B. Future Fulfillment of the Office**

The New Testament clearly teaches the future fulfillment of this office by Yeshua when He returns. Even within

the scope of the Gospels during the time of His First Coming, He was declared to be King of the Jews (Mt. 2:1–2). The wise men came looking for Him, asking the question: **Where is he that is born King of the Jews?** He is also referred to as **King** in Matthew 21:4–5; Luke 1:30–33+; John 1:49+; and John 18:37.

**Jesus offered Himself as King at His First Coming**, but He could not rule as King until He was accepted by His own nation. Unfortunately, at His First Coming when He offered Himself as King, He was rejected (Mat. 27:37; Mk. 15:16–20; Lk. 19:11–14; 23:38; Jn. 19:19–22). All of these specific passages emphasize, not just the rejection of Yeshua as Messiah, but in particular, the rejection of Him as King of the Jews. Since Yeshua could not fulfill that function until He was accepted by His own nation, He did not become King during His First Coming nor is He functioning in that office today. Instead, at His First Coming He remained within the scope of Prophet and, today, He remains within the scope of Priest. Some day, He will function in that third office, the office of King of the Jews and King of the world. Indeed, when Jesus comes back, He is returning for the purpose of setting up His Kingdom.

**The prerequisite to the Second Coming is the Jewish request for Him to return** Some day, all Israel will be saved; all Israel will accept Yeshua as their King (**ED**: cf Ro 11:26-27+, Zechariah 12:10-14+, Zechariah 13:1+, Zechariah 13:8-9+, et al). Once they do, then Yeshua will come again to set up His Kingdom and rule over it as King. This particular aspect of His Second Coming—for the purpose of setting up a Kingdom to rule over as King—is brought out in Revelation 19:15–16+ and Matthew 25:34, 40.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, Jesus holds three offices: **Prophet, Priest, and King**. He does not function in all three offices simultaneously, but chronologically. At His First Coming, He functioned as Prophet. Between the First and Second Comings, He is functioning as Priest. At the Second Coming, He will function as King, and He will function in that capacity for 1,000 years.

Normally, the **Triumphal Entry** is interpreted to represent the time when Yeshua (Jesus) came and officially offered Himself as the King of the Jews and as Israel's Messiah. But that is not the best interpretation of the actual significance of the Triumphal Entry, because Yeshua had already been offering Himself as the Messiah and the King of the Jews for the previous three and one-half years. Israel had already rejected the Messiahship of Jesus about a year and one-half earlier (Mt. 12:22–45). At that point, Yeshua said that the generation of His day was guilty of committing the “unpardonable sin”; therefore, they were under the judgment that would come in the year A.D. 70. Furthermore, the Kingdom offer was then rescinded, to be re-offered to a later Jewish generation: the generation of the Great Tribulation. The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem was not for the purpose of officially offering Himself as the King; there was a different purpose. The Triumphal Entry took place in the context of the Passover. The significance of this particular Passover was that this was the Passover when Yeshua knew that the final atonement for sin would be made, by virtue of His death (Lk. 22:14). (**See another interpretation** - [What is the significance of the triumphal/triumphant entry?](#))

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#### The Star

First of all, we will discuss the issue of the star. The basic rule of interpretation is this:

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense. Therefore take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise. (Dr. David L. Cooper)

We should take the Bible exactly as it says unless there is some indication in the text and in the context that tells us we cannot take it literally. Five things indicate that this is not a literal star.

To begin with, that this was no ordinary star is evident by the actions that this star took. The star is referred to as “His” star, the King of the Jews’ star, in a way that the other stars simply cannot be. This star appears and disappears. This star moves from east to west. This star moves from north to south. This star hovers over one single house in Bethlehem and points to where the Messiah is. Any literal star, as we know it, that will hover over just one house in Bethlehem will destroy this entire planet. It is very evident that this cannot be a literal star. Again, there are five things about this star which make it clear that it cannot be a physical star:

1. It is the personal star of the King of the Jews.
2. It appears and disappears.
3. It moves from east to west.
4. It moves from north to south.
5. It literally hovers over one single house in Bethlehem.

Obviously it must be something different—but what is it?

The root meaning of the Greek word for “star” simply means “radiance” or “brilliance.” By this star coming in the form of a light, what we actually have is the appearance of the [Shechinah Glory](#) rather than an astrologer’s star. (WHILE THIS IS A POSSIBILITY NOTE THIS IS CONJECTURE AND NOT DEFINITELY STATED BY THE BIBLICAL TEXT) What is the Shechinah Glory? The Shechinah Glory is the visible manifestation of God’s presence. Whenever God became visible in the Old Testament, this is referred to as the Shechinah Glory. In most cases, the Shechinah Glory came in the form of a light, fire, cloud or some combination of these three things. Over in Babylonia a light appeared, a brilliance, a radiance, that may have looked like a star from a distance and yet had actions and did things which no star can do or does do. What these Wise Men actually saw was the Shechinah Glory. When they saw this Shechinah Glory, when they saw this unusual brilliance, they deduced from it that it was a signal that the King of the Jews, the Messiah, had finally been born. (A study of the Shechinah Glory can be found in Appendix 4 of the author’s *The Footsteps Of The Messiah*.) Keeping in mind that in ancient times the two disciplines of astronomy and astrology were not separate sciences, if anyone would recognize a new light in the heavens, it would be them. (Arnold Fruchtenbaum - Messianic Christology)

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**J C Ryle** speaks of the amazing faith of the magi - The conduct of the wise men is a striking example of faith **ED**: HOWEVER AS [ALLUDED TO ABOVE](#), THE MAGI MUST HAVE HAD SOME SPECIAL REVELATION ON WHICH TO BASE THEIR FAITH FOR AS PAUL TEACHES "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the **word** of Christ." Ro 10:17+). They believed in Christ when they had never seen Him;—but that was not all. They believed in Him when the Scribes and Pharisees were unbelieving;—but that again was not all. They believed in Him when they saw Him a little infant on Mary’s knee, and worshipped Him as a King. This was the crowning point of their faith.—They saw no miracles to convince them. They heard no teaching to persuade them (**ED**: HERE I WOULD SLIGHTLY DISAGREE. SOMEHOW THE MAGI HAD RECEIVED SPECIAL REVELATION THAT HE WOULD BE KING OF THE JEWS). They beheld no signs of divinity and greatness to overawe them. They saw nothing but a newborn infant, helpless and weak, and needing a mother’s care like any one of ourselves. And yet when they saw that infant, they believed that they saw the divine Saviour of the world. “They fell down and worshipped Him.” It is a faith that deserves to be placed side by side with that of the penitent thief. The thief saw one dying the death of a malefactor, and yet prayed to Him, and “called Him Lord.” (cf Lk 23:39-43+) The wise men saw a new-born babe on the lap of a poor woman (Mt 2:11), and yet worshipped Him and confessed that He was Christ (**ED**: THE TEXT DOES NOT SAY THEY ACTUALLY CONFESSED HIM AS CHRIST BUT THAT WOULD BE A REASONABLE ASSUMPTION). Blessed indeed are those that can believe in this fashion! (cf Jn 20:28) This is the kind of faith, let us remember, that God delights to honor. Wherever the Bible is read the conduct of these wise men is known, and told as a memorial of them. Let us walk in the steps of their faith. Let us not be ashamed to believe in Jesus and confess Him, though all around us remain careless and unbelieving. Have we not a thousand-fold more evidence than the wise men had, to make us believe that Jesus is the Christ? Beyond doubt we have. Yet where is our faith? ([All Ryle’s Expository Comments on the Gospels on one page](#))

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Though we aren’t Magi being physically guided by a star, we can still look at the stars in the sky to marvel at God’s magnificent creation and His creative power. If you have a telescope and weather permits, spend time looking at the night sky. As you gaze at the stars, reflect on how God directed the Magi and protected Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. If there’s a planetarium nearby, you could visit a star show with a friend and then discuss the way that God used a star as part of the story of the birth of Jesus.

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## The Only King

They bowed down and worshiped him. Matthew 2:11

Today’s Scripture & Insight: Matthew 2:1–12

As five-year-old Eldon listened to the pastor talk about Jesus leaving heaven and coming to earth, he gasped when the pastor thanked Him in prayer for dying for our sins. “Oh, no! He died?” the boy said in surprise.

From the start of Christ’s life on earth, there were people who wanted Him dead. Wise men came to Jerusalem during the reign of King Herod inquiring, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him” (Matthew 2:2). When the king heard this, he became fearful of one day losing his position to Jesus. So he sent soldiers to kill all the boys two years old and younger around Bethlehem. But God protected His Son and sent an angel to warn His parents to leave the area. They fled, and He was saved (vv. 13–18).

When Jesus completed His ministry, He was crucified for the sins of the world. The sign placed above His cross, though meant in mockery, read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews” (27:37). Yet three days later He rose in victory from the grave. After ascending to heaven, He sat down on the throne as King of kings and Lord of lords (Philippians 2:8–11).

The King died for our sins—yours, mine, and Eldon’s. Let’s allow Him to rule in our hearts. By: Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Reflect & Pray

What does it mean for you to have Jesus as your King? Are there areas of your life where He's not?

Jesus, thank You for willingly dying for our sins and offering forgiveness. Teach us to submit to Your rule.

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## John Butler - [Sermon Starters - Volume 7](#) - Wise Men See Herod

- Matthew 2:2 "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" (Matthew 2:2).

The wise men had gotten as far as Jerusalem and could go not farther without help. So they went to the logical place for directions, namely, Herod who was the then "king of the Jews." The wise men said three things to Herod, none of which pleased this very wicked man.

### FIRST—THE SEEKING

"Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" This question was very revealing. It revealed the dumbness of Herod, and it disclosed the birth of Christ.

- **Dumbness of Herod.** Herod the Great, as he was known in Israel did not know about the most important birth that ever occurred. He is like the king of England who wrote in his diary on the 4th of July 1776, the day of the declaration of Independence, that nothing important happened that day. Little did he know. Ask famous politicians today about Jesus Christ and all they will say will add darkness to the subject. They seldom, if ever, know anything about Christ.

- **Declaration of Christ's birth.** Though born in a lowly manger, yet his birth is announced in the palace and by men of high standing. Christ may be despised and ignored but He is the most important being ever to set foot on this earth!!!

### SECOND—THE STAR

"We have seen his star in the east." The wise men came from the east. The star had to be west of them if its purpose was to guide them. What a great privilege these wise men had. But privilege brings responsibility which can be very costly, the the wise men were indeed very responsible in that they came (at great cost and inconvenience) many miles to worship Christ. If you have not received divine privileges lately, or ever, maybe it is because you do not treat privilege with responsibility. Our day wants privilege (they call it 'rights') but they do not want the responsibility that comes with privilege.

### THIRD—THE SUBSERVIENCE

"Are come to worship him." There are at least three lessons in this statement of devotion to Christ. They all have to do with the worship by the wise men.

- **The prudence of worship.** "Wise men." The words "wise men" are a translation of the word 'magi' which is applied to various groups, from scientist to magicians and by implication means they were exceptionally wise. And wisdom is found in worshipping Christ. This is not evidenced in football stadiums or other sports arenas which schedule their games at church worship times which keeps many from worship.

- **The plebian of worship.** "Worship him." Worship requires humility, for it is bowing before some one else regardless of your rank.

- **The Person of worship.** "Him." This speaks of Christ's Deity. Only God is to be worshipped (Matthew 4:10; Revelation 19:10; 22:9).

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## Ian Paisley in his devotional **A Text A Day Keeps the Devil Away** -

### They Saw His Star

"We have seen his star"

I think that it is right to believe that the wise men were kings in their own right. A star appeared to them in the east. It was certainly the far east for it took them two years to make their journey. The star was worth following for it was to lead them to their king. Though foreigners they were to become His subjects.

They saw His star and watched it!

### They Saw His Would—Be Slayers

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

Herod was vile, wretched, old in crime and crooked in soul. He decided he would soon wipe the new king off the face of the earth. He reckoned without God. He pretended to show interest in the child so that he too could also worship Him. This was but a ruse, for his mind was made up to slay Him.

They saw Herod and worried him!

### **They Saw Himself**

"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."

If they had kept following the star they would not have been sidetracked to Herod. Now having found the King they fell down and worshipped Him alone (Mary rightfully excluded) and presented gifts—gold, for royalty; frankincense, for sacrifice; myrrh, for burial. They saw Himself and worshipped Him.

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### **Matthew 2:2 A Russian Legend**

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"—Matt. 2:2

The Russian peasantry have a curious tradition. It is that an old woman, the Baboushka, was at work in her house when the wise men from the East passed on their way to find the Christ-child. "Come with us," they said; "we have seen His star in the East, and go to worship Him." "I will come, but not now," she answered; "I have my house to set in order; when this is done I will follow and find Him." But when her work was done the three kings had passed on their way across the desert, and the star shone no more in the darkened heavens. She never saw the Christ-child, but she is living and searching for Him still. For His sake she takes care of all His children. It is she who in Russian and Italian houses is believed to fill the stockings and dress the tree on Christmas morn. The children are awakened by the cry of "Behold the Baboushka!" and spring up hoping to see her before she vanished out of the window. She fancies, the tradition goes, that in each poor little one whom she warms and feeds she may find the Christ-child, whom she neglected ages ago, but is doomed to eternal disappointment.

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### **Norman Geisler - MATTHEW 2:2—Why does the Bible commend the Magi for following the star, when it condemns astrology?**

#### **PROBLEM:**

The Bible condemns the use of astrology (see Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10; Isa. 8:19), yet God blessed the wise men (Magi) for using a star to indicate the birth of Christ.

#### **SOLUTION:**

First, we need to ask what astrology is. Astrology is a belief that the study of the arrangement and movement of the stars can enable one to foretell events—whether they will be good or bad.

Second, the star used in the biblical account was to announce the birth of Christ, not to foretell this event. God gave the star to the Magi to proclaim to them that the child had already been born. We know the child was already born, because in Matthew 2:16, Herod gives a command to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and vicinity that are two years old or younger in accordance with "the time which he had ascertained from the Magi" (NASB).

Third, there are other cases in the Bible in which the stars and planets are used by God to reveal His desires. Psalm 19:1–6 affirms that the heavens declare God's glory, and Romans 1:18–20 teaches that creation reveals God's existence. Christ refers to what will happen to the sun, moon, and stars in connection with His second coming (Matt 24:29–30), as did the prophet Joel (2:31–32). The star guiding the Magi was not used to predict, but to proclaim the birth of Christ. (When Critics Ask)

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### **Matthew 2:1-12 Be A Star**

Those who turn many to righteousness [shall shine] like the stars forever and ever. —Daniel 12:3

Many today seek stardom by trying to get into the media spotlight. But a young Jewish captive achieved "stardom" in a better way.

When Daniel and his friends were taken captive by a ruthless invading nation, it was unlikely that they would be heard from again. But the godly young men soon distinguished themselves as intelligent and trustworthy.



When the king had a dream that his wise men could not repeat nor interpret, he condemned them to death. After a night of prayer with his friends, Daniel received from God the content of the dream and its interpretation. As a result, the king promoted Daniel to be his chief advisor (see Da 2:48).

If the story ended there, it would be remarkable enough. But some scholars believe that Daniel's influence in Babylon made people aware of messianic prophecies about a Savior who would be born in Bethlehem. Daniel's teaching may have been the reason that 500 years later wise men from the East followed a star to a remote and unfamiliar part of the world to find an infant King, worship Him, and return to their country with the good news of God's incredible journey to earth (Matt. 2:1-12).

By turning others to righteousness, we, like Daniel, can become a star that will shine forever. By Julie Ackerman Link

Make me a blessing, make me a blessing!  
Out of my life may Jesus shine;  
Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray,  
Make me a blessing to someone today. —Wilson

You can attract people to Jesus when you have His light in your life.

### Matthew 2:3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

NET When King Herod heard this he was alarmed, and all Jerusalem with him.

GNT κο σας δ βασιλε ρ δης ταρ χθη κα π σα εροσ λυμα μετ α το ,

NLT King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem.

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

ESV When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him;

NIV When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

- **he** - Mt 8:29 23:37 1Ki 18:17,18 Joh 11:47,48 Ac 4:2,24-27 5:24-28 Ac 16:20,21 17:6,7

## A TROUBLED TYRANT

**When Herod the king heard this** - What is **this**? The question of the magi about another **King** (Mt 2:2)! **Herod the king Herod** had been called "king of the Jews" by the Senate in Rome for almost 40 years. **Herod the king** is also known as "Herod the Great." This designation of "great" is clearly in the eyes of men, but it will carry no weight with God at the **Great White Throne judgment** for John records "And I saw the dead, the **GREAT** and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds...And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Rev 20:12,15+)

**D A Carson** says **Herod** "was wealthy, politically gifted, intensely loyal, an excellent administrator, and clever enough to remain in the good graces of successive Roman emperors. His famine relief was superb and his building projects (including the temple, begun 20 B.C.) were admired even by his foes. But he loved power, inflicted incredibly heavy taxes on the people, and resented the fact that many Jews considered him a usurper. In his last years, suffering an illness that compounded his paranoia, he turned to cruelty and in fits of rage and jealousy killed close associates."

**Barclay** on Herod's evil disposition - "Augustus, the Roman Emperor, had said, bitterly, that it was safer to be Herod's pig than Herod's son. (The saying is even more epigrammatic in Greek, for in Greek *hus* is the word for a pig, and *huios* is the word for a son)."

**Spurgeon** - This trouble is again testimony to the greatness of Jesus, even as a young child. "Jesus of Nazareth is so potent a factor in the world of mind that, no sooner is he there in his utmost weakness, a now-born King, than he begins to reign. Before he mounts the throne, friends bring him presents, and his enemies compass his death.....Herod heard a good Bible study about the birthplace of the Messiah, but it did him no good. "When the earth-king dabbles in theology, it bodes no good to truth. Herod among the priests and scribes is Herod still. Some men may be well instructed in their Bibles and yet be all the worse for what they

have discovered....Mark that the wise men never promised to return to Herod; they probably guessed that all this eager zeal was not quite so pure as it seemed to be, and their silence did not mean consent.

**He was troubled** - NLT = "was deeply disturbed" Just the thought of a rival King of the Jews would have been sufficient information to give him quite a fright. One can almost see him shaking which is the literal meaning of the Greek verb **tarasso**. This picture recalls another king named Belshazzar, who became frightened by the sudden appearance of a hand writing on the wall (Da 5:5+) and as a result "the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and **his knees began knocking together.**" (Da 5:6+)

**Was troubled** (disturbed) (5015)(**tarasso**) literally means to shake back and forth, be agitated (like water boiling) and stir up (like the pool in John 5:4,7, Lxx = Isa 51:15 = "stirs up the sea"; Ps 46:2, 3, 6 referring to earth, water, nations; 2Sa 22:8 = of earth shaking). Most of the NT uses of **tarasso** are figurative and describe the state of one's mind as stirred up, agitated or experiencing inward commotion. The passive voice is always used in the NT with a negative meaning, and refers to an unsettled mind, as here when Herod heard of the birth of the **King of the Jews**. **Tarasso** is used in two commands ([present imperative with a negative](#) - stop this or do not let it begin) from Jesus to disciples (and applicable to all believers) in Jn 14:1 "**Do not let** your heart **be troubled**; believe in God, believe also in Me." and Jn 14:27 "'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. **Do not let** your heart **be troubled**, nor let it be fearful." Sometimes we need to hear Jesus say this twice to us also, don't we! Matt. 2:3; Matt. 14:26; Mk. 6:50; Lk. 1:12; Lk. 24:38; Jn. 5:4; Jn. 5:7; Jn. 11:33; Jn. 12:27; Jn. 13:21; Jn. 14:1; Jn. 14:27; Acts 15:24; Acts 17:8; Acts 17:13; Gal. 1:7; Gal. 5:10; 1 Pet. 3:14

**And all Jerusalem with him** - Notice the adjective "**ALL**" while probably hyperbole is clearly speaking of the majority of the unholy populace of the Holy City! Why would the Holy City be so disturbed by the birth of the Holy One? Probably because they were not living holy lives. Certainly the religious leaders would have been disturbed as this true **King of the Jews** would threaten their power base and their false "religion" based on rabbinical traditions and not on the Word of Truth, the Bible.

**J C Ryle** - These verses teach us, that it is not always those who have most religious privileges, who give Christ most honor. We might have thought that the Scribes and Pharisees would have been the first to hasten to **Bethlehem**, on the slightest rumor that the Saviour was born. But it was not so. A few unknown strangers from a distant land were the first, except the shepherds mentioned by St. Luke, to rejoice at His birth. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (Jn 1:11) What a mournful picture this is of human nature! How often the same kind of thing may be seen among ourselves! How often the very persons who live nearest to the means of grace are those who neglect them most! There is only too much truth in the old proverb, "The nearer the church the further from God." Familiarity with sacred things has an awful tendency to make men despise them. There are many, who from residence and convenience ought to be first and foremost in the worship of God, and yet are always last. There are many, who might well be expected to be last, who are always first. ([Matthew 2 Commentary](#))

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### John Butler - [Sermon Starters - Volume 7](#) - Agitation Of Christmas Matthew 2:3

- "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (Matthew 2:3).

The word "**troubled**" in our text means to be agitated, agitation as water that is boiling. It is a strong word and shows hostility here.

#### FIRST—THE MESSAGE THAT TROUBLED

"**Heard these things.**" The message that agitated was at least fourfold.

- **The coming of Christ.** The wise men had said Someone important was born. The birth of Christ was not meant with much joy in the world to which He came.
- **The crown for Christ.** The wise men had said that Christ was to be the "king of the Jews." (Matthew 2:2). This manifested rank and power for Jesus Christ. Herod especially would not like this.
- **The celebration of Christ.** The wise men were going to worship Him. Worship means reverence, respect, deference, honor. It makes the person worshipped very honored especially when the worshippers have come a long distance to worship Him. This would upset Herod.
- **The communicants for Christ.** Because the wise men had come a long distance to worship Him, they were obviously very dedicated and devoted to Christ. The world does not adore such people.

#### SECOND—THE MONARCH THAT WAS TROUBLED

"Herod." Several things about Herod are in the context of this text. No wonder he was troubled at the news of Christ's birth and worship. All of this was contrary to him.

- **His character.** He was very deceitful to the wise men, for he pretended to also want to worship Christ, when in fact, he wanted to do away with Christ. History is not kind to Herod. He was jealous, self-serving and proud. While alive he was called 'Herod the Great,' but death changed the 'Great' to 'Guile.' The Bible never calls him 'Great' but it does call John the Baptist and Jesus "Great." (Luke 1). He was ignorant of important spiritual truths, was hypocritical (feigned himself a worshiper of Christ), cruel (as we will note in more detail next), and contemptible.
- **His cruelty.** Herod lashed out in an effort to kill the Christchild by killing all the children two years and younger in the Bethlehem vicinity. History verifies his cruelty. At his death he wanted a group of people to be slain so there would be sorrow in the land when he died. He was so cruel he knew people would rejoice at his death so made this horrible decree for sorrow (which was not carried out).

### THIRD—THE MUNICIPALITY THAT WAS TROUBLED

"And all Jerusalem with him." A world that calls a Herod 'Great' will not rejoice over the coming of Christ. You would expect Jerusalem, of all places, to rejoice, but it was filled with sin. We give ourselves away by what we rejoice in, criticize and compliment. Evil likes evil, not righteousness. The world despises Christianity.

**Matthew 2:4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.**

NET After assembling all the chief priests and experts in the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

GNT κα συναγαγὼν πάντας τοὺς ῥηγέρας καὶ γραμματεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ πυνθάνετο παρ' αὐτῶν ποῦ ὁ Χριστὸς γεννηταί.

NLT He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"

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

ESV and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

NIV When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

- **the chief priests-** Mt 21:15,23 26:3,47 27:1 1Ch 24:4-19 2Ch 36:14 Ezr 10:5 Ne 12:7 Ps 2:2 Joh 7:32 18:3
- **the chief priests-** Mt 7:29 13:52 2Ch 34:13,15 Ezr 7:6,11,12 Jer 8:8 Mk 8:31 Lu 20:19 Lu 23:10 Joh 8:3 Ac 4:5 6:12 23:9
- **he inquired of them** - Mal 2:7 Joh 3:10

**Gathering together all the chief priests** : These were the temple hierarchy (the high priest and his associates) and were mostly Sadducees (Mt 3:7). At this time the high priest was appointed by the Romans. These men preferred the recognition of the political power than the recognition of the One with Power. Imagine how honored these religious leaders would be to be invited by King Herod to give spiritual advice. However is notable that Sadducees and Pharisees (most scribes were pharisees) did not get along, but this was an exceptional case which makes me think of [the enemy of my enemy is my friend!](#)

John 12:42-43 says "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for **they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.**" (This is a tough one! Were the **rulers** true believers or were they like those in John 2:23-24+? Compare Paul's teaching in Ro 10:9-10+, Mk 8:34-37, 38, with other passages like Jn 19:38-39, Mk 15:43, Lk 23:50-51 - Certainly Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea did confess, but were there others?)

**Gathering together** (4863)([sunago](#) from **sun** = with + **ago** = to lead, ) means literally to lead together. To gather (in) or gather (up) It is a bit ironic that this verb gives us the word [synagogue](#) the place where Jews gathered to worship. Here they gathered for what would prove to be the antithesis of worship of God, as

Herod would seek to kill the King of the Jews on finding out His birthplace.

**Chief priests** (749)(**archiereus** from **arche** = first in a series, the leader or ruler, idea of rank or degree + **hierous** = priest - **hieros** is that which is determined, filled or consecrated by divine power) refers to the priest that was chief over all the other priests in Israel. In the plural **archiereus** refers to all the ruling priests, the members of the high-priestly families as a group, the upper echelons of the priestly class, especially those who served on the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court (Lk 9:22, Mk 8:31).

**And scribes of the people** - **Scribes** were primarily Pharisees, authorities who were interpreters of the Jewish law. Sometimes they are referred to as "lawyers" (see Lu 10:25). They were professional scholars, "teachers of the law" so called because it was their office to make copies of the Scriptures, to classify and teach the precepts of the oral law, and to keep careful count of every letter in the O.T. writings.. They knew exactly where the Messiah was to be born (Mt 2:5), but lacked the faith to accompany the magi to actually go to the place where He was. To know about Christ is not enough! One must go to Christ! Many today in America know, but fail to go in repentance and faith and will be sadly shocked in the day of judgment (cf Mt 7:21-23+).

**Scribes** (1122)(**grammateus** from **grapho** = to write) was one skilled in Jewish law and theology scribe, expert, scholar (Mt 2.4). **Grammateus** also referred to a chief executive officer of a governmental entity such as a town official secretary, town clerk (Acts 19.35). Jesus gives a long rebuke including **8 WOES** primarily to the Scribes and Pharisees which should be read to help understand how this group of Jewish religious men functioned (See Mt 23:1-39, 13, 14, 15, 16, etc). Most sources consider the **lawyers** (nomikos - meaning one skilled in the Mosaic law) to be scribes specialized in the jurisprudence of the Law of Moses. Finally the scribes in Lk 5:17 (nomdidaskalos) were teachers of the Jewish law who were equal to the lawyers and scribes **MacArthur** adds that "Not all **Pharisees** were scribes, but the scribes were primarily **Pharisees**, who were interpreters and teachers of the law of Moses and the traditional rabbinic writings. Their teaching provided the theological framework for the Pharisees' legalistic system of works-righteousness. The scribes were the dominant force in Judaism, not only theologically, but socially. Their views affected every aspect of life, and they also handled all legal matters, including property, estates, and contracts. They were revered, and given the respectful title of Rabbi (Mt. 23:7). That title was sometimes given to Jesus because He was a teacher (cf. John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 6:25). It was commonly believed that Moses received the law, then gave it to Joshua, who gave it to the elders, who gave it to the prophets, who gave it to the scribes. (Luke Commentary on Lk 20:46)

**He inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born** - **KJV** has demanded (for **inquired**) which is a poor translation for the word means simply to seek to learn something by asking. Inquired is in the **imperfect tense** indicating he asked them again and again. Although they obviously eventually did give the right answer, perhaps a number of them did not know the answer. As King he could have **demanded** but that is not the sense with this verb. **Messiah** is actually the word usually translated Christ and not the Greek word **messias** which means Messiah and is used only in John 1:41 and John 4:24. What do we learn from this passage? If we compare it with the question of the **magi** in Mt 2:2 "Where is He who has been born **King** of the Jews?" It is clear that the King of the Jews is the **Messiah**! The phrase **was to be born** is literally "where the Christ is born" which Robertson calls the "prophetic present" which does imply certainty or states with assurance that which is predicted. The idea is that events which are future are pictured as if present. It is worth noting that Herod actually seems to believe the Scriptures, but still seeks to destroy the **King of the Jews**. He was Satan's puppet. And what about the Jewish "wise men" (scribes)? These Jewish "wise men" know and yet don't go! Gentile wise men know and go!

**Constable** adds that "Some of the Jews—particularly the **Essenes** whom Herod did not consult, but not the Sadducees and Pharisees—were expecting a Messiah to appear soon because of Daniel 9:24–27+ (**ED**: SEE ESPECIALLY PREDICTION OF MESSIAH'S COMING IN Da 9:25 see **note** = "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks." cf JESUS' WARNING - ""If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace!...." - see note on Lk 19:42). Daniel had been a wise man in the East also."

**Messiah** (literally Christ)(5547)(**Christos** from **chrizo** = to rub or anoint, consecrate to an office) describes one who has been anointed with oil, one who has been consecrated. The majority of the NT uses refer to Jesus. **Christos** describes Jesus as the "Anointed One" the Greek synonym for "**Messiah (Anointed One)**."

**Inquired** (ask)(4441)(**punthanomai** means to inquire, ask, seek to learn usually from someone (Mt 2:4; Lk 15:26; 18:36; Jn 4:52; Acts 4:7; 10:18, 29; 21:33; 23:19f. The word carries the sense of asking by inquiry, rather than asking by making a request to receive

- Matthew 2:4 "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 wise men had asked where this special person was born and Herod would find out for them in spite of his spiritual ignorance.

### FIRST—HIS SYCOPHANTS

"He . . . gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together." Herod had the religious leaders as sycophants. They fawned his person for special favors. Therefore it was no trick for him to gather the religious leaders together to learn where the Christ-child was born. There are always those ministers who are more interested in political clout than they are in spiritual clout. They prefer the recognition of the powers that be to the recognition of the Power that is, namely, God. "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). If they prefer Christ, they will be secret disciples like Joseph of Arimathea. They equate respect for high office with fawning of high officers (though evil). We could do without this kind. One can easily imagine how honored these religious leaders would be to be invited to give Herod some spiritual advice. In their long and decorative robes they would vie with one another to be the closest to wicked Herod so they could boast about it at the next Sanhedrin meeting.

### SECOND—HIS SERIOUSNESS

"Demanded." The translation is a bit strong. It means simply to inquire, to seek information etc. But the tense of the verb gives away the seriousness of Herod. It is in the perfect tense which means Herod continually asked them where Christ would be born. You can see why the translators used "demanded." Herod was a worried man. "King of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2) upset him and he looked at Christ as an usurper. He must know where Christ is to be born so he can take immediate action to stop the Christ-child from taking Herod's prestigious and powerful throne. Herod was very serious in his inquiry. He did not 'demand' as we think of 'demanding' today, but his continual repeating of his request showed his agitation.

### THIRD—HIS STUPIDITY

"He demanded of them where Christ should be born." Herod was spiritually a dunce. He did not know the important facts spiritually. He obviously knew how to politic. He carried Rome into making him a very powerful ruler over Israel. But he did not know much spiritually. He would get along well with our politicians today. Be they Republican or Democrat, they all have one thing in common—they know little, if anything about spiritual matters. They know how get elected again and again but they do not know anything much where it really matters. They approve of things the Bible condemns (abortion, homosexuality, gambling, and booze) and do not seem to realize that the solution to the world's problems is being in deference to Christ. (John Butler - [Sermon Starters - Volume 7](#))

### Matthew 2:5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

NET "In Bethlehem of Judea," they said, "for it is written this way by the prophet:

GNT ο δ ε παν α τ , ν Βηθλ ε μ τ ς ουδα ας· ο τω ς γ ρ γ γραπται δι το προφ του·

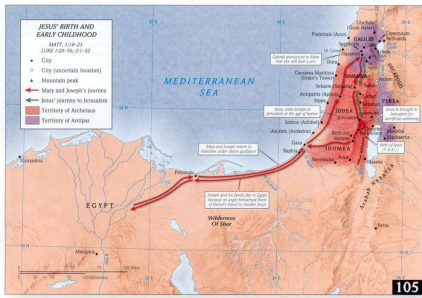
NLT "In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote:

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

ESV They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

NIV "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

- Ge 35:19 Jos 19:15 Ru 1:1,19 2:4 4:11 1Sa 16:1



Events of Jesus' birth. See [another map](#) without captions.  
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 Please do not download or copy.

## BORN IN THE VERY CITY GOD PREDICTED

**They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet-** This is interesting. They did not answer, we need to go back to our Scriptural scrolls and check this one out. They seem to know the answer (after Herod had inquired several times - see notes on Mt 2:4). This is sad when religious leaders know the answers but fail to communicate (much less even believe) the truth to those under their tutelage! The priests were to teach the people and they did apparently know the facts but there was a problem ( Ezek 44:23) There is no record of them going to Bethlehem! They know but refuse to go! Wow!

**John Walvoord** - Matthew adroitly answers Jewish unbelief concerning Jesus Christ by quoting their own official body to the effect that the prophecy of His birth in Bethlehem was literal, that the Messiah was to be an individual, not the entire Jewish nation, and that their Messiah was to be a King who would rule over them. ([Matthew - Thy Kingdom Come](#))

**J C Ryle** - These verses teach us, that there may be knowledge of Scripture in the head, while there is no grace in the heart. Mark how king Herod sends to inquire of the priests and elders "where Christ should be born." Mark what a ready answer they return him, and what an acquaintance with the letter of Scripture they show. But they never went to Bethlehem to seek for the coming Saviour. They would not believe in Him, when He ministered among them. Their heads were better than their hearts.—Let us all beware of resting satisfied with head-knowledge. It is an excellent thing, when rightly used. But a man may have much of it, and yet perish everlastingly. What is the state of our hearts? This is the great question. A little grace is better than many gifts. Gifts alone save no one. But grace leads on to glory. ([Matthew 2 Commentary](#))

**Has been written** (1125) ([grapho](#)) from root **graph-** = primarily means to scratch on or engrave as on an ornament, reports, letters, etc; **English** = graph, graphic, etc) means to engrave or inscribe with a pen or stylus characters or letters on a surface which can be wood, wax, metal, leather, stone, parchment, dirt (John), paper, etc. The similar phrase **it is written** is frequent in the Gospels - Matt. 4:4; Matt. 4:6; Matt. 4:7; Matt. 4:10; Matt. 11:10; Matt. 21:13; Matt. 26:24; Matt. 26:31; Mk. 1:2; Mk. 7:6; Mk. 9:13; Mk. 14:21; Mk. 14:27; Lk. 2:23; Lk. 3:4; Lk. 4:4; Lk. 4:8; Lk. 4:10; Lk. 7:27; Lk. 19:46; Lk. 24:46; Jn. 6:31; Jn. 6:45; Jn. 12:14

**THOUGHT - It is written** ("It stands written") occurs 76 times in the Bible and four uses are in the temptation of Christ, 3x by Jesus and once by the Tempter (Matt. 4:4; 4:6; 4:7; 4:10+). When we were children and our parents told us to do something and we questioned "Why?", the answer was usually "Because I said so!". Why are we commanded to be holy? Because God said so! A popular saying is "God said it, I believe it, that settles it." This sounds good but isn't accurate because God's Word is true, irregardless of whether we believe it or not. A more accurate "saying" would be **God said it, that settles it!** It is written (or "has been written") should put a stop to every complaint or excuse. In essence, Jesus sets Satan's suggestion next to Scripture's statement. There is an important principle here - we should always lay God's Word besides Satan's subtle seductions - The best way to show a stick is crooked is not to argue about it or spend time denouncing it, but to lay a straight stick alongside it. **"It is written"** should be in the heart and on the lips of every Christian." (F. Whitfield) **"It is written"** should decide every controversy, settle every doubt, and overcome every difficulty. (Amen!)

**THOUGHT - Grapho** is in the [perfect tense](#) which indicates that God's Word was written down at a point in time and stands written! It is still in force, still relevant to your life! Jesus in fact said "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." (Mt 24:35) This begs the question - why don't we [memorize His Word](#)? All of the shiny trinkets and babbles we spend time collecting will vanish (cf 1 Jn 2:17+), but God's Word will endure. Eat the Word beloved (1 Pe 2:2+, Heb 5:14+), so that may be enabled by the Spirit to [meditate on the Word](#) anywhere, anytime and you will also experience the promised blessings of meditation (Ps 1:1+, Ps 1:2+, Ps 1:3+, Joshua 1:8+)

**Prophet** (4396)(**prophetes** from **próphemi** = literally to tell beforehand in turn from **pró** = before, in front of, forth, on behalf of + **phemí** = speak, tell) is primarily a **forth-teller** or one who speaks out God's message, primarily to their own generation, usually always calling the people to God's truth for them at that moment, often using the phrase "Thus saith the Lord." The **prophet** is one who speaks **before** in the sense of proclaim, or the one who speaks for, i.e., in the Name of (God). "As distinct from the sacral figures of pagan antiquity the biblical prophet is not a magician. He does not force God. On the contrary, he is under divine constraint. It is God Who invites, summons, and impels him--e.g., Jer 20:7" (Lamorte and Hawthorne) Although we commonly think of the **prophet** as predicting future events (**foretelling**) generally this was secondary to his work of **forth-telling**. When they functioned as predictors or prognosticators, the Biblical **prophets** foretold the future with **100 percent accuracy**. And so if they were correct on the first coming of Messiah, they will be correct on His second coming and on the coming of the antichrist. In sum, forth-telling dealt with current events and foretelling with future events, but in both the goal is the same -- to call us to trust the Lord and submit to His will for our lives, living in conformity with His Word. Matthew uses this word four times in chapter 2 - Mt 2:5, Mt 2:15, Mt 2:17, Mt 2:23.

#### Related Resource:

[Is Micah 5:2 a Messianic prophecy?](#)

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#### Matthew 2:1 with Micah 5:2 **Perfect Predictions**

At the beginning of a new year and a new millennium, we hear many predictions. But then, making predictions is nothing new. In 1983, US News & World Report magazine had a section titled "What The Next 50 Years Will Bring." It had the usual suggestions about the growing importance of computers, about new medical breakthroughs, and about the sleeker, faster ways of getting around. The introduction said, "Prediction is at best a risky business." Then it quoted Sir Francis Bacon, who said, "Dreams and predictions ought to serve but for winter talk by the fireside."

That may be true of man's predictions, but not of God's prophecies. Man may speculate about what will happen next week, but God showed us in the Bible that He knows the future. This truth is one reason we can have absolute confidence in the Book of books. The Old Testament contains hundreds of prophecies about people, events, and nations that have already been fulfilled. The chance of that many predictions coming true is astronomical.

Do you lack confidence in the Bible? Spend some time examining its many fulfilled prophecies. I predict you'll be convinced that it truly is God's Word, and that you can rely on it for everything in your future.

#### For Further Study

Look up the following prophecies and their fulfillment:

Isaiah 7:14 & Luke 1:26-35;

Micah 5:2 & Matthew 2:1;

Isaiah 53:9,12 & Matthew 27:38,57-61.

#### **In a changing world you can trust God's unchanging Word.**

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It has been estimated that there are 333 prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the Messiah. Clearly the fulfillment of all 333 in one Man would be literally impossible based on chance alone. But what about the odds against even a smaller number being fulfilled by chance. [Click](#) for an illustration of the statistical unlikelihood that even 8 of OT prophecies could have fulfilled in Jesus merely by chance. Jesus Himself taught in one of His post-resurrection appearances that...

**"beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."** (Luke 24:27+)

The Messiah (Christ) is the Word of God (Jn 1:1) and so it should come as no surprise that He is described in every Old Testament book.

- In Genesis He is the Seed of the woman (Ge 3:15).
- In Exodus He is the Lamb of God for sinners slain (Ex 12:5, 6, 7, 11).
- In Leviticus He is our High Priest (the whole book).
- In Numbers He is the Star out of Jacob (Nu 24:17).
- In Deuteronomy He is the Prophet like unto Moses (Dt 18:15).

- In Joshua He is the Captain of the Lord's armies (Josh 5:13, 14, 15).
- In Judges He is the Angel of the LORD or the messenger of Jehovah (Jdg 13:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23).
- In Ruth He is our Kinsman-Redeemer (Chapter 3).
- In Samuel, Kings and Chronicles He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1Sa 8:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).
- In Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther He is the sovereign Lord over all the kingdoms of the earth (entire books).
- In Job He is our risen and returning Redeemer (Job 19:25).
- In Psalms He is the Blessed Man (Psalm 1:1, 2, 3), the Son of Man (Psalm 2:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), the Crucified One (Psalm 22), the Coming One (Psalm 24), the Reigning One (Psalm 72).
- In Proverbs He is our Wisdom (Pr 14).
- In Ecclesiastes He is the forgotten Wise Man (Eccl 9:14, 15).
- In Song of Solomon He is my Beloved (Song 2:16).
- In Isaiah He is our suffering Substitute (Isa 53).
- In Jeremiah He is the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jer 23:6).
- In Lamentations He is the Man of sorrows who weeps for His people (Lam 1:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18).
- In Ezekiel He is the glory of God (Ezek 1:28).
- In Daniel He is the Smiting Stone (Da 2:34) and the Companion in the furnace of fire and the den of lions (Da 3:24, 25; 6:22).
- In Hosea He is David's Greater King (Hos 3:5).
- In Joel He is the Hope of His people (Joel 3:16).
- In Amos He is the Rescuer of Israel (Amos 3:12).
- In Obadiah He is the Deliverer upon Mount Zion (Oba 1:17).
- In Jonah He is the buried and risen Saviour (compare Mt 12:40).
- In Micah He is the Everlasting God born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2).
- In Nahum He is our Stronghold in the day of wrath (Nah 1:7).
- In Habakkuk He is the Anchor of our faith (Hab 2:4).
- In Zephaniah He is in the midst for judgment and cleansing (Zeph 3:5,15).
- In Haggai He is Lord of presence and power (Hag 1:13).
- In Zechariah He is the coming king riding on a donkey (Zech 9:9).
- In Malachi He is the Sun of Righteousness (Mal 4:2).

#### Related Resources:

- [Messianic Prophecy](#)
- [Josh McDowell's classic "More than a Carpenter"](#) - good book to suggest to your skeptical friends!
- [How a Jewish man Michael Goldstone met Messiah - site has multiple similar video testimonies](#)
- [Messianic Prophecies • WebBible Encyclopedia • ChristianAnswers.Net](#)
- [AccordingtotheScriptures.org -- 353 Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Christ - nice simple chart](#)
- [Jesus and messianic prophecy - Wikipedia](#)
- [Messianic Prophecy](#)
- [Messianic Prophecies - Bible.org](#) - J. Hampton Keathley, III
- [Prophecies Concerning Christ](#) - Michael Finlay
- [Prophecies of the Birth of Christ](#) - J. Hampton Keathley, III
- [The Story of the "Seed" - The Coming of the Promised Messiah](#) - Bob Deffinbaugh
- [Prophecies of Jesus Christ as Messiah](#)
- [Chris Tomlin's song Jesus Messiah](#)
- [Messianic Prophecies in Isaiah - 20 part Series by S Lewis Johnson](#)
- [The Messianic Hope of Israel - Series - Max Reich](#)
- [Messianic Prophecy in the Old Testament - Wil Pounds](#)
- [Messianic Prophecies, Types & Applications in the Old Testament - Wil Pounds](#)
- [Numbers 24:15-19 A Star Will Come out of Jacob - Greg Herrick](#)
- [Numbers 24:17-19 Messianic Prophecies - Allen Ross](#)
- [The Amazing Prophecy Of Names - A study of Isaiah's names for the Savior](#)
- [Commentary on Messianic Predictions \(V1-Gen, Ps, Minor Prophets\) - E W Hengstenberg \(Pdf\)](#)
- [Commentary on Messianic Predictions \(V2-Isa, Zeph, Jer\) - E W Hengstenberg](#)
- [The Jewish Tradition Of Two Messiahs - RBC](#)
- [Questions Skeptics Ask About Messianic Prophecy - RBC](#)
- [2 Timothy 3:16-17: Study on Authority of God's Word](#)
- [The Power of God's Word - a simple study](#)



- [The Necessity of Scripture \(Pdf\) - William D. Barrick](#)
- [The Sufficiency of Scripture \(Pdf\) - John MacArthur \(also here\)](#)
- [Rationality, Meaningfulness & Precision of Scripture - Robert L. Thomas](#)
- [The Authority of Scripture \(Pdf\) - Richard L. Mayhue](#)
- [The Testimony of Prophecy by Charles Simeon](#) (Or [Here](#) - scroll down to 2 Peter 1:19)

**Matthew 2:6 '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.'**"

NET 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are in no way least among the rulers of Judah, for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'

GNT Κα σ Βηθλ εμ, γ ο δα, ο δαμ ς λαχ στη ε ν το ς γεμ σιν ο δα· κ σο γ ρ ξελε σεται γο μενος, σπς ποιμανε τ ν λα ν μου τ ν σρα λ.

NLT 'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.' "

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

ESV "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

NIV " 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.' "

- **YOU, BETHLEHEM** - Mt 2:1 Mic 5:2 Joh 7:42
- **A RULER**- Mt 28:18 Ge 49:10 Nu 24:19 1 Chr 5:2 Ps 2:1-6 Isa 9:6,7 Eph 1:22 Col 1:18 Rev 2:27 11:15
- **WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL** - Ps 78:71,72 Isa 40:11 Jer 23:4-6 Eze 34:23-25 37:24-26

## **BETHLEHEM HOUSE OF BREAD BIRTHPLACE OF BREAD OF LIFE**

**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** - This is the first of four fulfilled prophecies in Matthew - (1) Mt 2:6 fulfilled Micah 5:2 (2) Mt 2:15 fulfilled Hosea 11:1 (3) Mt 2:18 fulfilled Jeremiah 31:15 and (4) Mt 2:23 is said to "fulfill what was spoken through the prophets. There is however no specific prophecy or prophecies that can be definitely linked to Matthew 2:23. See [discussion below](#) on OT quotes in the NT.

This prophecy, which combines Mic. 5:2 and 2 Sam. 5:2, emphasizes Matthew's conviction that the King who brings the kingdom is a Shepherd-King.

### **Related Resource:**

- [Is Micah 5:2 a Messianic prophecy?](#)

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### **Knowing But Not Going**

- Matthew 2:6 "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."

Herod was not disappointed. His religious sycophants had the answer for Him as to where Christ would be born.

### **FIRST—THE PLACE IN THE ANSWER**

"And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda." The religious leaders that toadied up to Herod knew but did not practice Scripture. They told Herod Christ would be born in Bethlehem, and they quoted Micah 5:2 to confirm their claim.

- The size. "Least among the princes of Juda." The size of Bethlehem was so small that sometimes it was left off the list of towns of that area (namely Judah). But God does not reject small. Size is not the criteria for service but character is. Bethlehem may be small, but during World War II President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill sat side by side singing on board a ship at a Christmas service singing, "O Little Town of Bethlehem." Take care of your character, God will take care of your calling. Regardless of how obscure you may be. He can make a small Bethlehem into a significant place. The site. "In the land of Juda." This information would identify what Bethlehem was spoken of in Scripture. It would also tell Herod that it was close by his location so he could quickly and cruelly end this opposition to his rule. There was another Bethlehem in the north in Zebulun so Herod needed to know which Bethlehem.

## SECOND—THE PRODUCT IN THE ANSWER

"A governor, that shall rule my people Israel." The passage quoted by the religious leaders also said some important truths about the Person who was born in Bethlehem.

- The position. "Governor." This person born in Bethlehem was called "Governor." This word means the principle ruler, Christ will be "King of kings and Lord of lords." (Revelation 19:16).
- The purpose. "Shall rule my people Israel." He, not Herod, will be "king of the Jews." (Matthew 2:2). "Rule" could be translated 'shepherd.' It will be a much better rule than Herod's oppressive rule. Yet people vote for Herod because he does not disturb their sinning.

## THIRD—THE PASSIVENESS IN THE ANSWER

"There shall come." The religious leaders knew but did not go.

- Their disinterest. The religious leaders did not want Christ and here evidence absolutely no interest in him. Religion had degenerated into political and cultural correctness.
- Their detachment. The religious leaders made no application to their information. This is the habit of many today. I had an adult Sunday School teacher in my Chicago church who could wax eloquent with information, but had no application. He was a very popular teacher because no application means no conviction and no rebuking. (John Butler - [Sermon Starters - Volume 7](#))

## MATTHEW 2:6—How can we explain Matthew's apparent misquotation of Micah 5:2?

### PROBLEM:

Matthew 2:6 quotes Micah 5:2. However, the words Matthew uses are different than those used by Micah.

### SOLUTION:

Although Matthew seems to have changed some of the words from the passage in Micah, there is no real deviation in the meaning of the text. Matthew, in some instances, seems to have paraphrased.

First, Matthew inserts the phrase "land of Judah" for the word "Ephrathah." This does not really change the meaning of the verse. There is no difference between the land of Judah and Ephrathah, except one is more specific than the other. In fact, Ephrathah refers to Bethlehem in the Micah passage, and Bethlehem is located in the land of Judah. However, this does not change the basic meaning of this verse. He is speaking of the same area of land. Interestingly, when Herod asked the chief priests and the scribes where the child was to be born, they said, "in Bethlehem of Judea" (Matt. 2:5, NASB).

Second, Matthew describes the land of Judah as "not the least" but Micah states that it is "little." Here, Matthew may be saying that since the Messiah is to come from this region, it is by no means least among the other areas of land in Judah. The phrase in Micah only says that Bethlehem is too little or small, as compared to the other areas of land in Judah. The verse does not say it is the least among them, only very little. Matthew is saying the same thing in different words, namely, that Bethlehem is little in size, but by no means the least in significance, since the Messiah was born there.

Finally, Matthew uses the phrase "who will shepherd My people Israel" and Micah does not. Micah 5:2 recognizes that there will be a ruler in Israel, and Matthew recognizes this as well. However, the phrase that is not mentioned in Micah is actually taken from 2 Samuel 5:2. The combining of verses does not take away what is being said, but it strengthens the point that the author is making. There are other instances where an author

combines one Scripture with another. For example, Matthew 27:9–10 combines some of Zechariah 11:12–13 with Jeremiah 19:2, 11 and 32:6–9. Also, Mark 1:2–3 combines some of Isaiah 40:3 with Malachi 3:1. Only the first passage is mentioned, since it is the main passage being cited.

In brief, Matthew is not misrepresenting any information in his quotation of Micah 5:2 and 2 Samuel 5:2. Matthew's quote is still accurate even though he paraphrases part of it and combines another portion of Scripture with it. (Norman Geisler - When Critics Ask)

### Matthew 2:7 Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared.

NET He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and look carefully for the child. When you find him, inform me so that I can go and worship him as well."

GNT κα π μψας α το ς ε ς Βηθλ εμ ε πεν, Πορευθ ντες ξη σατε κριβ ς περ το παιδ ου· π ν δ ε ρητε, παγγε λατ μοι, πως κ γ λθ ν προσκυν σω α τ .

NLT Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"

KJV 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.

ESV And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."

NIV He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

- Mt 26:3-5 Ex 1:10 1Sa 18:21 Ps 10:9,10 55:21 64:4-6 83:3,4 Isa 7:5-7 Eze 38:10,11 Rev 12:1-5,15

**Then** (5119)(**tote**) is an **expression of time** which means "At that time." When used as an adverb **THEN** is always worth pausing to ponder and query asking questions like "What time is it? What happens next? Why does this happen now?, etc". When **then** is used (as determined by the context) to be an **expression of time** or "time phrase", it usually indicates **sequence** and thus marks that which is next in order of time, soon after that, following next after in order of position, narration or enumeration, being next in a series ([See English definitions](#) or [here](#)).

**Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star**(**note**) **appeared** - **Secretly** speaks of his sinister deception. The word **determined** (**akriboo** - only Mt 2:7, 16) means to find out exactly, inquire accurately, to make a detailed inquiry in order to ascertain precisely or exactly. **Exact time** is actually just one word **chronos** which means "**time**" but translators have added "**exactly**" presumably based on the meaning of the associated verb **akriboo**.

**Secretly** (2977)(**lathra** from **lanthano** = to be hidden) is an adverb that means in a secretive way, doing so without others noticing. Four uses in NT - Matt. 1:19; Matt. 2:7; Jn. 11:28; Acts 16:37 - Of Herod who "secretly called the magi." (Mt 2:7). Of Martha when she "called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." (Jn 11:28) Of Paul after being falsely beaten and jailed asked and "now are they sending us away secretly?"

**Appeared** (5316) see below on **phaino**

**Star** (792)(**aster**) is literally a single star or luminous (heavenly) body (Mt 2:2, 7, 9, 10 - see **note**; 1 Cor. 15:41; Rev. 6:13; 8:12). Figuratively aster was used of spiritual leaders and even of Christ (Rev 22.16+ = "I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning **star**."), **Aster** describes those in charge of churches as Christ's messengers (? pastors or angels - see commentary on Rev 1.20+), and of false teachers as "wandering stars"(Jude 1:13+).

**Gilbrant** = For the Septuagint translators **astēr** almost invariably rendered the Hebrew **kôkhāv** (cf. the **Bar Kochba rebellion** of A.D. 132 which derived its name from its leader "Son of a Star"). First and foremost, together with the sun and moon (a frequent refrain), the stars are God's creation (Genesis 1:16; Psalm 8:3); hence they must not be worshiped (Deuteronomy 4:19). Metaphorically the stars represent an unfathomably large number (Genesis 15:5; 22:17; 1 Chronicles 27:23; Nehemiah 9:23). (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

Zodhiates has an interesting comment on aster in 1 Cor 15:41 - What Paul is saying that as we look at the sun, the moon, and the stars, and know them, so believers in their resurrection bodies will be recognized for the glory that they have won through their life of sacrifice and compliance with Christ. Not all believers will enjoy heaven equally, nor will they shine with equal splendor.(Complete Word Study Dictionary)

**Aster** - 24x in 21v in the NT - Matt. 2:2; Matt. 2:7; Matt. 2:9; Matt. 2:10; Matt. 24:29+; Mk. 13:25; 1 Co. 15:41; Jude 1:13+; Rev. 1:16+; Rev. 1:20+; Rev. 2:1+; Rev. 2:28+; Rev. 3:1+; Rev. 6:13+; Rev. 8:10+ Rev. 8:11+; Rev. 8:12+; Rev. 9:1+; Rev. 12:1+; Rev. 12:4+; Rev. 22:16+

**Aster** in [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) - Ge 1:16; Ge 15:5+ (count the **stars**, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."); Ge 22:17; Ge 26:4; Ge 37:9; Dt. 4:19 (Do not worship stars - "And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the **stars**, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.); Jdg. 5:20; 1 Chr. 27:23; Neh. 9:23; Ps. 8:3 (When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the **stars**, which You have ordained; ); Eccl 12:2; Isa. 13:10 ([Day of the Lord](#) = "For the **stars** of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light."); Isa. 47:13; Jer. 8:2; Jer. 31:35; Dan. 8:10; Dan. 12:3+ ("Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the **stars** forever and ever.); Joel 3:15 ([Day of the Lord](#) = "The sun and moon grow dark And the **stars** lose their brightness.");

#### Dictionary Articles:

- [Bridgeway Bible Dictionary Stars](#)
- [Easton's Bible Dictionary Stars](#)
- [Holman Bible Dictionary Stars](#)
- [Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible Stars](#)

**Herod**, sometimes called Herod the Great was the son of Antipater, a part-Jew of Edomite descent. He was the procurator of Judaea from 47 B.C. until he died in 4 B.C., soon after the flight of Joseph, Mary, and the infant Jesus into Egypt (Matthew 2:19). This indicates that Christ must have been born in 4 B.C. or earlier.

Evidently, the star had appeared to the wise men only while they were still "in the east" (Matthew 2:2). Even though they probably knew (Micah 5:2) that He would be born in Bethlehem (a village six miles away from Jerusalem), they would naturally travel first to Jerusalem as a courtesy to the king. They would also assume that the arrival of the long-awaited King would be an occasion for rejoicing and by the time they could complete their long pilgrimage from Persia, He would surely have been brought to the capital to be worshiped by His people. How wrong they were about that!

(v7,9) Herod's inquiry concerning the time of the appearance of the star indicates that the Magi had not seen the star from the time they left their homes in the East. The question also belies Herod's scheme to locate and execute the infant claimant to the throne.

[V9-10] suggest that the Magi saw the star again only upon their departure from Jerusalem. It led them unflinchingly to Bethlehem. The account would seem to indicate that the star was a supernatural and not a natural phenomenon (cf. Nu 24:17).

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#### Herod's Deceptive Seeking

Matthew 2:7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared" (Genesis 7:23).

Herod was upset about the news of a "king of the Jews." Matthew 2:2 being born and did some inquiring to protect himself from this threat.

#### FIRST—THE PRIVACY OF THE INQUIRY

"Then Herod when he had privily called the wise men." We think we can conceal our actions but God sees all.

- The purpose of privacy. Herod liked to deal secretly so others would not see the evil he was doing or see his deficiencies. Herod thought he was acting clandestinely here but little did he know that his actions would be recorded for all to see in the Gospel of Matthew.
- The practice of privacy. The lesson here is that no matter how we conceal matters God sees everything and knows everything about us. He even knows our thoughts.

## SECOND—THE PASSION OF THE INQUIRY

"Diligently Herod's evil plans really needed to know how long it had been since Christ was born.

- The pretense in the diligence. This diligence looked good for Herod. But his passion here was passion for the preservation of his throne and not a passion for praise for Christ.
- The problem for the diligence. He shows ignorance in his pretense. He does not seem to allow for the fact that the appearance of the star to the wise men could have come before Christ was born. But than Herod is a wicked politician, not an honest seeker of the truth. Spiritual ignorance is often accompanied by practical ignorance (e.g. the case of evolution). Herod was a first-class fool (Romans 1:22).
- The place of diligence. Of course there are some who are honest and noble in their diligence quest for spiritual knowledge. In fact, if you want to know spiritual knowledge, you have to be diligent in the pursuit of it, or you will not learn much.

## THIRD—THE THE PERVERSION IN THE INQUIRY

"When the star appeared." Herod wanted to know the time of Christ's birth to help him slay the right age group. While we have already pointed out the perverting of his inquiry, we emphasize it here.

- The perverting of the star. The star was a guide to the Christchild, it was not intended to be used to kill the Christ-child as Herod planned. Satan loves to pervert that which God gives us, for our good and help, into something that he can pervert to lead people to doing evil. That explains why some texts are perverted to justify evil.
- The perverting of the motivation. God is interested in your motivation—it can justify or rebuke your actions. Herod's inquiry is another illustration of the spiritual ignorance of those who are in powers of authority politically. They may be skilled in politics but when he comes to spiritual matters, they are all thumbs. But they use pretended spiritual interest and knowledge to get votes. (John Butler - [Sermon Starters - Volume 7](#))

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### [What was the star of Bethlehem?](#)

Answer: The star of Bethlehem is associated with the birth of Christ and the visit of the magi (wise men) as recorded in Matthew 2:1–12. The text implies the star of Bethlehem appeared only to the magi in the East (most likely the area of Persia, or modern-day Iran). There is no biblical record of anyone else observing the star of Bethlehem.

The magi in the East saw something in the heavens—the star of Bethlehem—that alerted them to the fact that the Jewish Messiah was born. The magi do not call the star of Bethlehem by that name; in Matthew 2:2 they refer to it as being “his star,” since it was a sign to them that a king was born. The star prompted the magi to travel to Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. This would be the logical place to start looking for the birth of the King of the Jews for someone who did not know of Micah’s prophecy about Bethlehem.

In Jerusalem, the magi visited King Herod and were told that the new king they were looking for would be born in Bethlehem, not in Jerusalem (Matthew 2:5). The wise men left Herod’s palace, and the star of Bethlehem appeared to them once again. In fact, the star “went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed” (verses 9–10). The star of Bethlehem, apparently mobile, led the magi to the precise place where they could find Jesus.

Modern portrayals of the Christmas nativity scene usually show the wise men visiting Jesus on the night of His birth. That is likely not what truly occurred. King Herod discovered from the magi the “exact time” the star of Bethlehem had first appeared to them (Matthew 2:7), and he later ordered all male children two years old and under in Bethlehem to be killed (verse 16). Herod obviously thought the star of Bethlehem had first appeared when Christ was born; if he was right, then Jesus could have been up to two years old when the star of Bethlehem later guided the magi through the streets of Bethlehem. The Greek word translated “young child” in Matthew 2:9 can mean anything from a newborn infant to a toddler.

So, the magi may have first observed the star of Bethlehem the night of Jesus’ birth, or they may have first seen it up to two years beforehand. Either way, they found Jesus still in Bethlehem when they arrived. Joseph and Mary almost surely stayed in Bethlehem until Mary could travel again. In fact, they probably stayed there for the 40 days necessary to complete Mary’s purification. From Bethlehem, they could easily make the five-mile trip to Jerusalem for the sacrifice for Mary’s purification (Luke 2:22). The fact that the magi came to a “house” (Matthew 2:11) rather than the stable makes sense because Joseph naturally would have moved his family to a more protected place as soon as possible—the morning after Jesus was born, in all probability.

After seeing the star of Bethlehem, the magi traveled to Jerusalem to look for the Messiah. The question arises, how would Persian magi know about the Jewish Messiah? Undoubtedly, they would have been exposed to the writings of the Jewish prophet Daniel, who had been the chief of the court seers in Persia. Daniel 9:24–27 is a prophecy that gives a timeline for the birth of the Messiah. Also, they may have been aware of the words of the pagan prophet Balaam (who was from the town of Pethor on the Euphrates

River near Persia) in Numbers 24:17. Balaam's prophecy specifically mentions "a star" and "a scepter" rising out of Jacob.

What exactly was the star of Bethlehem? The Greek word translated "star" in the text is the word aster, which is the normal word for a star or celestial body. The word is used 24 times in the New Testament, and most of the time it refers to a celestial body. It can be used to denote angels, as in Revelation 12:4, where aster seems to refer to the fallen angels who followed Satan's rebellion. Basic rules of biblical interpretation state that we should take the normal sense of a word unless there is compelling evidence to suggest otherwise. In that case, the star of Bethlehem should be considered an actual heavenly body. Many Bible scholars suggest a natural explanation for the star of Bethlehem, their theories ranging from a supernova to a comet to an alignment of planets. Something in the heavens provided a brighter-than-normal light in the sky.

However, there is evidence to suggest that the star of Bethlehem was not a natural stellar phenomenon, but something unexplained by science. First, the fact that the star of Bethlehem seemed to appear only to the magi indicates that this was no ordinary star. Also, celestial bodies normally move from east to west due to the earth's rotation, yet the star of Bethlehem led the magi from Jerusalem south to Bethlehem. Not only that, but it led them directly to the place where Joseph and Mary were staying, stopping overhead. There is no natural stellar phenomenon that can do that.

So, if the normal usage of the word star doesn't fit the context, what does? The star of Bethlehem in Matthew 2:1–12 was likely an angel or a manifestation of the Shekinah Glory. The Shekinah, which literally means "dwelling of God," was the visible presence of the Lord. Prior to this, the most notable appearance of the Shekinah was the pillar of cloud that led the Israelites by day and the pillar of fire that led them by night (Exodus 13:21). The Shekinah can obviously lead people to specific locations, and it was seen later in connection with Christ's ministry (e.g., Matthew 17:5; Acts 1:9). Either an angel or the Shekinah would fit the evidence. It shouldn't surprise us that God would use a miraculous sign to signal the advent of His Son into the world. Those with eyes to see joyfully beheld His glory.

**Matthew 2:8 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."**

NET He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and look carefully for the child. When you find him, inform me so that I can go and worship him as well."

GNT κα π μψας α το ς ε ς Βηθλ ε μ ε πεν, Πορευθ ντες ξετ σατε κριβ ς περ το παιδ ου· π ν δ ε ρητε, παγγε λατ μοι, πω ς κ γ λθ ν προσκυν σω α τ .

NLT Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"

KJV 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.

ESV And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."

NIV He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

- **go** - 1Sa 23:22,23 2Sa 17:14 1Ki 19:2 Job 5:12,13 Ps 33:10,11 Pr 21:30 La 3:37 1Co 3:19,20
- **that** - Mt 26:48,49 2Sa 15:7-12 2Ki 10:18,19 Ezr 4:1,2 Ps 12:2,3 Ps 55:11-15 Pr 26:24,25 Jer 41:5-7 Lu 20:20,21

## HEROD THE DECEIVER

**And he sent them to Bethlehem** - Herod sends the magi, thinking they will serve as his "stool pigeons" (so to speak) and act as his informants as to whereabouts of the infant Jesus. Powerful men think they can use people at will, but God would supernaturally supervene and disrupt Herod's evil ruse.

**And said, "Go and search carefully for the Child** -

**Child** (3813)(**paidion** diminutive of **pais** = child) is a little child of either sex, ranging from an infant (Mt 19:13, 14; Mk 10:13-15; Lk 18:16, 17, etc) to children who are older (Mt 11:16; Mt 14:21; 15:38; 18:2-5, etc) **Paidion** is used repeatedly of the infant Jesus in Matthew Matt. 2:8; Matt. 2:9; Matt. 2:11; Matt. 2:13;

**And when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him-** When my children were little and I knew they were lying I would say "Liar, liar, pants on fire," and then I would set their pants "ablaze" so to speak. Herod is of his father the devil about whom Jesus declared " He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (Jn 8:44). Herod would soon show, "like father, like son," by murdering innocent children in an attempt to murder Christ, exactly what Satan wanted to do! **Wiersbe** adds that "Just as Satan had tried to keep Christ from being born, now he tried to destroy Him after He was born (see Rev. 12:1–4). The flesh wars against the Spirit (Gal 5:17), and Herod (an Edomite) warred against Christ (a Jew)." (Expository Outlines)

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### Herod, The Actor

Matthew 2:8 "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" (Matthew 2:8).

Herod was acting very deceptive here in speaking with the wise men. He spoke some truth but not all truth. It was obvious that he did not belong in the 'truthful' category but in the 'lying' category.

### FIRST—THE WAY PROCLAIMED

"He sent them to Bethlehem." Bethlehem was just five miles south. The wise men had asked where Christ was born. Herod called the religious leaders to him to tell him this fact. He obviously did it clandestinely, he wanted to look good in telling the wise men where to go. Then he called the wise men privately to ask about the star. Herod would use this inquiry of the wise men to advance his own evil plans (Matthew 2:13). He was like many evil people who will use tragedy, floods, sports, and whatever to promote themselves, to get their picture on the front page, to be interviewed by radio and TV, to get votes for himself or herself. It is the Jesse Jackson syndrome (QCT newspaper).

### SECOND—THE WORK PRECEPT

"Go and search diligently for the young child." This was both guileful advice and good advice.

- Guileful advice. You will note Herod did not volunteer to help them search. He was like a lot of people, they can give good advice but they do not follow it themselves. Jesus said of the religious leaders of his day, who were like that, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say and do not." (Matthew 23:3).
- Good advice. We ought to search diligently in spiritual matters. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." (Isaiah 55:6). Lack of diligence in spiritual matters will curse a person with many missed blessings. Often folk are diligent where it does not matter, but not where it matters. Folk will get up early to get their kid to soccer practice, but not for church. If church attendance requires any diligence they complain, for they reserve their diligence for carnal efforts.

### THIRD—THE WORSHIP PROMISED

"When ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also." Herod promised that he too wanted to worship the Christ-child. It must have been a very convincing bit of subterfuge, for the wise men required a special revelation from God not to inform Herod of their finding the Christ-child (Matthew 2:12). Herod was so deceptive here. He feigned interest in Christ so he could destroy Him. Satan puts many in church like that. They feign an interest in spiritual matters to get their foot in the door, to get elected to office, and to be appointed as a teacher of some prestigious class, but then they become such problems to deal with at board meetings and business meetings that they actually are a liability and not an asset in the church. (John Butler - [Sermon Starters - Volume 7](#))

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**Matthew 2:9 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.**

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NET After listening to the king they left, and once again the star they saw when it rose led them until it stopped above the place where the child was.

GNT ο δ κο σαντες το βασιλ ως πορεθησαν κα δο σ τ ρ, ν ε δον ν τ νατολ, προ γεν α το ς, ως λθ ν

στ θη π ω ο υ τ παιδ ον.

NLT After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was.

KJV 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.

ESV After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

NIV After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

- **the star** - Mt 2:2 Ps 25:12 Pr 2:1-6 8:17 2Pe 1:19

**After hearing the king, they went their way** - At this time they were doubtless duped by the deceiver Herod and had all intentions of returning as indicated by the fact that God had to give them a specific warning not to return.

**And the star, which they had seen in the east** (see [anatole](#)), **went on before them** - This is not just "a" star, not just "any" star, but was "**the star**," identified as a specific star by use of the definitive article "**the**" (in Greek). The recognized something about **the star** that identified it as "**His star**." (Mt 2:2+) and so off they went on the short journey to Bethlehem. They knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that this was **His star**. How did they know? We simply do not know but won't Heaven be fun to talk with them about their journey of a lifetime! **Went on before** is [proago](#) in the [imperfect tense](#) picturing the star as going on an on in front of them toward it's target. They knew the town was Bethlehem but the star was directing them to the specific location of the **Child**.

**THOUGHT**- The supernatural light of God gave direction to the wise men in their search for Jesus. Today that same supernatural light comes from His Word and gives light for those seeking Jesus.

Proverbs 6:23 For the **commandment** is a **lamp** and the teaching is **light**; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life

Psalms 119:105 Nun. Your **word** is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

John 5:39 "You **search the Scriptures** because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;

**Until it came and stood over the place where the Child was**- Passages like this should simply cause us to pause and worship Him Who created the stars, the One "Who makes the Bear, Orion and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south; Who does great things, unfathomable, and wondrous works without number." (Job 9:9-10) When we get glimpses into God's mysterious omnipotent workings as in this passage, I am always reminded of the words of Job "Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; and how faint a word we hear of Him!" (Job 26:14) That the star **stood over the place where the Child was** is the idea is that it "hovered" over where Jesus was! Will God show us these wonderful workings some day in Heaven? I pray so!

**Child** (3813) ([paidion](#) diminutive of **pais** = child) is a little child of either sex, ranging from an infant (Mt 19:13, 14; Mk 10:13-15; Lk 18:16, 17, etc) to children who are older (Mt 11:16; Mt 14:21; 15:38; 18:2-5, etc) **Paidion** is used repeatedly of the infant Jesus in Matthew Matt. 2:8; Matt. 2:9; Matt. 2:11; Matt. 2:13; Matt. 2:14; Matt. 2:20; Matt. 2:21.

### Matthew 2:10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

NET When they saw the star they shouted joyfully.

GNT ὁ ντες ὁ τ υ σ τ ρ α χ ρησαν χαρ ν μεγ λην σφ ὄρα.

NLT When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!

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

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

NIV When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

- **they rejoiced** - De 32:13 Ps 67:4 105:3 Lu 2:10,20 Ac 13:46-48 Ro 15:9-13



## UNSPEAKABLE INCOMPARABLE JOY

**When they saw the star** - It was "the (specific) star," His star. And why did they rejoice? Because the star signaled the goal of their long journey and the anticipation of seeing Jesus brought them great joy.

**THOUGHT** - The hope (absolute certainty, not "hope so" but "hope sure") that we as believers will one day (SOON) see our Savior face to face (the Goal of our life's journey) ought to stir in our hearts exceedingly great joy today! Are you downcast, despairing? Then preach to your soul to hope in God (Ps 43:5). Ponder your future appointment with Jesus the Lover of your soul. Let that thought invigorate your heart. We need to heed Peter's exhortation to "prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:13) We need to obey Paul's command to "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." (Col 3:2-4) And we need to heed the exhortation of the writer of Hebrews to fix "our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:2).

**They rejoiced exceedingly with great joy** - The NET rendering is very weak "they shouted joyfully." Matthew could have simply said "they rejoiced" and we would have understood him. Instead, he piles up words that literally read "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy" **Rejoiced** is [chairo](#) means to enjoy a state of gladness, to be delighted. **Exceedingly** is [sphroda](#) an adverb meaning extremely, greatly, very much. **Great** is [megas](#) which means out of the ordinary in degree, magnitude, or effect. And finally **joy** is [chara](#) is a feeling of great pleasure, of inner gladness, or of delight, an emotion evoked by a sense of well-being and a deep feeling of happiness and contentment. It is almost as if they could not experience a greater degree of joy. So as stated above their "over the top" joy was because of their anticipation at their imminent meeting with the real "Star," the **King of the Jews!**

The reaction of these Gentile magi recalls a similar reaction of the Jewish shepherds....

(Lk 2:10) But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, **I bring you good news of great joy** which will be for all the people;

(Lk 2:20) The shepherds went back, **glorifying and praising God** for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

**John Butler** observes that "Herod was not rejoicing (HE WAS TROUBLED. HE WAS SCHEMING). Evil people are too busy doing evil to rejoice and to know joy. Their joy is hallow, unreal, superficial, but when God gives joy, it supersedes anything the world has to offer. The wise men knew tremendous joy because Christ was their focus. He is the key to true joy. There is no true joy apart from Jesus. (John Butler - [Sermon Starters - Volume 7](#))

As with gladness men of old  
Did the guiding star behold;  
As with joy they hailed its light,  
Leading onward, beaming bright,  
So, now gracious Lord, may we,  
Even more be led to Thee.

William C. Dix

**Matthew Henry** applies the text - What joy these wise men felt upon this sight of the star, none know so well as those who, after a long and melancholy night of temptation and desertion, under the power of a spirit of bondage, at length receive the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with their spirits that they are the children of God. We may well think what a disappointment it was to them, when they found a cottage was his palace, and his own poor mother the only attendant he had. However, these wise men did not think themselves baffled; but having found the King they sought, they presented their gifts to him. The humble inquirer after Christ will not be stumbled at finding him and his disciples in obscure cottages, after having in vain sought them in palaces and populous cities. Is a soul busy, seeking after Christ? Would it worship him, and does it say, Alas! I am a foolish and poor creature, and have nothing to offer? Nothing! Hast thou not a heart, though unworthy of him, dark, hard, and foul? Give it to him as it is, and be willing that he use and dispose of it as it pleases him; he will take it, and will make it better, and thou shalt never repent having given it to him. He shall frame it to his own likeness, and will give thee himself, and be thine for ever. The gifts the wise men presented were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Providence sent these as a seasonable relief to Joseph and Mary in their present poor condition. Thus our heavenly Father, who knows what his children need, uses some as stewards to supply the wants of others, and can provide for them, even from the ends of the earth.

**Thos. Champness** - We who look for Jesus ought to be joyful; it is no credit to our Lord when we look as though we were seeking His grave. The dull looks of Christ's followers have injured Him in the sight of the world. Let us, then, smile as we go, for we have the star if we will look up and put ourselves in the right path.

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### **Matthew 2:10 Ready for the Judgment**

"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."—Matt. 2:10

When they saw the star, they rejoiced. A cause of terror to one person is a cause of joy to another. The baying of a hound on his track strikes dismay to a hunted robber in the woods. The same sound would give cheer to a lost child, when he knew it was his father's hound in search of him. It makes all the difference in the world at which end of the cannon you stand when it is being fired in battle. Its belching fire is the same in either case; but in one instance it is against your enemies, and in the other against you. There is no more terrible thought possible, to the opposer of God, than that the LORD reigneth, and that He is sure to put down all His enemies. There is no thought more comforting than this to the Christian believer. There was an under-witted but a faith-filled Scotch lad in this country, at the time of the great meteoric shower of November, 1833. When on every side men and women were that night in terror at the thought that the hour of final doom had come, this lad's mother aroused him from his sleep with a cry: "Sandy, Sandy, get up, will you? The Day of Judgment has come." Instantly the boy was alive to that call, and was on his feet, shouting, "Glory to God! I'm ready." When the loving followers of Jesus see signs of His appearance, they rejoice with exceeding great joy.

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### **Wise men today worship not only the Child of Bethlehem, but also the Man of Calvary.**

How wonderful that we on Christmas morn,  
Though centuries have passed since Christ was born,  
May worship still the Living Lord of men,  
Our Savior, Jesus, Babe of Bethlehem.  
—Hutchings

In his portrayal of the nativity scene, Rembrandt focused attention entirely on the Babe in the manger. He did this by painting a shaft of light so that it falls exclusively on the Christ-child. Although he included other figures, they are shrouded in shadows. Rembrandt wanted nothing to detract from the significance of that baby—who was God in the flesh. He Wanted Christ to be the sole object of adoration.

GOD'S HIGHEST GIFT  
AWAKENS MAN'S DEEPEST GRATITUDE.

### **Matthew 2:11 After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.**

NET As they came into the house and saw the child with Mary his mother, they bowed down and worshiped him. They opened their treasure boxes and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

GNT κα λθ ντες ε ς τ ν ο κ αν ε δον τ παιδ ον μετ Μαρ ας τ ς μητρ ς α το , κα πεσ ντες προσεκ νησαν α τ κα νο ξαντες το ς θησαυρο ς α τ ν προσ νεγκαν α τ δ ρα, χρυσ ν κα λ βανον κα σμ ρναν.

NLT They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

KJV 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.

ESV And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

NIV On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

- they saw - Lu 2:16,26-32,38
- worshipped - Mt 2:2 4:9,10 14:33 Ps 2:12 95:6 Joh 5:22,23 Ac 10:25,26 Rev 19:10 Rev 22:8-10

- presented - or, offered, Ge 43:11 1Sa 10:27 1Ki 10:2,10 Ps 72:10,15 Isa 60:6
- frankincense - Ex 30:23,34 Lev 2:1,2 6:15 Nu 7:14,86 Ps 45:8 Mal 1:11 Rev 5:8

## THE FIRST RECORDED GENTILE WORSHIPPERS

The first recorded worshippers were poor Jewish shepherds and now we see rich Gentile wise men, giving us a foreshadowing of Jesus' life purpose to be the Savior of the world, both Jews and Gentiles!

**After coming into the house** - It would seem that the overcrowded situation which existed in Bethlehem when Mary and Joseph had first arrived was now dissipated. The family had now found a **house** to live in, instead of their initial accommodations when Mary "gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." (Luke 2:7+). As discussed below it may have been many weeks or months since His birth, even up to two years. Once again we see one of the errors of Christmas traditions because most [Nativity Scenes](#) have Shepherds (who were at His birth in a manger) and Three Kings (who visited the Infant Jesus in a house). The reaction by Herod would also tend to support this premise. Herod, after inquiring "diligently what time the star appeared" to the wise men, ordered all the young children in and around Bethlehem up to two years of age to be slain." (Mt 2:7,16).

**House** (3614)([oikia](#) from **oikos** = house) is literally one's residence, home or abode. **Oikia** is an inhabited edifice, building or dwelling. **Oikia** is used 94x in 85 verses and is always translated house (or related word like household).

**They saw the Child with Mary His mother:** Interesting that there is no mention of Joseph at this visit (cf shepherds in Lk 2:16+) We do not know how many **magi** there were at this viewing of the Messiah. It is notable that **Child** is the noun [paidion](#) and not [brephos](#) (most often of a literal baby), the word used to describe the shepherds visit to the '**baby** ([brephos](#)) wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Lk 2:12+), Luke adds that the shepherds "came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the **baby** ([brephos](#)) as He lay in the manger." (Luke 2:16+). So notice the distinctive features of the two visits to Jesus - (1) the magi see the **Child** ([paidion](#)) in the **house** ([oikia](#)) by following a sign (**His star**) and in contrast (2) the shepherds see a baby ([brephos](#)) in the **manger** by seeing the sign of "a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Lk 2:12+) This contrast between the magi and the shepherds would support the premise that while the shepherds saw the newborn baby Jesus, the magi saw the infant Jesus, some time after His birth. In addition the fact that Herod chose the age of 2 years and younger to be killed supports that the magi did not visit Jesus as a newly born infant but later as a young infant. How much later we cannot say for sure but it could be days, months or even up to 2 years.

**Child** (3813)([paidion](#) diminutive of **pais** = child) is a little child of either sex, ranging from an infant (Mt 19:13, 14; Mk 10:13-15; Lk 18:16, 17, etc) to children who are older (Mt 11:16; Mt 14:21; 15:38; 18:2-5, etc) **Paidion** is used repeatedly of the infant Jesus in Matthew Matt. 2:8; Matt. 2:9; Matt. 2:11; Matt. 2:13; Matt. 2:14; Matt. 2:20; Matt. 2:21. Barclay adds that "paidion (is) a child young in experience."

### Related Resource:

- [What does the Bible say about the three wise men \(Magi\)?](#)
- [Watch video on the time of arrival of the magi](#)

## WISE MEN WORSHIP

**And they fell to the ground and worshiped Him - Fell down** is described by BDAG as to "throw oneself to the ground as a sign of devotion, before high-ranking persons or divine beings." Falling **to the ground** is what you do to acknowledge you (in this case the INFANT JESUS) are high and I am low. One can envision them as they are falling on their faces before Jesus, throwing their kisses toward Him in a gesture of reverence and respect (see [proskuneo](#)). Note that they **worshipped Him**, not Mary who is NOT to be worshipped and Scripture never describes as being worshipped! Respected yes. Revered to a degree, yes. But NEVER worshipped.

**INTERESTING NOTE** - In the Gospels there are nine prostrations before the Savior. Magi (Matthew 2:11); Jarius (Mark 5:22); Woman healed (Mark 5:33); Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:25); Peter, (Luke 5:8); The Leper (Luke 5:12); 7, The Gadarene (Luke 8:28); 8, The Samaritan (Luke 17:16); 9, Mary (John 11:32).

**Worship** (bow down) (4352)([proskuneo](#) from **pros** = before + **kuneo** = kiss or adore) means to prostrate one's self, to kiss the hand to (towards) one in token of reverence, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence (to make a salam), by kneeling or prostration to do

homage to one or make obeisance, either in order to express respect or make supplication. When Jesus Christ was born into this world, He was attended and worshipped by angels. (Lu 2:13f+). **Proskuneo** represents the most common Near Eastern act of adoration and reverence and also carries the idea of profound awe and respect. Some believe that the root word **kuneo** may be related to **kuon** which is the Greek word for dog and which then could be picturing a dog licking his master's hand. **Proskuneo** literally means to kiss toward someone, to throw a kiss in token of respect or homage, to prostrate oneself in homage, to do reverence to, to adore and so to worship and show respect. In the ancient Oriental (especially Persia) the mode of salutation between persons of equal rank was to kiss each other on the lips. When the difference of rank was slight, they kissed each other on the cheek. When one was much inferior, he fell upon his knees touched his forehead to the ground or prostrated himself, and as he was bowing down he would be throwing kisses toward the superior. It is this latter mode of salutation that is intended by the Greek writers in the use of the verb **proskuneo**. Matthew's uses of **proskuneo** - Matt. 2:2; Matt. 2:8; Matt. 2:11; Matt. 4:9; Matt. 4:10; Matt. 8:2; Matt. 9:18; Matt. 14:33; Matt. 15:25; Matt. 18:26; Matt. 20:20; Matt. 28:9; Matt. 28:17

**Spurgeon** - - Those who look for Jesus will see him: those who truly see him will worship him: those who worship him will consecrate their substance to him.

**Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh** - Their **treasures** implies they gave their best! In effect they were showing by their gifts the this **King of the Jews** was their greatest treasure! I am reminded that in Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col 2:3+) He is our greatest Treasure in time and eternity! The principle is clear, if we would seek to worship Jesus well, we will unreservedly offer Him our best! The worship of the magi was associated with voluntary giving of **gifts**. The **gifts** were expensive gifts and were fit for a king. It is well attested that the Jewish expectation was that both Jews and non-Jews would bring the Messiah gifts While it may be somewhat fanciful, the early church Fathers understood the gold to be symbolic of Christ's deity, the frankincense of His purity, and the myrrh of His death (since it was used for embalming). **Walvoord** says "Unquestionably the gifts were chosen appropriately: gold for His deity and majesty, frankincense for the fragrance of His life and His intercession, myrrh for His sacrifice and death."

Psalm 72:10-11 was written for Solomon but it looks beyond Solomon to One far greater, the future worship of the Messiah "Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands **bring presents**; The kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts. And let all kings **bow down** before him, All nations serve him."

**Treasures** (2344)(**thesauros** from **tithemi** = put, set) refers to the place where goods and precious things are stored for safekeeping here referring to in essence a "treasure chest."

**Presented** (4374)(**prosphero** from **prós** = to, toward, denotes motion toward a place + **phéro** = bring) means to carry or bring something into the presence of someone usually implying a transfer of something to that person carry to. **Prosphero** refers to the presentation of an offering, in this case the magi's (**doron**). This first use of **prosphero** in the NT in giving an offering to Jesus in the atmosphere of worship and reverence is in striking contrast to the use of **prosphero** as He was being Himself offered up as an offering to God (cf Jn 1:29) and they approached Him and **brought** (**prosphero**) sour wine up to His mouth (Jn 19:29)! The first "offering" at His birth to Him in a Cradle, the last offering at His death, to Him on a Cross! Oh my!

**Gifts** (1435)(**doron**) is that which is given or granted and stresses the gratuitous character of the gift which is voluntarily transferred by one to another without compensation and here refers to a gift presented as an act of worship and devotion. Almost all 17 uses of **doron** refer to offerings to God (except Eph 2:8 Rev 11:10).

While the intent of the gifts was pure worship, there is another possible benefit of the expensive gifts from the magi, for Joseph and Mary would soon have to take the Christ Child to Egypt to escape the murderous designs of Herod. The gifts of the magi would have provided funds needed to make the trip and provide for living expenses. True worship enables the work of God to go forward.

**Fruchtenbaum** - The Wise Men gave to Jesus three types of gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. All of these are full of Old Testament symbolism: gold is the symbol of royalty or kingship, emphasizing that Jesus is a king; frankincense is the symbol of deity because frankincense was part of the special scent burned on the Altar of Incense within the Holy Place and the smoke penetrated into God's presence in the Holy of Holies itself, thus frankincense emphasizes Jesus is God; myrrh was associated in the Old Testament with death and embalming. While the first line of that famous Christmas song "We three kings of orient are" is not biblically accurate, the last line which says, "**God and king and sacrifice**" certainly is! (Messianic Christology)

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**The Best of All Places "Sitting at the feet of Jesus" Luke 10:39+**

We learn in the Gospels of nine prostrations before the Saviour.

- 1, Wise men (Matthew 2:11+);
- 2, Jarius (Mark 5:22+);
- 3, Women healed (Mark 5:33+);
- 4, Syrophenician women (Mark 7:25+);
- 5, Peter, (Luke 5:8+);
- 6, The Leper (Luke 5:12+);
- 7, The Gadarene (Luke 8:28+);
- 8, The Samaritan (Luke 17:16+);
- 9, Mary (John 11:32).

#### **I. Mary Learned the Secret of His Person at Jesus Feet**(Luke 10:42+)

Only at His feet can we be taught by Him. Cumbered and worried with much service we will never have time to be at His feet. If we have not time to sit there we will not have time to learn.

#### **II. Mary Learned the Secret of His Purpose at Jesus Feet**(John 11:32)

Only there could she understand why Lazarus died and why Martha and herself must be plunged into the deepest sorrow. To the grave she led him and there at the very place of deepest sorrow, came the highest joy.

#### **III. Mary Learned the Secret of His Passion at Jesus Feet**

This was revealed when she anointed Him for His burial. The secret was out and everywhere her testimony has been told. See Matthew 26:12-13. As I write this I help to fulfil the Lord's prophecy.

**Do you sit at Jesus feet? Have you learned these three secrets? - Ian Paisley**

[Gotquestions](#) comments that - Displaying a **Christmas nativity scene** is a long-standing tradition, but it can also present a bit of a skewed view of the actual events of Jesus' birth. While each person depicted in a traditional nativity scene is a part of the Christmas story, not all the characters were present in one place on the night Jesus was born. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were in a stable that night due to the overcrowding in Bethlehem's inn (Luke 2:7), but the Bible never mentions whether or not animals were present—in fact, it never even mentions a stable. The shepherds, once told of Jesus' arrival, left their flocks to worship the newborn King (Luke 2:16). However, the angels, which are often part of nativity scenes, bore the good news to the shepherds in the fields (Luke 2:8–14). As far as we know, there were no angels flying visibly over the place where Jesus was when the shepherds arrived. In addition, the wise men (the Bible never says how many there were) were also probably not present that first night. The magi visited Jesus some time later, when He was in a house (Matthew 2:1–11). Despite these small details, a Christmas nativity scene is a wonderful reminder of what happened the night Jesus was born. Ever since Adam and Eve's sin, our relationship with God has been marred and broken (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12). Out of love, God sent His Son in human form "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). To that end, Jesus Christ was born in the town of Bethlehem. Modern Christmas nativity scenes help to proclaim Christ's birth and the true "reason for the season." ([What is a Christmas nativity?](#))

#### **F B Meyer - They offered unto Him gifts, Gold.... (marg.). Our Daily Homily**

Gold is for the king. It is meet that Matthew should tell this story: for his is pre-eminently the royal Gospel. Long before the Lord was born, these Eastern sages must have been started on their way, whither and to worship whom they knew not: but an ancient prophecy had foretold that to this babe should be offered of the gold of Sheba, and that kings should bring Him the riches of the Gentiles.

How useful this gold was to Joseph in the following months! It helped him to defray the cost of the journey into Egypt and back, and to maintain his precious charges there. The Heavenly Father knew what those needs would be, and met them by anticipation. If you concern yourself in the affairs of his kingdom, and will obey the warnings and directions He gives; if you dare to step out on the path of literal obedience — you will find that God will become responsible and defray all costs. Gold is naught to Him. He can make it out of common dust by a word.

It is sweet to think of all the gold presented to Jesus in after ages. The wealth of the rich, the golden ornaments taken from the person, the tiny pieces of gold which represent the patient savings of the poor — all these have made up the flowing river of which those golden gifts of the Magi were the first trickling drops. Have you given gold to Him, you who know Him, not as the babe only, but as the Man of the Cross; not as man merely, but as the Son of the Highest! You may have given Him copper in abundance, and

silver in handfuls; but let your future gifts to Him be of the best. Or, if poverty restrains you, let the philosopher's stone of Love turn the meaner metals to gold.

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### **A FITTING PRESENT**

Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. —Romans 12:1

Read Mt 2:11-15

A little boy was somewhat perplexed by all the exchanging of presents on Christmas morning, for he had been taught in Sunday school that it was the birthday of the Saviour. Finally, after a long period of silence, he asked,

**“Mummy, when are we going to give Jesus His present? I thought it was His birthday”**

Strange isn't it that most of us give gifts to everyone but the One whose birthday we celebrate? A good question we might ask ourselves is this: What am I going to give to the Lord Jesus this Christmas? If you have never trusted in Him as your Saviour, the thing He desires most from you is a believing heart. Why not put your faith in Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross so you can be saved from your sins?

If by faith you already know Christ as your Saviour, then the most wonderful thing you can do this Christmas is to present to God the one gift He most desires to receive from you—your body (Ro 12:1).

Our bodies are to be used for God's purposes. Because we have accepted the gift of salvation from Him, it's only reasonable that we should present ourselves to the Father. When we give ourselves, we give the one Christmas present that truly fits the occasion!  
Richard DeHaan

GIVE YOUR ALL TO CHRIST;  
HE GAVE HIS ALL FOR YOU.

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### **Someone to Celebrate**

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. Psalm 95:6

Today's Scripture & Insight: Matthew 2:1–12

Many manger scenes depict the wise men, or magi, visiting Jesus in Bethlehem at the same time as the shepherds. But according to the gospel of Matthew, the only place in Scripture where their story is found, the magi showed up later. Jesus was no longer in the manger in a stable at the inn, but in a house. Matthew 2:11 tells us, “On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.”

Realizing that the magi's visit happened later than we may think provides a helpful reminder as we begin a new year. Jesus is always worthy of worship. When the holidays are past and we head back to life's everyday routines, we still have Someone to celebrate.

Jesus Christ is Immanuel, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23), in every season. He has promised to be with us “always” (28:20). Because He is always with us, we can worship Him in our hearts every day and trust that He will show Himself faithful in the years to come. Just as the magi sought Him, may we seek Him too and worship Him wherever we are. By: James Banks ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Reflect & Pray

Lord Jesus, just as the magi sought You and bowed before You as the coming King, help me to yield my will to You and to follow where You lead.

When we find Christ we offer our worship.

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### **Matthew 2:1-12 Wrapped Up In Greed**

When they had come into the house, they saw the young Child . . . and fell down and worshiped Him. —Matthew 2:11

As followers of Jesus, we must be careful to guard our hearts from greed during this holiday season. In a society that has secularized Christmas, that's not easy.

USA Today reported the results of three polls signaling the erosion of the meaning of Christmas. In a survey of Americans, only one-third said the birth of Jesus is what makes the holiday important.

What is important, then? The presents, of course! According to the poll, 97 percent of us purchase gifts.

While there's nothing wrong with commemorating the gift of God's Son by giving gifts to those we love, this pleasant tradition can easily become greed-infected. Remember the toy-of-choice in 1996, the Tickle Me Elmo doll? Some people bought one for a child or grandchild but gave up that loving idea after learning they could turn the toy into a big profit. Newspapers were soon carrying columns of ads offering the fad-of-the-season doll for many times its purchase price.

If you find yourself caught up in the greed of Christmas, take a moment to sit quietly. In your mind's eye, walk with the wisemen to the Christ-child. Bow before Him and offer Him the gift of your love and worship. Instead of a greedy Christmas this year, let's make it a worshipful one. By David Egener ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Take time this Christmastide to go  
A little way apart,  
And with the hands of prayer prepare  
The house that is your heart.  
—Anon.

Selfishness makes Christmas a burden; love makes it a delight.

**Matthew 2:12 And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.**

NET After being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back by another route to their own country.

GNT κα χρηματισθ ντες κατ ναρ μ ν ακ μβαι πρ ς ρ δην, δι λλης δο νεχ ρησαν ε ς τ ν χ ραν α τ ν.

NLT When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

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

ESV And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

NIV And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

- **warned** - Mt 2:22 1:20 27:19 Ge 20:6,7 31:24 Job 33:15-17 Da 2:19
- **they left** - Ex 1:17 Ac 4:19 5:29 1Co 3:19

## DIVINE DIRECTIVE TO DETOUR

**And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod-** Apparently this warning was **by God** Himself as no angelic messenger is described.

**Warned** (5537)(**chrematizo** from **chrema** = an affair, business, sum of money) in the NT means to impart a divine message (an injunction or warning). **Chrematizo** in this sense speaks of a divine oracle or declaration as to Simeon to whom "it **had been revealed** to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Lk 2:26+). Here and in Mt 2:22 it is a divine warning. **Marvin Vincent** has an interesting note on the meaning of **chrematizo** in the present context writing "The verb means to *give a response to one who asks or consults*: hence, in the **passive**, as here, *to receive an answer*. The word therefore **implies that the wise men had sought counsel of God**; and so Wycliffe, "*And answer taken in sleep*.""

**Dream** (3677)(**onar**) is a divine communication which is distinct from a vision (horama). Onar is used only in

the the Gospel of Matthew with no uses in the Septuagint. Matt. 1:20; Matt. 2:12; Matt. 2:13; Matt. 2:19; Matt. 2:22; Matt. 27:19

**Return** (344)(**anakampto** from **aná** = back again + **kámpto** = bend) means literally to bend back or turn back and so to return. To bend back one's course. To bend one's steps back. Used only 4x - Matt. 2:12 = "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will **return** to you." Lk. 10:6; Acts 18:21 = "I **will return** to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus." Heb. 11:15 = "indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return." The "bent" of the hearts of the patriarchs was toward heaven not earth!

**The magi left for their own country by another way**- The **magi** had ears to hear the supernatural warning and took the divinely directed detour! Once again we see God's sovereign hand orchestrating the events in men's life to assure that His will is accomplished.

**THOUGHT** - I wonder if we are as wise as these magi? So many times God gives us a clear warning to "steer clear" of some place, some person, some thing, and we like a stubborn mule go headlong to that place, person or thing which around which we were warned to take a detour!

**Left** (402)(**anachoreo** from **ana** = back again or emphatic + **choreo** = depart, make room) means to depart from a location. **Anachoreō** is used several times in Matthew to describe a strategic withdrawal in the face of danger (Mt 2:12-14, 22; 4:12; 12:15; 14:13; 15:21) here the magi who were warned by God and in Mt 2:14 of Joseph when he was warned and "left for Egypt" **Liddell-Scott** says **anachoreo** was used by Homer to retire or withdraw from battle, to retire from a place, to come back or revert to the rightful owner, to withdraw from the world. **Gilbrant** adds that "In classical Greek literature the word's semantic range includes "walk backwards," "revert to," or even "to strike" (i.e., "refuse to work"). In the Septuagint **anachoreō** especially depicts flight or withdrawal from a place or area (e.g., Ex 2:15; Nu 16:24; Josh 8:15)."

**Matthew 2:13** 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."

NET After they had gone, 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 look for the child to kill him."

GNT ναχωρησωντων δ ατην δογγελος κυρου φα νεται καταναρ τωσφ λγων, γερθεις παρλαβετ παιδον κατην μητρα ατο καφε γε ες Αγυπτον κασθι κεως νεπωσοι μλλει γρ ρδης ζητηεντ παιδον τοπολσαιατ.

NLT After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

KJV 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.

ESV Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."

NIV When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

- **an angel** - Mt 2:19 1:20 Ac 5:19 10:7,22 12:11 Heb 1:13,14
- **Get up** - Mt 10:23 Rev 12:6,14
- **Until** - Mt 2:19,20 Jos 3:13,17 4:10,18 Da 3:25,26 Ac 16:36
- **For Herod** - Mt 2:16 Ex 1:22 2:2,3 Job 33:15,17 Ac 7:19 Rev 12:4



## GOD SOVEREIGNLY INTERVENES TO ASSURE SAFETY OF HIS SON

Now when they had gone, **behold - Behold** (see note above on [idou](#)) is to grab our attention. Joseph would seem to have little need to have a **behold** for an angel in a dream would be enough to grab anyone's full attention!

An angel ([aggelos/angelos](#)) of the Lord ([kurios](#)) appeared to Joseph ([kurios](#)) in a dream (onar) - God Himself speaks to the magi in a dream and now speaks via an angel to Joseph in another **dream**. Notice this is **AN** angel and not **THE** [Angel of the LORD](#) (Pre-incarnate Christophany) as is seen so in the OT (cf Ge16:7).

**Appeared** ([5316](#)) see below on [phaino](#)

And said, "Get up! **Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you - Take** is [paralambano](#) in the [aorist imperative](#), implying a note of urgency. Do this now! Do not delay! **Flee** and **remain** are also commands in [present imperative](#). Keep on fleeing. Keep remaining in Egypt.

God gave directions to the **magi** via the star and, indirectly, through the Scriptures, Matt. 2:1–6: He directed the **shepherds** to Christ by the angel, Luke 2:9–12, but **Joseph** received his divine announcements and warnings through dreams, Matt. 1:20; 2:13; 2:19; 2:22, in the same way as his illustrious predecessor of the same name, Gen. 37:5, 9.

So we see fulfillment of OT prophecy involved (1) when Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) in obedience to the imperial decree (Lu 2:1-5 - sovereignly brought about by God), and (2) when they fled to Egypt (Hosea 11:1), following the command from the Lord's messenger.

**Child** ([3813](#))([paidion](#) diminutive of **pais** = child) is a little child of either sex, ranging from an infant (Mt 19:13, 14; Mk 10:13-15; Lk 18:16, 17, etc) to children who are older (Mt 11:16; Mt 14:21; 15:38; 18:2-5, etc) **Paidion** is used repeatedly of the infant Jesus in Matthew Matt. 2:8; Matt. 2:9; Matt. 2:11; Matt. 2:13; Matt. 2:14; Matt. 2:20; Matt. 2:21.

**Flee** (escape) ([5343](#))([pheugo](#)) means to flee away in the sense of to take to flight in order to seek safety. To flee in the sense of to escape something, being made safe from danger by eluding or avoiding it. **Webster** defines **flee** as to run away often from danger or evil or to hurry toward a place of security. **Pheugo** is the root of our English word "**fugitive**" defined as one who escapes from something or someone

**For** ([gar](#)) is a term of explanation. God is giving the reason for the staccato-like commands that convey a sense of urgency. One can imagine the stir in Herod's palace as he realizes the magi have duped him and it did not take him long to realized he had to carry out infanticide!

**Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him- Search** speaks of eagerness and diligence and the [present tense](#).

**Search** ([2212](#))([zeteo](#)) implies giving attention and priority to and deliberately pursuing after. The most common sense of this word is to "**seek**".

**Destroy** ([622](#))([apollumi](#) from **apo** = away from or wholly + **olethros** = state of utter ruin <> **ollumi** = to destroy) means to destroy utterly but not to cause one to cease to exist.

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### Matthew 2:13-21 Out Of Egypt

Take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt. —Matthew 2:13

One year when our family was traveling through Ohio on the way to Grandma's house, we arrived in Columbus just as a tornado warning was issued. Suddenly everything changed as we feared that our children might be in danger.

I mention that story to help us imagine what it was like for Joseph's family as he, Mary, and their young child traveled to Egypt. Herod, not a tornado, threatened them as he sought to kill their little boy. Imagine how frightening it was for them, knowing that "Herod [sought] the young Child to destroy Him" (Matt. 2:13).

We usually take a more idyllic view of Christmastime—lowing cattle and kneeling shepherds in a peaceful scene. But there was no peace for Jesus' family as they sought to escape Herod's horror. Only when an angel told them it was safe did the family go out of Egypt and back home to Nazareth (vv.20-23).

Consider the awe we should feel for the incarnation. Jesus, who enjoyed the majesty of heaven in partnership with the Father, set it all aside to be born in poverty, to face many dangers, and to be crucified for us. Coming out of Egypt is one thing, but leaving heaven for us—that's the grand and amazing part of this story!

Jesus our Savior left heaven above,  
Coming to earth as a Servant with love;  
Laying aside all His glory He came,  
Bringing salvation through faith in His name.  
—Hess

Jesus came to earth for us so we could go to heaven with Him.

INSIGHT: Today's passage is both a harrowing and a comforting account of early events in Jesus' life. Verse 15 reminds us that the threat to His life and His family's hasty escape to Egypt were within God's plan. By Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **Flee into Egypt Matt. 2:13**

Why? Because there is a cruel king who will seek the young child's life.

Is Christ born in thee? Is thy life like that manger—precious as a casket, because of what it holds? Then have a care; for, craftier and more unscrupulous than Herod, the destroyer of souls will seek to destroy thee.

There is a day coming when they shall say, "They are dead which sought the young child's life." Grace shall survive the foe, and we shall yet return to enjoy the comforts of life, with no Herod to threaten us. After all, it is sin which is short-lived, for goodness shall flourish when the evil one is chained up forever. --Thos. Champness

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### **Streams in the Desert "Be thou there till I bring thee word." (Matt. 2:13)**

"I'll stay where You've put me; I will, dear Lord,  
Though I wanted so badly to go;  
I was eager to march with the 'rank and file,'  
Yes, I wanted to lead them, You know.  
I planned to keep step to the music loud,  
To cheer when the banner unfurled,  
To stand in the midst of the fight straight and proud,  
But I'll stay where You've put me.

"I'll stay where You've put me; I'll work, dear Lord,  
Though the field be narrow and small,  
And the ground be fallow, and the stones lie thick,  
And there seems to be no life at all.  
The field is Thine own, only give me the seed,  
I'll sow it with never a fear;  
I'll till the dry soil while I wait for the rain,  
And rejoice when the green blades appear;  
I'll work where You've put me.

"I'll stay where You've put me; I will, dear Lord;  
I'll bear the day's burden and heat,  
Always trusting Thee fully; when even has come  
I'll lay heavy sheaves at Thy feet.  
And then, when my earth work is ended and done,  
In the light of eternity's glow,  
Life's record all closed, I surely shall find  
It was better to stay than to go;  
I'll stay where You've put me."

"Oh restless heart, that beat against your prison bars of circumstances, yearning for a wider sphere of usefulness, leave God to

order all your days. Patience and trust, in the dullness of the routine of life, will be the best preparation for a courageous bearing of the tug and strain of the larger opportunity which God may some time send you." (Lettie Cowman)

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A Spider's Web - And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." -  
TODAY IN THE WORD

A children's story tells that when Mary and Joseph became weary on their way to Egypt, they sought refuge in a cave. A spider, wishing to do something for the Christ child, spun its web across the entrance to block the wind. When Herod's soldiers passed by, they didn't bother to check the cave because the spider web was not torn. They didn't think anyone could possibly be inside. They left the holy family in peace. Some historians attribute the tradition of hanging tinsel on a Christmas tree to represent the safety provided by the spider's web in that story.

The angel of the Lord once again appeared to Joseph and told him to flee, because Herod would try to murder Jesus. Joseph instantly obeyed (Mt 2:14). Fleeing to Egypt fulfilled the prophecy of Hosea 11:1: "Out of Egypt I called my son." This passage carries the double meaning of God's love for Israel, shown by Moses leading the exodus from Egypt, and also God's love for us by calling His Son from the relative safety of Egypt to return and fulfill His ultimate purpose of suffering and dying on the cross for our sins.

Herod wanted to be sure to eliminate this potential rival to his power, so "he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under" (Mt 2:16). Perhaps the soldiers drew a circle around Jerusalem with the radius as far south as Bethlehem and as far north as Ramah. They killed all the young boys within that territory, fulfilling the words of Jeremiah 31:15 that are quoted in Matthew 2:18.

Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel, was the symbolic mother of the northern tribes of Israel. In Jeremiah 31 she is pictured crying for the exiles at Ramah, a deportation point during the Babylonian captivity. This terrible mourning had its fulfillment in Matthew 2 as the mothers in Bethlehem and the surrounding area wept as their children were brutally slain by Herod's soldiers.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Now we have seen all four prophecies dealing with locations in the birth of Christ fulfilled: born in Bethlehem, called out of Egypt, weeping in Ramah, and called a Nazarene. When originally given by the Old Testament prophets, these prophecies may have seemed strange and unreal. Yet, all were fulfilled and became real during Jesus' early childhood. Look over the previous days of December, particularly the Old Testament passages. Make a list of the other prophecies regarding Jesus that you can find.

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Matthew 2:1-23

He breaks the spirit of rulers; he is feared by the kings of the earth. - Psalm 76:12

TODAY IN THE WORD

Richard von Weizsaecker, former president of Germany, said of the Holocaust, "There were many ways of not burdening one's conscience, of shunning responsibility, looking away, keeping mum. When the unspeakable truth of the Holocaust then became known at the end of the war, all too many of us claimed that they had not known anything about it or even suspected anything." The guilt of an atrocity rests on the shoulders of leaders, but the many who did nothing to stop it share in the liability.

King Herod the Great is the bad boy of today's passage, but the people he ruled deserve scrutiny as well. The desperate fear of losing power drove Herod to murder, but he wasn't alone in his apprehension.

The Magi don't appear to have come directly to Herod, but to Jerusalem in general—the text doesn't specifically say they came to Herod's palace. The Magi may have asked around Jerusalem looking for the newborn King before word got to Herod about the foreign visitors. We do know for certain that the entire city was troubled by the news of the birth of the Christ (Mt 2:3-4). But the Magi were looking in the wrong city, as the priests and scribes knew from Micah's prophecy (Micah 5:2). Then Herod acted on his own, summoning the Magi privately and covertly sending them in the hope of destroying this threat to his rule (Mt 2:8, 13).

Herod's reaction (and Jerusalem's as well) to the news of Christ's birth is brought into sharp relief by the generous worship of the foreign wise men. The people of Jerusalem doubted the Magi's astronomical claims; those who believed in the fulfillment of prophecy and the birth of Messiah were the Magi (who responded with worship) and the wicked King Herod (who reacted with violence).

Herod ordered the execution of all boys age two and under in the vicinity of Bethlehem, an attempt to hold on to power. But how many people who were "troubled" by the Magi's message must have complied with his atrocious demands?

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

It's unlikely that any of us wield the type of power Herod of Great had, but there are at least two applications we can draw from studying his actions. First, we should never have so tight a grip on our position or our possessions that we aren't willing to surrender to the plan of God. And secondly, a "bad boy" in power will always have accomplices—don't become a partner to their wickedness

through quiet cooperation in acts you know to be wrong.

Pray for insight on how to be the best you can be for His sake.

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Matthew 2:13-23

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

It's interesting to encounter the same two groups of people at Jesus' birth that were present at His death. That is, Herod represents the worriers while the Magi, Joseph, and Mary represent the worshipers. nervously in Jerusalem, worrying that someone might try to steal Jesus' body and raise more of an outcry (Matt. 27:62-66). In reality, they were disturbed because they knew that they had shed innocent blood. anoint Jesus' body with spices, but observed the Sabbath according to God's commandment (Luke 23:56).a worrier after the Magi came to him with the disturbing news that a new King had been born. Just as Pilate was in a position of authority and could order Jesus' grave sealed and a guard posted, so Herod had all the authority he needed to try to stamp out this invisible threat. to be killed. Through the Holy Spirit's inspiration, Luke saw the tragedy in the same light were spiritually sensitive enough to the God of Israel to receive His instruction in a dream and to obey, defying Herod's order to report back to him (Matt. 2:12).and instantly obeyed each time. We know we have truly worshiped God not just when we have offered up thanksgiving for what He has done, but when we have obeyed what He tells us to do. The worriers at the crucifixion got nowhere, and neither did Herod. Their actions only brought God's judgment upon them. But the worshipers in each case were blessed as God once again used humanly weak and insignificant vessels to confound the mighty.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

At Easter time, we usually talk about the worriers and the worshipers and encourage our readers to reaffirm their commitment to be God's worshipers. This day is made for worship, for leaving off the week's worries and fastening our minds and hearts on our great God. studies planned for next year, and we want God to use them to bless His people.

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Matthew 2:13-23; Luke 2:21-24

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

Instant Retreat - The story is told of a great military commander who sat by an evening fire with several of his officers to discuss the day's battle. He asked the officers, ""Who did the best today on the field of battle?"" One by one, the men told of soldiers who had fought bravely and risked their lives for their comrades.

The commander heard them out, then said, ""No, I fear you are all mistaken."" He told of a soldier who, just as he raised his arm to strike an enemy, heard the trumpet sound retreat. Instantly, he dropped his arm without striking and retreated, an act the commander called ""perfect and ready obedience to the will of his general.""

Today's reading demonstrates that Joseph and Mary obeyed God in the same spirit of promptness and submission. The story of Jesus' circumcision and Mary's purification in Luke 2 precedes the family's flight into Egypt, possibly by a number of months. But both accounts reveal Jesus' parents' perfect and ready obedience to the will and direction of God.

Apparently, Jesus was circumcised in Bethlehem on the eighth day after His birth, in obedience to the Law (Lev. 12:3). Then, in accordance with the Law, Mary remained ceremonially ""unclean"" for an additional thirty-three days. At the end of that time, she and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem to present the prescribed sacrifice (Lev. 12). Since the couple offered doves or pigeons rather than a lamb, we know that they were poor.

Joseph's obedience to the angelic warnings was much more dramatic than his obedience to the Law. Fleeing to Egypt must have been the last thing on his mind. But he and Mary did exactly that, just because God said to!

We know that more happened here in God's plan than merely the holy family's avoiding danger. Matthew tells us that the flight fulfilled God's prophetic word (Matt. 2:15; Hosea 11:1). By identifying Jesus with Israel, God was validating His Son's identity as Israel's Messiah and calling the nation to identify with Him.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Here's a second way you can make good use of these ""in between"" days so as to finish 1996 well.

If you're like most people, you probably didn't have enough time to visit with everyone during the holidays. Why not invite some of those people over for an informal time of fellowship this weekend? You might even enjoy one another's company more without the pressure of the Christmas rush.

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Matthew 2:3-8, 13-18

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. - Matthew 20:28

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

Last summer, Israeli archaeologist Ehud Netzer of Hebrew University announced that he had found the tomb of Herod the Great at a

dig south of Jerusalem. He had been searching for the tomb at the site, which was Herod's summer palace, since 1972. He and his team knew they had found what they were looking for when they unearthed an enormous staircase, built for Herod's funeral procession, and an elaborately decorated limestone sarcophagus. It had been smashed and no bones were found in it. Netzer explained that the palace had been raided by Jewish rebels in a.d. 66-72. The discovery has been hailed as a milestone in biblical and Near Eastern archaeology.

Herod, of course, played an infamous role in the Christmas story. We've seen various responses to the story thus far, including faith, doubt, amazement, praise, confusion, reflection, and rejoicing. But today we see a different type of response altogether, what might be called "hostile belief." Herod, who reigned during the years 37-4 b.c., responded to the Magi's news as if it were true and a threat to his political power (Mt 2:3). A "king" had been born? Herod cared nothing for stars and saviors—he saw only the threat of competition. This viewpoint is the Incarnation as seen through the eyes of worldly power.

The king called together Jewish religious scholars and asked where such a king would be born. They knew the Scriptures and gave him the correct answer: Bethlehem (Mt 2:4-6; Micah 5:2). Sadly, it seems they did nothing while Herod acted in "hostile belief." He lied to the wise men, making sure to meet with them secretly not only so that people wouldn't know he was taking this seriously but also to lessen the risk that someone might enlighten the visitors about his ruthless reputation. As a backup plan, he found out the exact time of the birth, which eventually led to the "slaughter of the innocents" and the flight of Jesus' family to Egypt (Mt 2:13-18).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

As we see throughout the Christmas story, but especially in the Gospel of Matthew, the birth of Christ fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies. If you have time for deeper or more extensive study, this is a good topic. How many prophecies does the New Testament identify as being fulfilled in the birth of Christ? In what ways were they fulfilled? How do the fulfillments compare to the original contexts of the prophecies? Can you identify any running themes? What do these fulfilled prophecies mean to you today?

**Matthew 2:14 So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.**

NET Then he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and went to Egypt.

GNT ὁ γερθε ς παρ λαβεν τ παιδ ον κα τ ν μητ ρα α το νυκτ ς κα νεχ ρησεν ε ς Α γυπτου,

NLT That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother,

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

ESV And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt

NIV So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt,

- Mt 2:20,21 Mt 1:24 Ac 26:21

### JOSEPH'S UNHESITATING OBEDIENCE

**So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt-** Recall how quickly Joseph responded to the divine instruction in Matthew 1:24+ "Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife." Joseph's immediate obedience is a good example for all of us when we hear from the Lord (through His Word and prayer). The phrase **while it was still night** supports the premise that this little family was in grave, imminent danger. Had they left during the daylight hours, they may have been queried as to where they were going and if Herod had discovered they were going to Egypt it would be easy to imagine him sending assassins to kill the King of the Jews!

**Child** (3813) see **paidion** diminutive of **pais** = child) is a little child

**Left** (402) see above on **anachoreo**

**Matthew 2:15 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."**

NET He stayed there until Herod died. In this way what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet was fulfilled: "I called my Son out of Egypt."

GNT κα ν κε ως τ ς τελευτ ς ρ δου· να πληρωθ τ ηθ ν π κυρ ου δι το προφ του λ γοντος, ξ Α γ ππου κ λεσα τ ν υ ν μου.

NLT and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my Son out of Egypt."

KJV 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.

ESV and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

NIV where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

- **until** - Mt 2:19 Ac 12:1-4,23,24
- **what** - Mt 2:17,23 1:22 4:14,15 8:17 12:16-18 21:4 26:54,56 27:35 Lu 24:44 Joh 19:28,36 Ac 1:16
- **Out** - Ex 4:22 Nu 24:8 Ho 11:1

## **HORRIBLE DEATH OF HEINOUS HEROD**

"**Heinous Herod**" receives his just recompense! **Heinous** is an apropos description (and probably even somewhat of a [euphemism!](#)) of Herod for it means extremely wicked, outrageously evil, deeply criminal, hatefully or shockingly evil, abominable.

**He remained there until the death of Herod** - **Until** is an [expression of time](#) which should always prompt you to Consider the "5P's" - Pause to Ponder the Passage then Practice it in the Power of the Spirit. How did Joseph discover that Herod had died? We don't know. Josephus, in his Antiquities, records **Herod's horrible end** (Scroll down page to [Read chapter 33 where Josephus details Herod's last days](#)), his body **rotting** away and consumed by **worms**. It is fascinating to note that Herod's grandson, **Herod Agrippa**, was to die a similar death, Luke recording "immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died." (Acts 12:23+).

**John Walvoord** on where they stayed in Egypt, etc - More details are not given. Artists picture Mary riding on a donkey, holding the baby, and being led by Joseph. No Scripture is found as to where they stayed in Egypt. Matthew, however, anticipating the charge that Christ picked up magical arts by a long stay in Egypt, specifies that they were there only until the death of Herod, which occurred within three years of His birth. (**Ed**: So most commentators think they remained there for several years - usually stated as two years but this is not definitively stated in the Bible).

Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a youth I loved him, **And out of Egypt I called My son.**

**This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."**- This is the second of four fulfilled prophecies in Matthew - (1) Mt 2:6 fulfilled Micah 5:2 (2) Mt 2:15 fulfilled Hosea 11:1 (3) Mt 2:18 fulfilled Jeremiah 31:15 and (4) Mt 2:23 is said to "fulfill what was spoken through the prophets. There is however no specific prophecy or prophecies that can be definitely linked to Matthew 2:23. See [discussion below](#) on OT quotes in the NT.

This would explain why Joseph was not directed to go where the magi were living. God's purpose was to fulfill the prophecy is found in Hosea 11:1 where the context clearly indicates that it was the whole nation of Israel which had been called out of Egypt as God's young "son." Matthew, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, applies it to Christ. The children of Israel had been born in the land promised to them by God, but had to leave it and sojourn in the pagan land of Egypt for a while before being brought back home by God. Christ lived through the same experience--born in Judea, then sojourned in Egypt for a time before He was called back home.

**Criswell** - Some suggest that, by employing Hos. 11:1 in this verse and Jer. 31:15 in Matt. 15:17, 18, Matthew implies that Jesus recapitulates the history of Israel. The passage from Hosea, which follows the flight into Egypt, recalls the Exodus. Under this view, Matthew sees in the personal experiences of Jesus a summary of the experience of His people. He is afflicted with their affliction (Isa. 63:9) and repeats their religious experience of the Exodus from Egypt. As Egypt had been a refuge for God's people (Gen. 12:10; 46:3, 4; 1 Kin. 11:40), so now it offers asylum for the Lord's Anointed. Hosea saw in the Exodus both the liberation and election of the chosen people (cf. Ex. 4:22). Matthew uses Hosea to stress that Jesus is the liberating Messiah and Son of God, whose birth and infancy are guided by God's providence as was Israel's history.

**Was to fulfill** (4137) (**pleroo**) means to be filled ([passive voice](#)) like a net, Mt 13:48, a building, Jn 12:3, Acts 2:2, a city, Acts 5:28, needs Phil 4:19. Pleroo in the present context means to make complete in every particular. And so in chapter 2, Matthew uses pleroo three times describe Old Testament prophecies as

fulfilled in the events in this chapter - Mt 2:15, Mt 2:17, Mt 2:23. In fact given Matthew's emphasis of linking the OT prophecies to the specific fulfillments in the time of Jesus, it is not surprising that pleroc is used repeatedly with this meaning - Mt 1:22, Mt 2:15, Mt 2:17, Mt 2:23, Mt 4:14, Mt 8:17, Mt 12:17, Mt 13:35, Mt 21:4, Mt 26:56, Mt 27:9.

**Prophet (4396)** see note above on [prophetes](#)

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Matthew 2:1-23

And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet. - Matthew 2:15

TODAY IN THE WORD

A study conducted between 1991 and 2007 asked 750 former Muslims from 30 countries why they decided to follow Jesus. For many, the role of dreams and visions was significant; 27 percent reported dreams before they decided to follow Christ, 40 percent cited dreams at the time of their conversion, and 45 percent described dreams and visions after their conversion. Often the pre-conversion dreams featured a loved one urging them to follow Jesus, and post-conversion visions gave encouragement during trials like imprisonment.

Our passage today has a mix of God speaking through dreams as well as His Word to reveal Himself. Before that, let's look at some of the main characters in this dramatic passage.

Herod the Great embodied brutality. He ruled the region under the authority of Rome, that gave him the title, "King of the Jews," although he did not come from a Jewish royal line. His duplicitous and murderous ways were on display, as he attempted to trick the Magi and then slaughtered the infants of Bethlehem. Matthew has already established that Jesus is in the royal line of David, and in this dark episode of the loss of children we also have a taste of hope of another king, the true "King of the Jews," who will rule justly (see Jer. 31:15-34).

The Magi came from the east (perhaps Persia or Arabia) to worship the new king. They were "overjoyed" to find Him (v. 10). We saw in Matthew 1 the presence of non-Israelite women as important links in the genealogy of Jesus. Here we find non-Israelites responding to Him with joy, worship, and gifts.

Finally, God speaks through both dreams and Scripture. One principle here is that God's leading will not contradict His revealed Word. He used dreams to guide Joseph in specific actions, always in harmony with Scripture. Another principle is that God requires obedience to His Word. Joseph demonstrated that he was a "righteous man" (Mt 1:19) through His immediate, unquestioning obedience.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Our text today presents us with three alternative responses to the birth of Jesus: Herod heard the word about the coming shepherd of Israel, and he reacted angrily that his plans might be upset. The chief priests and teachers of the law also heard, and they decided to do nothing. The Magi heard this word, and they acted on it—they made the trip to Bethlehem where they found Jesus. When we are confronted with God's Word, how will we respond—in fury, failure, or faith?

**Matthew 2:16 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.**

NET When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he became enraged. He sent men to kill all the children in Bethlehem and throughout the surrounding region from the age of two and under, according to the time he had learned from the wise men.

GNT Τ τε ρ δης δ ν τι νεπα χθη π τ ν μ γων θυμ θη λ αν, κα π οστε λας νε λεν π ντας το ς πα δας το ς ν Βηθλ εμ κα ν π σι το ς ρ οισ α τ ς π διετο ς κα κατωτ ρω, κατ τ ν χρ νον ν κρ βωσεν παρ τ ν μ γων.

NLT Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance.

KJV 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 enquired of the wise men.

ESV Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and

killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

NIV When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

- **when** - Ge 39:14,17 Nu 22:29 24:10 Jud 16:10 Job 12:4
- **he became very enraged**, - Pr 27:3,4 Da 3:13,19,20
- **he became very enraged**, - Ge 49:7 2Ki 8:12 Pr 28:15,17 Isa 26:21 59:7 Ho 10:14 Rev 17:6
- **according** - Mt 2:7

### **MOCKED BY THE MAGI: THE DECEIVER DECEIVED**

**KJV** has "Herod, when he saw that he was **mocked**." The deceiver was deceived! (Like Jacob the Deceiver was deceived by Laban!) This passage recalls the principle in 2 Ti 3:13+ that "evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, **deceiving** (active voice) and **being** (passive voice) **deceived**." As the saying goes, [what goes around, comes around](#). So here we see Herod the plotter [pays the piper!](#) (even more so in Mt 2:19 being eaten by worms in his illness!).

**Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi**- Herod's slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem was in keeping with his cruel character.

**Tricked** (1702) ([empaizo](#) from **en** = in + **paizo** = to play as a child) means to ridicule, to make fun of, to mock, to deceive, to trick, to taunt, to treat outrageously, to treat someone contemptuously in an insolent and arrogant way, to treat abusively. Most uses describe the **mocking** of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here Herod is outwitted, tricked, made a fool of, trick and deceived.

**he became very enraged** - **Enraged** is **thumuoo** means Herod was provoke to anger to an exceeding degree. Herod had an anger management problem anyway and this deception of a deceiver was like [Mount Vesuvius](#) exploding, taking many lives!

**Enraged** (2373) (**thumuoo**) is used only here but we get a vivid picture of the meaning from the root word **thumos** which in turn is from **thúo** which means to move impetuously, particularly as the air or wind, a violent motion or passion of the mind; move violently, rush along. And so **thumos** describes **passion** (as if breathing hard) and speaks of an agitated, "heated" anger that rushes along (impulse toward a thing). It is a tumultuous welling up of the whole spirit produced by a mighty emotion which seizes and moves the whole inner person. **Thumos** especially when accompanied by breathing hard pictures a "panting rage". We can picture Herod exploding with a sudden outburst of passion. When someone is this anger you can often see their nasal passages widening to take in more air in the heat of their passion!

**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** - The number of infants Herod had murdered is not known. Bethlehem was not a big city and there would not be that many infants less than 2 years of age. In any event it was a despicable act by a cruel despot! He will be duly and eternally repaid in the Lake of fire!

**Fruchtenbaum** - Notice the interesting parallel between the slaughter of Jewish male babies in the time of Moses (Ex 1:15-22) and the time of Jesus. It was Satan's attempt to thwart the plan of God to deliver His people on both occasions. In Genesis 15:13 God tells Abraham that his descendants will be oppressed for 400 years. Satan knew when the time was drawing near for a deliverer to be born. This would be Moses.

**Criswell** - The historian Josephus does not mention this massacre; and since Matthew is our only source for it, some have erroneously thought it legendary. However, Bethlehem, located a few miles south of Jerusalem, was not a large town, and the number of victims may not have been many. Since Herod's reign was bloodstained, the murder of these children (50 or fewer) may not have attracted much attention outside the immediate vicinity. Such an atrocity was not uncommon for Herod, of whom Augustus Caesar said, with a play on words, it was better to be Herod's "sow" (hus, Gk.), than his "son" (huios, Gk.). Based upon the calculations of the Magi, Herod arbitrarily included all "male children" under two years of age in order to make sure that the one "born King of the Jews" would be included. As by the sword he had removed all former threats to his reign, so he now tries to do with the Christ.

**Matthew Henry** - Verses 16-18. Herod killed all the male children, not only in Bethlehem, but in all the villages of that city. Unbridled wrath, armed with an unlawful power, often carries men to absurd cruelties. It was no unrighteous thing with God to permit this;



every life is forfeited to his justice as soon as it begins. The diseases and deaths of little children are proofs of original sin. But the murder of these infants was their martyrdom. How early did persecution against Christ and his kingdom begin! Herod now thought that he had baffled the Old Testament prophecies, and the efforts of the wise men in finding Christ; but whatever crafty, cruel devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord shall stand.

#### Matthew 2:17 Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

NET Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

GNT τ τε πληρθη τ ηθ ν δι ερεμ ου το προφ του λ γοντος,

NLT Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

KJV Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

ESV Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

NIV Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

- Mt 2:15

#### Herod's Massacre of the Innocents

**Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled** - Note the phrase **spoken through** indicating **Jeremiah** (and all prophets) were in essence "conduits" through whom God would speak to the world, "for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Pet 1:21+). The quotation in the next verse is taken from Jer 31:15+, which depicts the wailing at the time of Israel's exile. That calamity and Herod's new atrocity are viewed as part of the same broad picture.

**Was fulfilled** (4137) see note above on [pleroo](#)

**Prophet** (4396) see note above on [prophetes](#)

#### Matthew 2:18 "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."

NET "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud wailing, Rachel weeping for her children, and she did not want to be comforted, because they were gone."

GNT Φων ν αμ κο σθη, κλαυθμ ς κα δυρμ ς πολ ς· αχ λ κλα ουσα τ τ κνα α τ ς, κα ο κ θελεν παρακληθ ναι, τι ο κ ε σ ν.

NLT "A cry was heard in Ramah-- weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted, for they are dead."

KJV In Rama 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.

ESV "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

NIV "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

- **Ramah** - Jer 31:15
- **lamentation** - Jer 4:31 9:17-21 Eze 2:10 Rev 8:13
- **Rachel** - Ge 35:16-20
- **REFUSED** - Ge 37:30,33-35 42:36 Job 14:10

**Ryrie** has an interesting note - Since Matthew was writing to those with a Jewish background, he used more quotations from the OT than the other gospel writers. There are 93 such quotations in Matthew, 49 in Mark, 80 in Luke, and 33 in John.

**A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEeping AND GREAT MOURNING** - This is the third of four fulfilled prophecies in Matthew - (1) Mt 2:6 fulfilled Micah 5:2 (2) Mt 2:15 fulfilled Hosea 11:1 (3) Mt 2:18 fulfilled Jeremiah 31:15 and (4) Mt 2:23 is said to "fulfill what was spoken through the prophets. There is however no specific prophecy or prophecies that can be definitely linked to Matthew 2:23. See [discussion below](#) on OT quotes in the NT. Not just mourning which would be bad enough but **great (polus) mourning**.

**Weeping (2805)** (**klauthmos** from **klaio** = to weep or bewail) is a noun which describes a strong inner emotion which is evoked in weeping, crying, lamentation (cries of grief, the act of bewailing as an expression of sorrow). Matt. 2:18; Matt. 8:12; Matt. 13:42; Matt. 13:50; Matt. 22:13; Matt. 24:51; Matt. 25:30; Lk. 13:28; Acts 20:37

**Mourning (3602)** **odurmos** from **oduromai** = to lament) expresses a very intense and deep sense of sorrow, a loud and grievous expression of mourning or remorse. It can include the idea of wailing which means to utter a prolonged, inarticulate, mournful cry, usually high-pitched or clear-sounding, as in grief or suffering. Found only in Mt 2:18+, 2 Cor 7:7+ Once in the Septuagint of Jer 31:15+ "A voice is heard in Ramah, **Lamentation** and bitter weeping." Matthew's use indicates that this word describes audible mourning as an expression of sorrow.

**Thayer** has this note on synonyms - dakruo (cf [dakruon](#)) , [klaio](#), oduromai (cf [odurmos](#)) , [threneo](#), [alalazo](#) (ololuzo) [stenazo](#): strictly, **dakruo** denotes to shed tears, weep silently; **klaio** to weep audibly, to cry as a child; **oduromai** to give verbal expression to grief, to lament; Bp to give formal expression to grief, to sing a dirge; [alalazo](#) to wail in oriental style, to howl in a consecrated, semi-liturgical fashion; [stenazo](#) to express grief by inarticulate or semi-articulate sounds, to groan.

**Oduromai - Liddell-Scott** - 1. c. acc. pers., Hom., Soph.; c. acc. mourned for it, i.e. for the want of it, 2. c. gen. pers. to mourn for, for the sake of, Hom. 3. c. dat. pers. to wail or lament to or before others, Id. 4. absol. to wail, mourn, Id., Eur.

**TDNT - oduromai** a. intr. "to wail," "to lament," "to grieve," "to be distressed," esp. for outward expressions of grief, often with tears, Hom. Od., 9, 13 (δυσρόμενος στεναχίζω); 14, 129 (δυσρομέν βλεφάρων πο δάκρυα πίπτει); 16, 144 f. (στοναχ τε γό τε); 18, 203 (κατὰ θυμόν); b. trans. "to bewail," "to bemoan," Hom. Il., 24, 714 (δάκρυ χέοντες); Soph. Ant., 693; Muson., p. 41, 4; 43, 2 (the exile). δυσρός, "wailing," "lamentation," "weeping," Eur. Tro., 609; Plat. Resp. 3, 398d (with θρ νοι); Isoc. Panegyricus, 169 (δυστυχίας νδρ ν); Plut. Demetr., 47, 3 (τ ς τύχης); Philo Migr. Abr., 156. In the LXX the verb occurs only in Jer 31:18+ for τιν hithp (lit. "to shake," shaking the head as a sign of grief), "to lament." For the noun δυσρός cf. ep. 38:15 (31:15) (with θρ νος and κλαυθμός, Heb. יָכִי תַמְרוּרִים, bitter weeping) for the loud (κούσθη) and violent lamentation of the mother at the loss of her children; also 2 Macc. 11:6 (μετ δυσρ ν κα δακρύων κέτευον). The only NT examples of [odurmos](#) are in Mt. 2:18 (quoting ep. 38:15 [31:15] → supra) for loud and grievous lamentation at a most bitter loss, and 2 C. 7:7 for violent expressions of bitter remorse.

**Rachel**, Jacob's beloved wife, died in Bethlehem (Ge 35:19) and thus the grieving mothers of Bethlehem's slaughtered children are all personified in her name. Rachel was the mother of Benjamin, whose descendants were still associated with the town. Since the slaughter of the children is evidently not recorded in secular history, some have denied that it really happened. However, Bethlehem was a small village, with relatively few young children. In view of Herod's notorious cruelty (he even put one of his wives and his three oldest sons to death), this occurrence was quite in character and probably was accorded little secular notice outside the affected community. The event was prophesied in Jer 31:15, but the prophet also exhorted them to "refrain...from weeping" because the slain children are safe with the Lord and "shall come again from the land of the enemy" (Jer 31:16)

Jer 31:15+ Thus says the LORD, "A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more."

**Warren Wiersbe** notes that "In order to understand this fulfillment, we must review Jewish history. The first mention of Bethlehem in Scripture is in connection with the death of Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel (Gen. 35:16–20). Rachel died giving birth to a son whom she named Benoni, "son of my sorrow." Jacob renamed his son Benjamin, "son of my right hand." Both of these names relate to Jesus Christ, for He was a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3), and He is now the Son of God's right hand (Acts 5:31; Heb. 1:3). Jacob put up a pillar to mark Rachel's grave which is near Bethlehem. Jeremiah's prophecy was given about 600 years before Christ was born. It grew out of the captivity of Jerusalem. Some of the captives were taken to Ramah in Benjamin, near Jerusalem; and this reminded Jeremiah of Jacob's sorrow when Rachel died. However, now it was Rachel who was weeping. She represented the mothers of Israel weeping as they saw their sons going into captivity. It was as though Rachel said, "I gave my life to bear a son, and now his descendants are no more." Jacob saw Bethlehem as a place of death, but the birth of Jesus made it a place

of life! Because of His coming, there would be spiritual deliverance for Israel and, in the future, the establishment of David's throne and kingdom. Israel, "the son of my sorrow," would one day become "the son of My right hand." Jeremiah gave a promise to the nation that they would be restored to their land again (Jer. 31:16–17), and this promise was fulfilled. But he gave an even greater promise that the nation would be regathered in the future, and the kingdom established (Jer. 31:27ff). This promise shall also be fulfilled. Very few people today think of Bethlehem as a burial place; they think of it as the birthplace of Jesus Christ. And because He died for us and rose again, we have a bright future before us. We shall live forever with Him in that glorious city where death is no more and where tears never fall. (BEC)

**RACHEL WEeping** (klauthmos) **FOR HER CHILDREN** (teknon); **AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED** (parakaleo), **BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE**: The massacre of the innocents recalls Jeremiah's prophecy lamenting the captivity of Rachel's descendants (Jer 31:15+). **Ramah** is located between 5.5-8 mi north of Jerusalem and was the scene of the gathering of the exiles. As they pass Ramah, Jeremiah pictures Rachel's weeping from her tomb over the fate of the fallen Ephraimites. Jeremiah uses this tragic event to introduce his description of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34+). Although the parallelism of sentiment between the Exile and Herod's atrocity is evident, Matthew employs the event to introduce the new covenant which Jesus has come to inaugurate in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.

**The prophet** (4396) see note above on [prophetes](#)

**John Butler** comments that "Abortion makes Herod's act look like a Sunday School picnic. We kill millions and millions of babies every year and the news media yawns and turns the other way. What we need to learn is that there is a relationship between our lack of affection for Christ and our abortion acts. In fact much evil in our land goes back to our bad attitude for Jesus Christ. The politicians do not understand this for they are part of the problem and they pass laws to allow evil which they cannot control. Those who defend abortion are not friends of Christ. They have more in common with Herod than with Christ."

#### Related Resource:

- [What is the Massacre of the Innocents?](#)

**Matthew 2:19** But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said,

NET After Herod had died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt

GNT Τελευτ σαντος ὁ το ρ δου ὁο γγελος κυρ ου φα νεται κατ ναρ τ ωσ φ ν Α γ πτ

NLT When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt.

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

ESV But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

NIV After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt

- **Herod** - Ps 76:10 Isa 51:12 Da 8:25 11:45
- **an angel** - Mt 2:13 1:20 Ps 139:7 Jer 30:10 Eze 11:16

## HEROD'S DEATH MARKS RETURN FROM EGYPT

**But** ([term of contrast](#)) **when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said**- Notice God's perfect timing **when Herod died**. His timing is perfect in our lives also beloved. [Herod the Great](#) died in 4 B.C. and his kingdom was divided up among his three sons: [Archelaus](#), who ruled over Judea (where Bethlehem was located, Mt 2:22); [Philip](#), who became tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (cf. Lk 3:1); and [Antipas](#), who became tetrarch of Galilee (location of Nazareth). Heb 1:1+ says God "spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways" and here speaks **in a dream**.

**Broadus** on **when Herod died** - The death of Herod (comp. on v. 1) occurred in the spring (just before the Passover) of the year of Rome 750. Josephus mentions an eclipse of the moon ("Ant.," 17, 6, 4) as taking place shortly before his death, and astronomical calculations enable us to fix the year with practical certainty. (Wieseler, Andrews, Caspari, Nicholson.) The birth of Jesus must have preceded Herod's death by several months, if not longer, and must therefore have occurred at least four years before the common Christian era, the first year of which coincides with the year of Rome 754. The poor old tyrant died of a most loathsome and torturing disease (see Jos. "Ant.," 17, 6, 5), in the seventieth year of his life, and the thirty-seventh of his nominal, or thirty-fourth of his actual

reign. (Jos. "War," 1, 33, 8; "Ant.," 17, 8, 1.)

**Died** (5053)(**teleutao**) means to complete, to come to an end, hence to die. Note especially Mt 9:18+ and Jn 11:39 which refer to persons raised from the dead by Jesus. **Friberg** - "intransitively in the NT come to an end; euphemistically die." **Thayer** - "to have an end or close, come to an end; hence, to die, very often so from Aeschylus and Herodotus down." **Liddell-Scott** - to complete, finish, accomplish (to fulfil an oath or promise; to bring about an evil day for one), to bring to an end, esp. to finish life, i.e. to die. Intransitively. 1. to be accomplished, Id. 2. to come to an end.

**Teleutao** - 13x in 13v - deceased (1), die (4), died (5), dying (1), put (2). - Mt. 2:19; Mt. 9:18; Mt. 15:4; Mt. 22:25; Mk. 7:10; Mk. 9:44; Mk. 9:46; Mk. 9:48; Lk. 7:2 (" was sick and about to **die**."); Jn 11:39 ("Martha, the sister of the **deceased**"); Acts 2:29+ ("the patriarch David that he both **died** and was buried"); Acts 7:15+; Heb. 11:22+

**Teleutao** in the **Septuagint** - In the Septuagint **teleutao** almost always translates the Hebrew term **mûth**, meaning "die" or "end one's life," especially in reference to physical death. Ge. 6:17 (Heb = **gava** = perish; Lxx = teleutao); Gen. 25:32; Gen. 30:1; Gen. 44:31; Gen. 50:16; Gen. 50:26; Exod. 1:6; Exod. 2:23; Exod. 4:19; Exod. 7:18; Exod. 7:21; Exod. 8:13; Exod. 9:4; Exod. 9:6; Exod. 9:7; Exod. 9:19; Exod. 11:5; Exod. 19:12; Exod. 21:16; Exod. 21:17; Exod. 21:34; Exod. 21:35; Exod. 21:36; Exod. 22:10; Exod. 35:2; Lev. 16:1; Lev. 21:11; Lev. 24:16; Num. 3:4; Num. 6:6; Num. 20:1; Num. 35:16; Deut. 17:5; Deut. 25:6; Deut. 32:50; Deut. 34:5; Deut. 34:7; Jos. 1:2; Jos. 24:33; Jdg. 2:8; 1 Chr. 29:28; 2 Chr. 13:20; 2 Chr. 16:13; 2 Chr. 24:15; Job 1:19; Job 2:9; Job 3:11; Job 12:2; Job 14:8; Job 14:10; Job 21:25; Job 27:15; Job 34:15; Job 42:17; Prov. 5:23; Prov. 10:21; Prov. 11:7; Prov. 15:10; Isa. 66:24; Jer. 11:22; Ezek. 6:12; Ezek. 7:15; Ezek. 12:13; Ezek. 17:16; Ezek. 18:17; Amos 7:11; Amos 7:17; Amos 9:10;

Note that this is **an angel of the Lord**, not "the **Angel of the LORD**" (OT Christophany), but a literal angel created by the the **Angel of the LORD**. Presumably this is the same angel as in Mt 2:13 who declared "remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." And now he tells Joseph.

**Behold** (2400)(**idou**) is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of eidon which means to see, perceive, look at. In the NT **idou** is used as a demonstrative particle that draws attention to what follows. **idou** in the **middle voice** means "you yourself look, see, perceive!" The **aorist imperative** is a command emphasizing "Do it now! Don't delay!" **Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

**Appeared** (5316)(**phaino**) means to bring to light, to cause to appear. Used frequently in Matthew and 3x in chapter 2- Matt. 1:20; Matt. 2:7; Matt. 2:13; Matt. 2:19; Matt. 6:5; Matt. 6:16; Matt. 6:18; Matt. 9:33; Matt. 13:26; Matt. 23:27; Matt. 23:28; Matt. 24:27; Matt. 24:30 = "Second Coming - "And then the sign of the Son of Man **will appear** in the sky"); Mk. 14:64; Mk. 16:9; Lk. 9:8; Lk. 24:11; Jn. 1:5; Jn. 5:35; Rom. 7:13; 2 Co. 13:7; Phil. 2:15; Heb. 11:3; Jas. 4:14; 1 Pet. 4:18; 2 Pet. 1:19; 1 Jn. 2:8; Rev. 1:16; Rev. 8:12; Rev. 18:23; Rev. 21:23

**M. Henry** - Mt 2:19-23. Egypt may serve to sojourn in, or take shelter in, for awhile, but not to abide in. Christ was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to them he must return. Did we but look upon the world as our Egypt, the place of our bondage and banishment, and heaven only as our Canaan, our home, our rest, we should as readily arise and depart thither, when we are called for, as Joseph did out of Egypt. The family must settle in Galilee. Nazareth was a place held in bad esteem, and Christ was crucified with this accusation, Jesus the Nazarene. Wherever Providence allots the bounds of our habitation, we must expect to share the reproach of Christ; yet we may glory in being called by his name, sure that if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him.

**Matthew 2:20** "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."

NET saying, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead."

GNT ἄγων, γερθε ς παρ λαβε τ παιδ ον κα τ ν μητ ρα α το κα πορε ου ε ς γ ν σρα λ· τεθν κασιν γ ρ ο ζητο ντε ς τ ν ψυχ ν το παιδ ου.

NLT "Get up!" the angel said. "Take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead."

KJV 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.

ESV saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead."

NIV and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

- **Get up** - Mt 2:13 Pr 3:5,6
- **for** - Ex 4:19 1Ki 11:21,40 12:1-3

## ANOTHER DREAM MESSAGE

This is the third communication from God to Joseph using a **dream** (Mt 1:20, Mt 2:12, Mt 2:19, Mt 2:22). This is another example of God's sovereign initiative and intervention in the lives of His people. These are the one's we are aware of, but given that God is in total control, there are doubtless many other sovereign acts not recorded. The one's that are recorded should always remind us that there are countless others and this is true of our lives beloved! You can count on a God Who is in control! (Even if your present circumstances seem out of control!)

**Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel** - One fascinating factoid is that this is the only mention of the phrase **the land of Israel** in the entire NT! One writer has an interesting thought "This expression, used nowhere else in the NT, suggests that Jesus' return from Egypt was like ancient Israel's leaving Egyptian slavery to dwell in the Promised Land." **Get up** ([egeiro](#)) means literally to wake up which is likely the sense here as the angel had spoke to Joseph in a dream. Then the angel gives a command to **take** in the [aorist imperative](#) meaning "Do this now!" "Don't delay!" **Go** is the [present imperative](#), a command to keep on going. It is not **flee** as before (Mt 2:13) but **go**. It is interesting that this command is almost identical (but the opposite direction) to that Jehovah gave to Moses in Ex 4:19 ""**Go** back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead." This is basically a reversal of the similar warning commands to **take** and **flee** in Mt 2:13.

**Take** (3880) ([paralambano](#) from **para** = beside + **lambano** = appropriate, receive) means to receive from another, to receive alongside or to take to oneself (into close association) in order to carry away, here of the baby Jesus, and one day Jesus taking us away in John 14:3 "I will come again and **receive** ([paralambano](#)) you to Myself." (The Rapture!)

**Child** (3813) see [paidion](#) diminutive of **pais** = child) is a little child

**For those who sought the Child's life are dead** - Note **those** is plural, so while Herod was the primary perpetrator of the assassination, it implies that there were others who were at least sympathetic accomplices! Think of the Jewish religious leadership whose power base would be totally disrupted if this one really were **King of the Jews**. While we cannot be definitive as to His age, clearly Jesus is no longer an infant and is probably between 2-4 years old, give that Herod died in 6 BC.

**Sought** (2212) ([zeteo](#)) implies giving attention and priority to and deliberately pursuing after. NIV has "those who were trying" reflecting the present tense of [zeteo](#) indicating this was a continuous effort to destroy the Christ Child. This was a persistent effort! Death snuffed out Herod's efforts to put Jesus to death.

**Matthew 2:21 So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.**

NET So he got up and took the child and his mother and returned to the land of Israel.

GNT ὁ γερθε ς παρ λαβεν τ παιδ ον κα τ ν μητ ρα α το κα ε σ λθεν ε ς γ ν σρα λ.

NLT So Joseph got up and returned to the land of Israel with Jesus and his mother.

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

ESV And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

NIV So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

- Ge 6:22 Heb 11:8

The Return from Egypt by James Tissot

## FROM EGYPT TO ISRAEL

**So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel**- Again note Joseph's unquestioning obedience. He is a man with a willing, submissive spirit. And the first area the family would have come to was Judea, which was ruled by Archelaus. Wiersbe adds that "We cannot help but admire Joseph for his faithfulness in obeying God and caring for both Mary and Jesus." (Expository Outlines)

**Arnold Fruchtenbaum** - They would have spent one to two years in Egypt, based on Josephus' account of Herod dying in Jericho in 4 B.C.

**Henry Morris** suggests that "Joseph apparently intended to return to the house in Bethlehem (Mt 2:9) where they had been living before their quick flight to Egypt. Instead, in response to another divine warning (Mt 2:22), he took the family back to Nazareth where they had lived before journeying to Bethlehem. The parallel account in Luke makes no mention of the visit of the Magi or of the flight to Egypt. It simply notes that they returned to Nazareth after a short visit to Jerusalem to dedicate Jesus to the Lord and to offer the appropriate sacrifice after his mother's month of purification (Lu 2:21-24,39 Lev 12:1-8). They evidently had returned to Bethlehem from Jerusalem, which was only a few miles away, by the time that the Magi came several months later." (Defender's Study Bible)

**Guzik** adds that "There have been some who falsely teach that Egyptian magicians or sorcerers influenced Jesus and His later miracles were really just Egyptian tricks. It is important to note that there is no evidence for such claims, and significant evidence against such claims. Particularly, the teaching and style of ministry of Jesus is completely influenced by Old Testament Judaism, not by Egyptian mysticism." ([Matthew 2 Commentary](#))

**Matthew 2:22** 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,

NET But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. After being warned in a dream, he went to the regions of Galilee.

GNT κο σας δ τι ρχ λαος βασιλει ει τς ουδα ας ντ το πατρ ς ατο ρ δου φοβ θη κε πελθε ν· χρηματισθε ς δ κατ ναρ νεχ ρησεν ε ς τ μ ρη τ ς Γαλιλα ας,

NLT But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod's son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there. Then, after being warned in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee.

KJV But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea 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:

ESV But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee.

NIV But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee,

- **he was** - Ge 19:17-21 1Sa 16:2 Ac 9:13,14
- **being** - Mt 2:12 1:20 Ps 48:14 73:24 107:6,7 121:8 Isa 30:21 48:17,18
- **he left for the regions of Galilee**- Mt 3:13 Lu 2:39 Joh 7:41,42,52

## JOSEPH WARNED IN ANOTHER DREAM

**But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod he was afraid([phobeo](#)) to go there** - The Roman government divided Herod's kingdom among his 3 sons - **Robertson** says that "In a fret at last before his death Herod had changed his will again and put [Archelaus](#), the worst of his living sons, in the place of **Antipas**." [Archelaus](#) (4 B.C.-A.D. 6) ruled over Judah, Idumea and Samaria. **Antipas** ruled over Galilee and Perea (he had John the Baptist executed Mt 14:1-2 and examined Christ the night before He was crucified - Lk 23:7-12). **Philip** became tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (cf. Lk 3:1). [Archelaus](#) was a bloody king, hated by the Jews and even worse in the eyes of Rome was the fact that he was an ineffective ruler. As a result [Augustus](#) made him [ethnarch](#), a title with less prestige than that of 'king.' He pursued the building of public works but was a repressive ruler. Early in his reign a riot broke out in Jerusalem during Passover. Three thousand people were killed by his soldiers, and it is probably this fact that contributed to Joseph's migration to Galilee. After a deputation of the Jewish aristocracy from Judea and Samaria visited Rome to protest the rule of [Archelaus](#), he was deposed and banished by Caesar Augustus in A.D. 6 to Gaul.

**Louis Barbieri** - [Archelaus](#), noted for tyranny, murder, and instability, was probably insane as a result of close family intermarriages. (BKC)

**Edersheim** has this background on **Herod's dreadful demise** - The cup of Herod's misdeeds, but also of his misery, was full. During the whole latter part of his life, the dread of a rival to the throne had haunted him, and he had sacrificed thousands, among them those nearest and dearest to him, to lay that ghost. And still the tyrant was not at rest. A more terrible scene is not presented in history than that of the closing days of Herod. Tormented by nameless fears; ever and again a prey to vain remorse, when he would frantically call for his passionately-loved, murdered wife Mariamme, and her sons; even making attempts on his own life; the delirium of tyranny, the passion for blood, drove him to the verge of madness. The most loathsome disease, such as can scarcely be described, had fastened on his body, and his sufferings were at times agonising. By the advice of his physicians, he had himself carried to the baths of Callirhoe (east of the Jordan), trying all remedies with the determination of one who will do hard battle for life. It was in vain. The namelessly horrible distemper, which had seized the old man of seventy, held him fast in its grasp, and, so to speak, played death on the living. He knew it, that his hour was come, and had himself conveyed back to his palace under the palm-trees of Jericho. They had known it also in Jerusalem, and, even before the last stage of his disease, two of the most honoured and loved Rabbis—Judas and Matthias—had headed the wild band, which would sweep away all traces of Herod's idolatrous rule. They began by pulling down the immense golden eagle, which hung over the great gate of the Temple. The two ringleaders, and forty of their followers, allowed themselves to be taken by Herod's guards. A mock public trial in the theatre at Jericho followed. Herod, carried out on a couch, was both accuser and judge. The zealots, who had made noble answer to the tyrant, were burnt alive; and the High-Priest, who was suspected of connivance, deposed.

After that the end came rapidly. On his return from Callirhoe, feeling his death approaching, the King had summoned the noblest of Israel throughout the land to Jericho, and shut them up in the Hippodrome, with orders to his sister to have them slain immediately upon his death, in the grim hope that the joy of the people at his decease would thus be changed into mourning. Five days before his death one ray of passing joy lighted his couch. Terrible to say, it was caused by a letter from Augustus allowing Herod to execute his son Antipater—the false accuser and real murderer of his half-brothers Alexander and Aristobulus. The death of the wretched prince was hastened by his attempt to bribe the jailer, as the noise in the palace, caused by an attempted suicide of Herod, led him to suppose his father was actually dead. And now the terrible drama was hastening to a close. The fresh access of rage shortened the life which was already running out. Five days more, and the terror of Judæa lay dead. He had reigned thirty-seven years—thirty-four since his conquest of Jerusalem. Soon the rule for which he had so long plotted, striven, and stained himself with untold crimes, passed from his descendants. A century more, and the whole race of Herod had been swept away.

We pass by the empty pageant and barbaric splendour of his burying in the Castle of Herodium, close to Bethlehem. The events of the last few weeks formed a lurid back-ground to the murder of 'the Innocents.' As we have reckoned it, the visit of the Magi took place in February 750 A.U.C. On the 12th of March the Rabbis and their adherents suffered. On the following night (or rather early morning) there was a lunar eclipse; the execution of Antipater preceded the death of his father by five days, and the latter occurred from seven to fourteen days before the Passover, which in 750 took place on the 12th of April.

It need scarcely be said, that Salome (Herod's sister) and her husband were too wise to execute Herod's direction in regard to the noble Jews shut up in the Hippodrome. Their liberation, and the death of Herod, were marked by the leaders of the people as joyous events in the so-called Megillath Taanith, or Roll of Fasts, although the date is not exactly marked. Henceforth this was to be a Yom Tobh (feast-day), on which mourning was interdicted. (Life and Time of Messiah - Chapter 9 - The Child - Life in Nazareth)

**Bruce** on [Archelaus](#) - "A man of kindred nature, suspicious, truculent (Josephus Antiquities, 17.11.2), to be feared and avoided by such as had cause to fear his father."

**Then after being warned** (see [chrematizo](#) in Mt 2:12) **by God in a dream (onar) he left (anachoreo) for the regions of Galilee** - This is the fourth communication from God to Joseph using a **dream (onar** - Mt 1:20, Mt 2:12, Mt 2:19, Mt 2:22). This is the fourth use of **departed (left - anachoreo)** in this chapter (Mt 2:12, Mt 2:13, Mt 2:14, Mt 2:22). In this dream warning there is no mention of which region or town to go to specifically. **Wiersbe** quips that "Joseph used his "sanctified common sense" and did not return to Judea. God affirmed the decision, and the family moved to Nazareth."

**Matthew 2:23 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."**

NET He came to a town called Nazareth and lived there. Then what had been spoken by the prophets was fulfilled, that Jesus would be called a Nazarene.

GNT κα λθ ν κατ κησεν ε ς π λιν λεγομ νην Ναζαρ τ· πω ς πληρωθ τ ηθ ν δι τ ν προφητ ν τι Ναζωρα ο ς κληθ σεται.

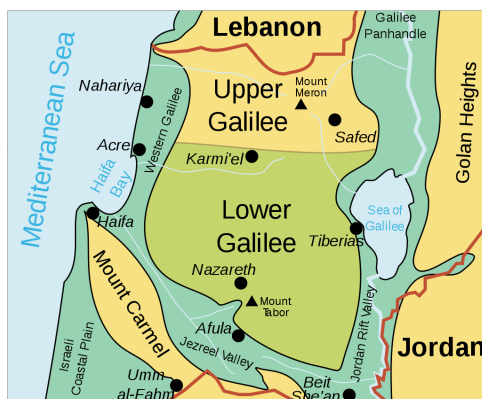
NLT So the family went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what the prophets had said: "He will be called a Nazarene."

KJV 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.

ESV And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

NIV and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."

- **Nazareth** - Joh 18:5,7 19:19 Acts 2:22
- **He shall** - Mt 26:71 Nu 6:13 Judges 13:5 1Sa 1:11 Ps 69:9,10 Isa 53:1,2 Am 2:10-12 Joh 1:45,46 Ac 24:5



**And came and lived in a city called Nazareth** (See [another map which shows Jerusalem](#) or [here](#)) - That they **came and lived** here makes sense as Nazareth is where Gabriel was sent to announce to Mary she would be the mother of Jesus (Lk 1:26-30, cf Lk 2:4). Nazareth was a no name town, thought to be home of nobody, but when Joseph moved his family there after returning from Egypt, Nazareth became the home of the greatest Somebody in the history of the world! But when looked at in the historical context (see more on Nazareth below), Jesus came out of a region (Galilee) and town (Nazareth) that were held in low esteem by most Jews, especially the Jews in Judea.

While not everyone agrees with the following interpretation **Barbieri** notes that "Isaiah said the Messiah would be "from [Jesse's] roots" like "a Branch" (Isa. 11:1). "Branch" is the Hebrew word nešer, which has consonants like those in the word "Nazarene" and



which carry the idea of having an insignificant beginning. (BKC)

**Nazareth** (3478)(**Nazaret**) is a transliteration of the Greek word. It is located about 14 miles west, southwest from the [Sea of Galilee](#), 6 miles west and NW of [Mount Tabor](#) and about 60 miles due north of Jerusalem. Mark refers to it as "Nazareth in Galilee" (Mk 1:9). Nazareth had such a low reputation, it was not even mentioned in the Old Testament, Josephus, the Talmud or even any of the classic Greek writers before the time of Christ! While the region of Galilee in Jesus' day generally had a negative reputation, and was looked down on by Judeans (Jerusalem and Bethlehem were in Judea), Nazareth was even more looked down upon. In Jn 1:46 "Nathanael said to him, **"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"** Philip said to him, "Come and see (REFERRING TO MESSIAH)." There were no rabbinic schools in Galilee in Jesus' day for they were all in Judea. The rabbis had a saying "if you want to get rich, go north, if to get wise, go south." It was situated on a mountain (Luke 4:29) within the province of Galilee (Mark 1:9) and near Cana (John 2:1, 2, 11). There was a precipice near the town from which the people proposed to cast Jesus (Luke 4:29). The angel appeared to Mary at Nazareth, which was also the home of Joseph (Luke 1:26; Lk 2:39). Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth after their flight into Egypt (Mt 2:23). Jesus preached in its synagogue, but was rejected by the people. He was known as **"Jesus of Nazareth"** (see "the Nazarene" = Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14) and His disciples were called Nazarenes. When the Turks conquered Palestine in a.d. 1517, the Christians were driven from the town. In a.d. 1620 the Franciscan monks gained a foothold there and began to rebuild the village. At the Battle of Mount Tabor in a.d. 1799, Napoleon and his army encamped near Nazareth. **Nazaret** is cited in both literature (Eusebius *HE* i.7.6-12) and inscriptions (*Israel Exploration Journal* 12 [1962] 137ff.), and archaeological discoveries have confirmed a continuous habitation of the site since ca. 900 b.c.

See notes on "The Puzzling Problem of Nazareth"

**Nazareth** - 12x in 12v and not in Septuagint-

Matthew 2:23 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."

Matthew 4:13 and leaving **Nazareth**, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Matthew 21:11 And the crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from **Nazareth** in Galilee."

Mark 1:9 In those days Jesus came from **Nazareth** in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Luke 1:26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called **Nazareth**,

Luke 2:4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of **Nazareth**, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,

Luke 2:39 When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of **Nazareth**.

Luke 2:51 And He went down with them and came to **Nazareth**, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 4:16 And He came to **Nazareth**, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and \*said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of **Nazareth**, the son of Joseph."

John 1:46 Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of **Nazareth?**" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Acts 10:38 "You know of Jesus of **Nazareth**, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

Some have suggested that "Nazarene" is a reference to the Heb. word for branch in Isaiah 11:1. Others point out that Matthew's statement that "prophets" had made this prediction may be a reference to verbal prophecies nowhere recorded in the OT. A still more likely explanation is that Matthew is using "Nazarene" as a synonym for someone who is despised or detestable—for that was how people from the region were often characterized (cf. John 1:46). If that is the case, the prophecies Matthew has in mind would include Ps. 22:6–8; Is. 49:7; 53:3.

**This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene."**- This is the fourth of four fulfilled prophecies in Matthew - (1) Mt 2:6 fulfilled Micah 5:2 (2) Mt 2:15 fulfilled Hosea 11:1 (3) Mt 2:18 fulfilled Jeremiah 31:15 and (4) Mt 2:23 is said to "fulfill what was spoken through the prophets. There is however no specific Old Testament prophecy or prophecies

that can be definitely linked to Matthew 2:23. See [discussion below](#) on OT quotes in the NT.

**THOUGHT** - The phrase **spoken through the prophets** is interesting indicating that the prophets did not just record these words but spoke them. And if they spoke what God's Spirit inspired them to speak (2 Pe 1:21+), when we read their "spoken words," we are reading the words God Himself had spoken. In short, when the Bible speaks, God speaks. Oh, how we need to continually go to this Holy Book to hear from our Father! Are you in the Book every day, so that the Book can get into you and renew your mind? If not, then rest assured that your mind is being "unrenewed" (so to speak) by the godless, God hating world system that bombards us with it's vile anti-God propaganda under the guise of advertisements, etc.

**Was to fulfill** (4137) see note above on [pleroo](#)

**Prophets** (4396) see note above on [prophetes](#)

**Spurgeon on Nazarene** - He meant that the prophets have described the Messiah as one that would be despised and rejected of men. They spoke of him as a great prince and conqueror when they described his second coming, but they set forth his first coming when they spoke of him as a root out of a dry ground without form or comeliness, who when he should be seen would have no beauty that men should desire him. The prophets said that he would be called by a despicable title, and it was so, for his countrymen called him a Nazarene.....Certainly he has long been called a 'Nazarene,' both by Jews and violent unbelievers. Spitting on the ground in disgust, many a time has his fierce adversary hissed out the name 'Nazarene,' as if it were the climax of contempt.....There is always some city or village or another whose inhabitants seem to be the butt of every joke and the object of scorn. The people of such places are thought to be low, uncultured, not-very-smart. That is the kind of place Nazareth was.

**Nazarene** (3480)(**Nazoraïos**) means an inhabitant of Nazareth and all uses refer to Jesus the Nazarene, with the exception of Acts 24:5+ which refers to Christians in a derogatory sense. Vincent says **Nazarene** is "A term of contempt (compare Jn 1:46, 7:52)." Despite the low esteem accorded the term Nazarene, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit and boldness is not ashamed to refer to Jesus as the Nazarene not only in his inaugural sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:22+), but at other times (Acts 3:6+, Acts 4:10+). Paul states in one of his versions of his conversion experience that the One he encountered identified Himself as Jesus the Nazarene, so even after His resurrection and ascension Jesus is not ashamed of this Name! (Acts 22:8+) **Nazoraïos** occurs 13x in 13 verses and is translated in the NAS as Nazarene (9), Nazarenes (1), Nazareth (3).

Matthew 2:23 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**."

Matthew 26:71 When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and \*said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus of **Nazareth**." (NET = Jesus the Nazarene)

Luke 18:37 They told him that Jesus of **Nazareth** (NET = Jesus the Nazarene) was passing by.

John 18:5 They answered Him, "Jesus the **Nazarene**." He said to them, "I am He." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them.

John 18:7 Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the **Nazarene**."

John 19:19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE **NAZARENE**, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Acts 2:22+ "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the **Nazarene**, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—

Acts 3:6+ But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the **Nazarene**—walk!"

Acts 4:10+ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the **Nazarene**, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health.

Acts 6:14+ for we have heard him say that this **Nazarene**, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."

Acts 22:8+ "And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the **Nazarene**, whom you are persecuting.'

Acts 24:5+ "For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the **Nazarenes**.

Acts 26:9+ "So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of **Nazareth**. (NET = Jesus the Nazarene)

**Toussaint** has an excellent summation of Matthew introductory chapters - "The first relates to the Gentiles. The Magi come from

the East and worship the King of the Jews. A glimmering foreview of all the nations of the earth being blessed in Abraham is seen in this act. . . . The second point Matthew makes concerns the Jews. They are shown to be unconcerned and indifferent to any report concerning Him. Finally, Matthew, by his use of the Old Testament, proves that Jesus is the promised Messiah. He is the fulfillment of all that is anticipated in their Scriptures. These three things form the basis of Matthew's Gospel. Jesus is presented as the Messiah prophesied and promised in the Old Testament. The Jews reject Him. Because of this rejection the King turns to the Gentiles and the kingdom program for the Jews is postponed. "Chapter one declares the theanthropic character of the person of the Messiah. The reception which is to be given the claims of the Messiah is set forth in chapter two. Matthew three begins the narrative of the historical account of the presentation of Israel's Messiah to that nation."

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## **HE SHALL BE CALLED A NAZARENE**

THE BIRTH NARRATIVES of the Lord Jesus Christ are a stunning testimony to the inviolability of the prophetic word. That the Messiah should come forth out of Bethlehem, Mic. 5:2, and be summoned from Egypt, Hos. 11:1, and be called a Nazarene, Matt. 2:23, seems to human intelligence wholly irreconcilable. Yet (and the believer should keep this much in mind) men are always wrong and God is always right! As the details unfolded the perfection of the word became apparent. Exactly the same flawless precision will be seen when the Lord Jesus returns to fulfil an even more extensive and perplexing series of prophetic pronouncements.

The Nazarene prediction is particularly interesting because it seems to have no exact source in the Old Testament. But we should note that the Spirit of God refers specifically to 'the prophets', as opposed to 'the prophet', 2:5, 17. It is not, then, one particular passage which is being pointed out, but the general drift of many which made it clear that God's Messiah would be shunned and scorned, growing up in poverty rather than plenty. He was 'despised and rejected of men', Isa. 53:3, 'a reproach of men, and despised of the people', Ps. 22:6, He demonstrates that 'the poor man's wisdom is despised', Eccles. 9:16, 'the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me', Ps. 69:9—thus the Holy Spirit testified in advance to the terrible repudiation of God's chosen One. And how completely was this fulfilled! Nathanael illustrates the average Israelite's viewpoint: 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?', John 1:46. The entire Galilee area was held unclean by orthodox Jews: it lay on the very borders of the land and was called 'Galilee of the nations', Isa. 9:1, 2, whose people walked in darkness.

Pride in birth, breeding, religious tradition, education, profession, affluence—all our smug human pretensions are shattered because God's own dear Son was raised in Nazareth. God forbid that we should glory save in the Lord Jesus and in His finished work, Gal. 6:14. Those who belong to a humble Saviour should be humble too, Jas. 4:6. (Cyril Hocking - Day by Day- Moments with the Master)

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## **MATTHEW 2:23—Didn't Matthew make a mistake by claiming a prophecy that is not found in the OT?**

PROBLEM: Matthew claims that Jesus moved to Nazareth to live, in order "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matt. 2:23). However, no such prophecy is found in any OT prophet. Did Matthew make a mistake?

SOLUTION: Matthew did not say that any particular OT "prophet" (singular) stated this. He simply affirmed that the OT "prophets" (plural) predicted that Jesus would be called a Nazarene. So we should not expect to find any given verse, but simply a general truth found in many prophets to correspond to His Nazarene-like character. There are several suggestions as to how Jesus could have "fulfilled" (brought to completion) this truth.

Some point to the fact that Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirements of the OT Law (Matt. 5:17–18; Rom. 8:3–4), one part of which involved the holy commitment made in the vow of the "Nazarite." The Nazarite took this vow "to separate himself to the Lord" (Num. 6:2), and Jesus perfectly fulfilled this. However, the word is different both in Hebrew and Greek, and Jesus never took this particular vow.

Others point to the fact that Nazareth comes from the basic word netzer (branch). And many prophets spoke of the Messiah as the "Branch" (cf. Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12).

Still others note that the city of Nazareth, where Jesus lived, was a despised place "on the other side of the tracks." This is evident in Nathaniel's response, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46) In this sense, "Nazarene" was a term of scorn appropriate to the Messiah whom the prophets predicted would be "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3; cf. Ps. 22:6; Dan. 9:26; Zech. 12:10). (Norman Geisler - When Critics Ask)

**Four Ways Old Testament is  
Quoted in New Testament**

Note that this material is a compilation from Arnold Fruchtenbaum's handout entitled "Life of Messiah", notes from "Messianic Christology." and comments from David Cooper's [Messiah: His Historical Appearance](#)

**INTRODUCTION** - Note that between 1/4 and 1/3 of the Bible is devoted to prophecy and some have been fulfilled, but a greater portion of has not, but awaits materialization in the future. Because sometimes the context of the Old Testament quotation does not seem to fit the New Testament context, some have questioned the validity of the New Testament's use of the Old Testament. When the New Testament quotes the Old Testament, it does so in four different ways. Every Old Testament quotation found within the New Testament will always fit into one of these four categories. There is one example of each of the four ways in Matthew Two, so this will be used as the basis for explaining them. These four ways of quoting the Old Testament are the ways the rabbis in 1st century Israel quoted them in rabbinic writings. Because of so very much unscientific exegesis of the Scriptures, many honest, sincere men and women have reached the conclusion that prophecy cannot be understood, and that it is a waste of time to try to understand it. There is no occasion for such gross and fantastic misinterpretation of prophecy. Essentially, history and prophecy are written upon the same basic principles. History tells what has occurred; predictive prophecy tells what will be. The same fundamental laws of logic and of language govern in both instances. If one gets these facts clearly in mind and approaches prophecy just as he does history, recognizing that the same principles obtain in both cases, he is in a position to understand prophecy more nearly accurately than is usually the case. (Adapted from David Cooper - Messiah-His Historical Appearance)

**CATEGORY (1) Literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment - Matthew 2:6 quotes Micah 5:2.**

Matthew 2:6 '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.'"

Micah 5:2 "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."

Note a specific point for point fulfillment, even predicting that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea (not in Bethlehem of Galilee) and this is the easiest kind of prophetic fulfillment to spot. That is the literal meaning, the literal interpretation of Micah 5:2; the Messiah, when He is born, will be born in the town of Bethlehem, within the tribal territory of Judah.

In these cases, the Old Testament literally speaks of a specific event in the future. When that specific event is literally fulfilled in the context of the New Testament, the New Testament quotes that particular prophecy as a point-by-point fulfillment. Many of the quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament fall into this category.

Other examples of **Category (1)**

1. Mt 1:22-23 quoting Isaiah 7:14,
2. Mt 3:3 quoting Isaiah 40:3,
3. Mark 1:2 quoting Malachi 3:1
4. Luke 4:18-19 quoting Isaiah 61:1-2.
5. Matthew 4:13-16 quoting Isaiah 8:22-9:2.
6. Matthew 21:5 quoting Zechariah 9:9
7. John 12:38 quoting Isaiah 53:1
8. John 19:24 quoting Psalm 22:18
9. Matthew 27:46 quoting Psalm 22:1

**NOTE THAT THE NASB HELPS IDENTIFY OT PROPHECIES BY PUTTING THE PROPHECY IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, A FEATURE NOT FOUND IN ANY OTHER POPULAR TRANSLATION.**

**(2) Literal prophecy plus typical fulfillment - a typology -**

Matthew 2:15 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."

Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.

In this OT passage from Hosea, the literal meaning of Hosea 11:1 is describing ISRAEL being called out of Egypt. It is calling Israel God's son. Look at Exodus 4:22-23. It is not a prophecy per se, but a historical event which foreshadows a future event. In this passage the calling of Israel out of Egypt is used as a TYPE, or parallel, or similar event, to God bringing Jesus out of Egypt. Many of the citations in the Book of Hebrews of Exodus and Leviticus fall into this category.

### (3) Literal prophecy plus application

Matthew 2:17-18 Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: 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.”

Jeremiah 31:15 (Thus says the LORD, “A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more.”

In this type of usage of Old Testament Scripture, there is one point of similarity, but also many differences. Matthew 2:17-18 uses Jeremiah 31:15 which in the original context is Jeremiah witnessing an event in his day as he sees the women of Ramah, where **Rachel** (she was the symbol of Jewish motherhood) was buried, crying as they see their sons being taken to exile in Babylon. They would never see them again. The events of Jeremiah have a point of similarity with the events in Bethlehem, since the Jewish mothers are weeping for sons they will never see again. However **Ramah** and **Bethlehem** are different towns, and the **Babylonian exiles** weren't going to their death as were the **infants of Bethlehem**. Everything is radically different except the mothers weeping.

This is what many pastors use in sermons today. They take a scripture and make a modern application from a single point of similarity.

### (4) Summation - a summary

Matthew 2:23.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.”

There is no exact quotation or prophecy, but when the word prophet switches from singular to plural, it is a summation. “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets” is a clue, when prophet becomes **prophets**, plural instead of singular, you are getting a summary. If you search the Old Testament for a mention of Nazareth, the only remote similarity in the is Isaiah 11:1, which calls Messiah a **Netzer**, which means branch, and sounds similar to Nazareth. However, the point that Matthew is making is that Jesus would be despised and rejected of men, as the **Nazarenes** were despised in their culture. Isaiah 53:3 and other scriptures foretell this. “He was despised and forsaken of men.” Other scriptures are: Isaiah 49:7, Psalm 22:6. “As spoken by the prophets” refers to prophecies such as these.

### PP - Pardes

The rabbinic concept of **PaRDeS** is an acronym for the four ways in which Scripture was used. It was a useful acronym to remind them of the four ways that Old Testament Scripture could be utilized.

- **Pshat** - the simple basic meaning of the text. Literal plus literal
- **Remez** - a hint. Literal plus typical
- **Drash** - exposition. Literal plus application
- **Sod** - secret. Summation

In summary, this was the rabbinic way of remembering valid ways to quote Old Testament Scripture. These four categories were used by the writers of the New Testament, as shown by the examples in these passages. If one does not understand the ways in which Scripture is being used, one can mistakenly conclude that Scripture is in error.