

THE FIRST YEARS OF JESUS' LIFE

The Visit of the Wise Men

Matthew 2:1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men (**Magos, magi**) from the East (**Babylon**) came to Jerusalem, **2** saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

- **Chuck Missler** says these were dream interpreters from Babylon (**AKA Persia**). They were called "Magi," or magicians by the Babylonian rulers because of their amazing ability to interpret dreams – BUT – Astrology was NOT their strong point, Dreams were!
- BTW, the Magi were given the authority to decide who was telling the truth or lying to the King.
 - They STILL do... We just call them **"MAGI- strates"**
 - They also had the task of choosing the next King when the ruling king died... Perhaps this explains why Herod was so upset... When they ask Herod where the **BORN** king is, they probably meant it as an insult to Herod, who was NOT even a Jew.
 - Who else do we know who could interpret dreams in Babylonia? Daniel!
 - These wise men could very well have been posterities, proteges, progenies of the prophet Daniel.
 - The way that we have been taught to look for the coming of the Lord – THEY had been taught to look for the coming of the Lord. They knew how many days it would be... **Daniel 9**
 - For being a POW, Daniel was very influential!

THE DISTURBED DICTATOR

3 When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all

Jerusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

- This is sad that the ruler of Israel knows so little about their prophecies...
- It IS sad that some of our Jewish friends are as ignorant of their Messianic prophecies as was Herod.

THE WISE MEN ANSWER

5 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 6 'BUT YOU, BETHLEHEM, IN THE LAND OF JUDAH, ARE NOT THE LEAST AMONG THE RULERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'

Micah 5:2

- For some reason, the Wise Men fail to mention that this child will be from eternity... Perhaps they are trying to pacify Herod now...

CLOSED DOOR MEETING

7 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared.

- This is like when the President calls for the congressional leaders to meet with him at the White House...
- He finds out what is about to happen from them...
- He tries to influence them... Threaten them... Sway them...
- Or, if that doesn't work... trick them...

8 "And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

ON THE ROAD AGAIN...

9 When they heard the king, they departed;...

- Missler believes they were accompanied by a military troop. This would

explain why Herod treated them so nicely, rather than just have them eliminated.

...and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. **10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

- What was the star they saw?
 - A comet? An alignment of stars?
 - Perhaps it was the angels still peeking down from heaven.

11 And when they had come into the house, **(Apparently, their room got upgraded,** they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, **(Deity)** frankincense, **(Priesthood)** and myrrh. **(Embalming spice) (Gifts prophesied in Isaiah 60:6)**

12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

JESUS THE REFUGEE

The Flight to Egypt

13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." **14** When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, **15** and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."

- How long was Jesus in Egypt?

- Josephus (*Antiquities*, 17.6.1, 5, 7, 8) and other historians of that time say 2-4 years.
- Almost immediately after seeking to kill Jesus, Herod became sick. He never recovered.

Herod Kills the Children

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, LAMENTATION, WEeping, AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEeping FOR HER CHILDREN, REFUSING TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY ARE NO MORE."

- The prophet Jeremiah spoke of this terrible event - **Jeremiah 31:15**- This is what the LORD says: "A cry is heard in Ramah—deep anguish and bitter weeping. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted—for her children are gone."

The Return to Nazareth

19 Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead."

21 Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. 23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

To me, the truly amazing part of Christmas is celebrating the fulfillment of so many Old Testament prophecies... Don't get me wrong, December the 25th is fun and I love it!

BUT...

There is nothing in scripture about December 25th – That date came into prominence in 354 A.D.

Centuries before the birth of Christ, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Micah, Zechariah, and others wrote of this miraculous birth, the virgin, the town of Bethlehem, the Messiah riding into Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, the resurrection, the destruction of the Temple... And next: THE CATCHING UP OF THE CHURCH!

SO... I end today with a question: Are you ready to be caught up?