

# Matthew Chapter 2

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### The Magi

#### Matthew 2:1-12

*If the Son of God must be brought into the world, one might expect that He should be received with all the ceremony possible, that the high and mighty of the world should have been his humble servants; such a Messiah as this the Jews expected.*

However, this did not happen, He came into the world and the world did not know Him. He came to His own and His own did not receive Him. The first who humbled themselves before the Son of God after his birth were the shepherds (Luke 2:15), after that, Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:21-38). The adoration of Jesus by Simeon and Anna is followed by about two years of silence, and then the magi from the east arrive in Jerusalem, seeking the newborn King.

#### Who were the magi?

Who were the magi? How many were there? Why did they come to Jerusalem? Many absurd traditions and guesses respecting these visitors to Jerusalem have found their way into the celebration of the birth of the Son of God and into Christian art. Were the magi three kings from the east? Some claim the magi represent the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth and therefore one of them is pictured as an Ethiopian. Were their names, Caspar, Belthizar and Melchoir? In Christian art, they are pictured kneeling at Jesus' cradle in the manger.

*Matthew tells us, "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem" (Matthew 2:1NASB).*

Matthew's introduction of the magi is very limited; all he tells us is the magi came from the east. He does not tell us they were kings. He does not tell us their names. He does not tell us they went to the stable where Jesus was born. He does tell us the magi was led by a star to the place Jesus was and entering the house they saw Jesus and His mother Mary and fell to the ground and worshiped Jesus and gave Him gifts (Matthew 2:9-11).

When the magi arrived in Jerusalem they inquired of everyone they met, "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" (Matthew 2:2).

In their country, which was in the east, the magi had seen an extraordinary star, such as they had not seen before; which they took to be an indication of an extraordinary person born in the

land of Judea. It is important to note the magi did not say the star led them to Jerusalem; they said they saw the star in the east, in their own country. There are two important facts we cannot overlook. **First**, if you were looking for a newborn king where would you go? The most logical place would be Jerusalem. **Second**, we are told how the magi knew about the prediction of the coming Messiah. The magi coming to Jerusalem is evidence they knew about the prediction. Therefore, as we are often told a star led the magi to Jerusalem is part of the same traditional accounts that place the magi worshipping Jesus in the stable.

**Note verses 9 and 10 In verse 10 we are told, "When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy."**

Those who truly desire to know Jesus and find Him will not regard pains or perils in seeking after Him. Their journey from the east to Jerusalem was a dangerous journey. There were many obstacles to overcome.

*Matthew has told us the magi came from the east to Jerusalem; they are seeking the newborn king and ask everyone they met, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:2), no one could answer the question.*

When Herod heard the magi were seeking a newborn king so that they might worship him Herod "was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (Matthew 2:3).

We can understand why Herod was troubled. What is difficult to understand is why all Jerusalem, except the few waiting for the consolation of Israel, was troubled. All Jerusalem knew of the evil character of Herod. They knew that the birth of the newborn king would result in bloodshed and they want no part of it.

Herod and Jerusalem were troubled because of a mistaken notion that the kingdom of the Messiah would clash and interfere with the secular powers. The reason why the kings of the earth, and the people, oppose the kingdom of heaven is that they do not understand the nature of the kingdom of heaven.

Herod has a solution to the situation he and all Jerusalem is in, he calls all the chief priests and scribes together and asks them where the Messiah was to be born. The persons he consults are the teachers of the law, the chief priests, and the scribes, who made it their business to study the law. The priests and scribes all agree that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem, the city of David here called Bethlehem of Judea, to distinguish it from another city of the same name in the land of Zebulun (Joshua 19:15).

**The proof they produce is taken from Micah 5:2.**

*Notice here how Jews and Gentiles compare notes about Jesus Christ. The Gentiles know the time of His birth by a star; the Jews know the place of it by the scriptures; and so they are capable of informing one another.*

Herod needs one more piece of information to put into effect his solution to what is troubling him and all Jerusalem, the exact location of the newborn king. He meets with the magi and asks

them the exact time of the appearing of the star and then he sends them to Bethlehem to find Jesus and then return and tell him where to find Jesus (Matthew 2:7-8). Why does Herod want to find Jesus, to worship Him as he claims, no his purpose is to kill Jesus.

Herod was now an old man, and had reigned thirty-five years; this king was but newly born and not likely to prove a threat to Herod for many years; yet Herod is jealous of him. Herod cannot endure the thought of successors, much less of rivals. Therefore, nothing less than the blood of this infant will satisfy him, What Herod does not realize, if this newborn child should be indeed the Messiah, in opposing him, or any attempt upon His life would be attacking God, something very dangerous. Herod's worst nightmare has got the mastery of reason and conscience. He would not openly admit his fears and jealousies; it would be his disgrace to let the wise men know them, and dangerous to let the people know them. Sinners are often tormented with secret fears, which they keep to themselves.

*What can we learn from the appearing of the magi in Jerusalem and their meeting with Herod? The greatest wickedness of men often conceals itself under a mask of religion. We see that in the United States, the Western World, and the Middle East.*

The magi found Jesus by the same star that they had seen in their own country (Matthew 2:9-10). By the first appearance of the star, they were informed of the birth of Jesus, then it disappeared, and they were left to take the usual methods for traveling to Jerusalem. A lesson for this present age, extraordinary helps are not to be expected where ordinary means are to be had.

The magi have pursued the matter of finding the newborn king as far as they could; they knew the birthplace of the newborn king. The question that needs answering is how they will find Him when they come to the place of His birth. Here they were at a loss, at their wit's end, but not at their faith's end. The magi believed that God, who had brought them this far would not leave them there; nor did He; for, behold, "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" (Matthew2: 9 NASB).

## A lesson for today

A lesson for today; if we go on as far as we can God will direct and enable us to do that which of ourselves we cannot do. The star had left the magi and now returns. They followed God in the dark, and now the light reserved for them leads them to Jesus. This star was the token of God's presence with them, for he is light, and goes before His people as their Guide. If we by faith follow the Lord in all our ways, He will lead in the paths of righteousness.

Observe how joyfully they followed God's direction (Matthew 2:10). Now they saw they were not deceived, and had not taken this long journey in vain. Now they were sure that God was with them, and the tokens of His presence and favor fill them with joy unspeakable. Now they could

laugh at the Jews in Jerusalem, who, probably, had laughed at them for coming on a fool's errand. Great joy filled the hearts of the magi when they entered the house where they found "the Child and His mother Mary."

We should find great joy in everything that will show us the way to Christ. God sent this star to guide the magi into the presence of the King of kings, the Lord of lords. God often sends tokens of his love to encourage us in difficult times. In the presence of the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the magi fell on the ground and worshiped Him. We do not read that they gave such honor to Herod, but to this Child they gave this honor, not only as to a king but also as to a God and they gave Him gifts. In the eastern nations, when they did homage to their kings, they gave them gifts.

Lessons for today, like the magi we must give up all that we have to Jesus Christ. We must be sincere in the surrender of ourselves to Him; we must not give our gifts unless we first present ourselves to Him as living sacrifices. The gifts the magi gave Jesus were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were the products of their own country. Some think they gave Jesus gold, as a king, paying Him tribute; frankincense, as God, for they honored God with the smoke of incense; and myrrh, as a Man that should die, for myrrh was used in embalming dead bodies.

The magi would have returned to Jerusalem and told him where to find Jesus, they had no reason to doubt what Herod told them. When the magi left Jerusalem, they did not promise or tell Herod they would return to Jerusalem and bring the good news to their fellow citizens. However, God warned the magi not to return to Herod and they left for their country another way. (Matthew 2:12).

## Exodus to Egypt

### Matthew 2:13-15

Verse 13 "Now when they had gone behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream" (NASB). This was not a dream like the one we normally experience; this was an actual confrontation with an angel. This type of dream was something unique to the periods of biblical revelation, and experienced by such men as Peter, Daniel, Abimelech, Jacob, Joseph, the butler and the baker who Joseph met in jail, and even Pharaoh.

The angel told Joseph, "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" (Matthew 2:13 NASB).

The Jewish Talmud says, "Ten measures of sorcery descended into the world; Egypt received nine, the rest of the world, one." Some Jewish rabbis in the Talmud believed that Egypt was the center of sorcery, and one of them believed that Jesus went into Egypt when He was young, and learned sorcery to con the world into believing that He was the Messiah.

*All that we really know about Jesus' infancy is that He went into Egypt and stayed there until after the death of Herod.*

**Joseph obeyed the angel (Matthew 2:14).**

*Escaping by night, Joseph took Jesus and Mary and remained there until the death of Herod. You will notice that Matthew omits the details because he is not concerned with them; he is concerned with the prophecy.*

We are not told how long Jesus and His parents resided in Egypt. Herod died shortly before the Passover in March or April of 4 B.C., which would make the stay in Egypt maybe a couple of months. In verses 19 and 20, we are told "when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, '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'"

What was the ultimate purpose of the family going to Egypt? The prophecy recorded in verse 15 does not say they went there that they might escape the threat on the life of Jesus, God could have done that any way He wanted. What God really wanted to do was verify prophecy concerning the Messiah. Therefore, Matthew tells us, "This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet; 'Out of Egypt I called My Son'" (Matthew 2:15; Hosea 11:1).

**That is one of the most important statements you will find anywhere in the Bible, because it tells you that the prophets, were inspired by God Himself.**

In this case, the Old Testament prophet was saying that the Son, namely the Messiah, would come out of Egypt.

Now how could the Child come out of Bethlehem and out of Egypt unless God worked some marvelous circumstances?

Hosea 11:1 says, "When Israel was a youth I loved him; and out of Egypt I called My son" (NASB) Now notice something very interesting there. To whom does He refer in Hosea 11:1? Who is the son there? It is Israel! Who is the son in Matthew? It is Christ. How can that be? Some people have said, "Well now, wait a minute. When the prophecy was given, it was given in reference to a historical statement about Israel, which is not even a prophecy there. It is merely a record of a past event. In addition, any Bible scholar who studies the book of Hosea will simply tell you God is reflecting upon the time when He called Israel out of bondage in Egypt. So how does this prophecy relate to the return of Jesus to Israel?"

God wanted Israel and Hosea to know how much He loved Israel. God's love for Israel went all the way back to when Israel was a child. Israel was not the last lover in a long line, but rather the first and only one that God loved when they were yet but a child. In other words, this passage emphasizes the incredible love that God has always had for Israel from the time Israel was not even a nation, held in bondage in Egypt under the power of Pharaoh. It was then that God set His love on them and sought to redeem them as His people (Deuteronomy 32:9-10).

When Matthew quotes Hosea, and applies it to Jesus, he sees the son that was called out of Egypt as fulfilled in Jesus. Thus, we are introduced to one of the most fascinating kinds of prophecy in the entire Bible, which is called a "type." Whereas a prophecy is a verbal prediction of a future event, a type is a nonverbal prediction. There are texts in the Old Testament that tell us God was going to send a Savior who would die, while at the same time there are other texts that present the sacrifice of a lamb, which was simply a nonverbal picture of Jesus Christ. Types, however, are no less potent and powerful, and no less direct than verbal prophecies. Therefore, Israel is a type because Matthew, inspired by the Holy Spirit, sees Israel as a picture

of Jesus; God calling His beloved son Israel out of Egypt.

*When the Lord Jesus returns in righteousness to reign over the earth as "King of kings and Lord of lords" the prophets tell us that one of the nations that is going to be given a special place of blessing in the Millennial Kingdom is Egypt (Isaiah 19:21-25; Zephaniah 3:9-10; Psalm 68:31).*

**You say, "Do you mean the Egypt that held Israel in bondage, oppressed them, and forced them to make bricks without straw, idolatrous nation will have a special place in the Millennial Kingdom?"**

Why in the world would Egypt ever have a place in the Millennium, could it be a token of divine gratitude for a country that granted sanctuary to the Son of God when He was a baby?

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