

# **“Wise Men Will Seek Jesus”**

## **Matthew 2:1-18**

Message by Michael J. Barnard

December 31, 2023

**Teaching Aim:** To explore the events surrounding the visit of the wise men (*or magi*) from the East sometime after the birth of Christ. To understand Herod’s negative reaction to the birth of the Jewish Messiah, to recognize the religious leader’s apathy and unbelief, to marvel at God’s unusual revelation through a supernatural star and the voice of an angel. To realize Jesus was born to die, but at the time appointed by God, not Herod.

### **DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)**

#### **Part I: Wise men visit King Herod and the city of Jerusalem (Matt. 2:1-12)**

1. The Herod mentioned in **verse 1** is also known as “*Herod the Great*.” Why was he given that title? During what years did Herod reign as “*the king of the Jews*?” What were some of Herod’s greatest accomplishments? What do we know about this man’s character? (See **vs. 16**)
2. Who were the wise men of **verse 1** and what can we learn about the purpose of their trip in **verse 2**? How many men were in their party? What region did the wise men come from? (See Commentaries)
3. Mark Antony, along with Octavian (later Caesar Augustus), were influential in Herod’s appointment as king of the Jews in 37 B.C. How did Herod respond to the news of the birth of another “*King of the Jews*?” How did the city of Jerusalem respond as a whole to the arrival of the wise men (**vs. 3**)?
4. What was troubling King Herod in **verse 4**? According to **verses 4 & 5**, were the religious leaders aware that the Magi had come to find the Messiah? Who should have been most excited about the birth of the Messiah? Were they? Were the Jewish religious leaders aware of where the Messiah was to be born (**vs. 6**)? How did they know? (See **Mic. 5:2**) What if any differences do you see in **Micah 5:2** and **Matt. 2:6**? How far was it from Jerusalem to Bethlehem? (Hint: Search online) Were the Jewish religious leaders willing to make the short trip to verify the Messiah was born?

5. Still troubled by this perceived challenge to his kingdom, Herod secretly summoned the wise men to meet with him in Jerusalem. What question did he ask them (**vs. 7**)? Why?
6. What mission did Herod send the wise men on (**vs. 8**)? Traditionally many people believe the wise men went to the stable to see Jesus on the night of His birth, but did they? What can we learn about the age of Jesus from **verse 8** and the fact that the wise men had to travel well over 1,000 miles on foot (or camel) to get there? What special instruction did Herod give to the wise men? Did Herod really want to go to Bethlehem to worship the Christ Child, or was he lying?
7. Notice the supernatural star that led the wise men from the East to Jerusalem disappeared when they arrived at Jerusalem. What supernaturally reappeared as the wise men resumed their trip to Bethlehem (**vs. 9**)? How far did the star lead them before stopping? What do you think this star was? (See Commentaries)
8. What was the reaction of the wise men when the star stopped above the house of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem (**vs. 10**)? Why were they so joyous?
9. What can we learn about the age of Jesus from **verse 11**? What does this verse do to the commonly held tradition that the wise men arrived at the stable on the night of Jesus' birth? Why? The order of names is significant in **verse 11**; who mentioned first, Mary or Jesus? What did the wise men do when they found "*the young Child*" and His mother? Why should truly wise men always seek Jesus?

10. What three gifts did the wise men bring to the Christ Child (**vs. 11**)? Why do people commonly believe there were three wise men? Do we know for sure how many people were there? (See Commentaries) What does each gift symbolize? What word is used in **verse 11** to describe the extreme value of these gifts?
11. What supernatural event took place in **verse 12**? Why? What were the wise men warned of? What did they do as a result of this warning? Should anyone who truly comes to Jesus want to return to their old lifestyle? Why or why not? What are some ways that your life has changed since coming to faith in Jesus Christ? (See **2 Cor. 5:17**)

## **Part II: Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt with the young Child Jesus (Matt. 2:13-15)**

1. What unusual experience did Joseph have in **verse 13**? What urgent warning was given to Joseph? Why? Can people hide the intent of their hearts from God? Why do so many people think that they can?
2. How quickly did Joseph respond to God's warning (**vs. 14**)? Has the Lord ever warned you that you were in danger? Did you respond immediately or just ignore it?
3. For how long did the family of Jesus take refuge in Egypt (**vs. 15**)? We know from Scripture that Joseph and Mary were very poor. (See **Luke 2:21-24**) How do you think they paid for the trip to Egypt and their temporary stay there? (See **vs. 11**) Do you think it is likely that they found a Jewish colony to stay with? How far was Egypt from Bethlehem?
4. Matthew quotes from **Hosea 11:1** to relate Jesus to the infant nation of Israel (**vs. 15b**). In the case of Israel, God led them out of Egypt during the Exodus. How was the nation of Egypt used to help deliver Israel from peril? (See **Gen. 42:1-2**) How did God use the nation of Egypt to help deliver the infant Jesus from imminent danger in Bethlehem?

5. Today Islam is sweeping across the world at an unprecedented pace. What do we learn about the future of Egypt and other Muslim nations from Isaiah's prophecy in **Isa. 19:20-25**? When will this massive conversion to Christ take place?

### **Part III: Herod murders all the male children two years and under in the vicinity of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16-18)**

1. How did Herod react when he realized the wise men had taken another route home instead of returning to Jerusalem (**vs. 16**)? What heinous crime did Herod the Great commit with his soldiers?
2. Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant; Jesus the Mediator of the New. What similar event happened to both baby boys following their birth (**vs. 16**)? (See **Exod. 1:15-16, 22; 2:1-3; Matt. 2:16-18**) How did God deliver each child? (See **Exod. 2:4-10**) Why do you think Satan tried so hard to kill these two babies, and in the process killed so many other children as well? Is Satan still trying to kill babies today? If so, how?
4. Matthew quoted **Jer. 31:15** in describing the events of **Matt. 2:16-18**. Matthew also used the "personification" of Rachel (*Jacob's favorite wife*) to represent the mother of Israel, even though she died some 1,650 years earlier. What was Jeremiah describing in his original prophecy? (See Commentaries) How did Matthew relate Jeremiah's prophecy to this incident in the life of Jesus?
5. Jacob saw Bethlehem as a place of death. What do we see Bethlehem as today? (Note: Rachel died near Bethlehem and her tomb is there today.) The personification of Rachel shows her symbolically crying for the Jewish baby boys who lost their lives to Herod the Great; the mother of Israel's heart was broken. Is your heart broken today by the many children who are losing their lives to abortion in our country and for the many others who are having their bodies mutilated by so called doctors? Children are our most precious resource, what are some things that you can do to help stop this carnage?

### **MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!***

- The wise men were Gentiles from either Babylon or Persia who were experts in the study of stars; they likely travelled over 1,000 miles on their journey to Bethlehem in order to worship Jesus.
- Herod (*who was a descendant of Esau and an Idumean*) was assigned by Rome to be king of the Jews; thus he was troubled when the announcement came that "*the King of the Jews*" had been born.
- The religious leaders wouldn't even travel five miles to see if the Messiah had been born.
- The unexpected gifts from the wise men funded the family's life saving trip to Egypt.
- Rachel, though dead for around 1650 years, is "*personified*" as the mother of Israel; she is seen here as crying and refusing to be comforted for the Jewish children who were murdered.
- What goes around comes around; in the end, God will judge all evildoers like Herod.
- Truly wise men will always seek Jesus. (See **John 14:6; Acts 4:12**)