

Matthew 2  
The infancy of Jesus

- I. Wise men visit the infant Christ. (1-12)
  - A. These events took place after Jesus was born. (1-8)
    - 1. He was born during the reign of Herod the Great. (40-4 BC)
      - a. Herod was a tyrant, but much was achieved during his reign, giving him the distinction of “the Great” behind his name.
      - b. This would make the birth of Jesus around 5 or 4 BC (not 1AD as commonly thought).
    - 2. The wise men traveled to Jerusalem in search of the Christ.
      - a. Wise men = Magi. A name for Persian priestly caste. Same word used in Acts 13:6, 8.
      - b. These men learned of Jesus’ birth and were looking for the location of the child.
    - 3. “From the east” is a general direction and cannot be positively identified.
      - a. The gifts could have been from Arabia, but not exclusively.  
Note: Some say there were three wise men because there were three different gifts mentioned. That is purely circumstantial. No evidence of the number.
      - b. They were Gentiles seeking the king of the Jews. (2)
      - c. Jews would not need to ask these questions because of the prophecies contained in the Old Testament.  
Note: This shows the universality of the King.
    - 4. Herod is disturbed by the news of a newborn king.
      - a. When Herod was troubled, the people under him were troubled.
      - b. Herod was appointed by Rome and knew a real king could rightfully drive him out.
      - c. Herod wanted to know where this king would be born. The answer was “Bethlehem in the land of Judaea”. (cf Mic. 5:2)
      - d. Interestingly, Jewish failure to believe was not due to ignorance. Israel knew precisely where the King would be born, but it was the Gentiles who worshiped Him first.
    - 5. Herod instructs the wise men to tell him the location of the King.
      - a. Herod does not reveal his true motives to the wise men.
      - b. “Young child” (8b) refers to an infant, not necessarily a newborn.
      - c. There was no reason the wise men should doubt Herod’s motives.
  - B. The wise men find the Christ child. (9-12)
    - 1. As they journey they see the star again.
      - a. How the star exactly stood over the place where He was located is unknown.
      - b. This star was a source of very great joy to these wise men.
    - 2. Contrary to popular belief, they did not visit the manger scene. It may have been weeks, or months, later when they found Him. (11)
- II. Jesus and His family flee into Egypt. Then, returned when it was safe. (13-23)
  - A. Their flight to Egypt to escape Herod. (13-15)
    - 1. Throughout history many Jews fled into Egypt when trouble arose in

- Palestine. (cf. Gen 43:1, 2; 1 Kings 11:40; 2 Kings 25:26; Jer. 26:21)
- a. Joseph immediately obeys. (14)
- Note: The providence of God is truly amazing. With the gift of gold the poor family now has the means to travel to escape Herod's tyranny.
- b. Note that "the child" is always mentioned before His mother, (cf. 2:11; 20, 21) showing the importance He held.
2. Herod kills the children two years old and under. (16-18)
    - a. Herod is furious at the disobedience of the wise men.
    - b. Herod was "exceeding wrath" which led to mass murder.
    - c. The "two years" gives him plenty of leeway to eliminate the King.  
Note: Some have questioned the authenticity of this account because of its extreme cruelty. History shows Herod had three of his own sons killed. In addition, when he was near death he left orders that one member of each family should be executed so that the whole nation would be in mourning, according to Josephus, Antiquities 17.181.
    - d. This murder was a fulfillment of OT prophecy. (cf. Jer. 31:15)
- B. The return of the Christ child from Egypt. (19-23)
1. Again, Joseph is informed in a dream. It is now safe to return to Israel.
    - a. Joseph obeys, at once, as he did in departing to Egypt.
    - b. Joseph and the family dwell in Nazareth because of Archelaus, the cruel son of Herod.
  2. Joseph and Mary were originally from Nazareth. (Lk 1:26; 2:4)
    - a. Nazareth, a term of contempt associated with Jesus throughout His life. (cf. Jn 1:46)
    - b. The Jews did not expect this kind of Messiah. (cf. Jn 7:52)

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