

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ Magi Visit and Flight to Egypt

Last time...the presentation, “dedication”, and witness of Jesus in the Temple

This time...the visit of the wise men and the flight to Egypt

We are in Matt 2

v1-2 there came wise men from the east...King...worship him:

After

- the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea (Roman province) due to Roman decree
 - the circumcision of Jesus 8 days later
 - the presentation/dedication/witness of Jesus in the Temple
- wise men (“magi”) from the east came to Jerusalem
- looking for the King of the Jews, the Messiah
 - so they could worship him

Where did the wise men come from?

- the East
- the homeland of Abraham
- the heart of Babylonian and Medo-Persian Empires
- the place of the Jewish captivity
- the region under the administration of Daniel
- the largest settlement of Jews outside of Jerusalem/Judea (a learned class)

Who were the wise men, these worshippers of the King?

- widely believed to be Gentile believers in the Jewish Messiah
- but given Jewish population in Babylon and same word is used of a Jew in Acts 13, could they be Jewish?
- possibly could be fruit of Daniel’s ministry about 535 years earlier

How many wise men were there?

- Scripture does not say
- So why do the traditional Nativity scenes have 3 wise men?
- Because the wise men brought 3 gifts...
3 wise men is an assumption, not a Biblical fact
- Given the distance covered, the danger of such a journey, and the value of their gifts, there would most likely have been an entourage, noticeable in its size and grandeur

Why did they go to Jerusalem?

- It is the seat of government in that Roman province
- It is where one might expect to find the King of the Jews
- “His star” led them there

What is “His star”?

- Natural
 - star
 - conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn (and possibly Mars) in the constellation Pisces
- Supernatural
 - instrument of Divine guidance
 - seen and unseen
 - appeared, disappeared, and reappeared
 - Messianic prophesy in Num 24:17 Star, Scepter shall rise

Would the wise men come to the City of David to see the King of the Jews...
and worship Him if they believed he was a mere man?

What does Scripture say about worship?

God alone is to be worshipped

v3 Herod...was troubled and all Jerusalem:

The hubbub of this entourage from the east...and their inquiry...
would have never gone unnoticed by the ever-alert, paranoid Herod

Remember, Herod was:

- Edomite, not Jewish
- forced to converted to Judaism by the Maccabees he hated
- loyal to Rome
- Hellenist...embraced Greek culture
(pleasing Sadducees but much to the consternation of Pharisees)
- charming
- self-glorifying
- intelligent without morals or scruples
- courageous without honor
- ruthless and evil
- devious and subtle
- over-the-top paranoid

The merciless dictator, ever suspicious of everyone when it came to his throne,
got the lowdown from “his people”...and in keeping with his nature, was

- agitated, riled up, threatened in his pervasive insecurity
- fearful of his masters (Rome) who did not tolerate any money-business
- angered by an unknown, mysterious challenger, this Jewish king

As a result, the entire population of Jerusalem was on edge and terrified,
not knowing how their unstable, volatile, insanely insecure “king”
would react to this challenge to his throne...but knowing he would.

v4-6 chief priest and scribes...where Christ should be born:

Herod had been hearing all the buzz in his kingdom about the Jewish Messiah and
knew of the expectancy the Jews held regarding His coming
He is “on alert” as a result...now this entourage from the east.

So he gathered

- the chief priests – his political appointments, not rightful priests
- the scribes – the Bible college professors

and demanded to know what the Jewish holy books said about the birthplace of
the Messiah...so he would know where to look for this challenger to his
throne

And the location of the Son of David (2 Sam 7) was Scripturally evident –
Bethlehem, David’s hometown (Micah 5:2)

From Bethlehem would come the Shepherd King of God’s flock

God’s King would be a Shepherd...not a wolf like Herod

This should have made the chief priests and scribes very nervous as well...

Ezk 34

- v2-3 feed themselves vs the flock...feed on the flock
- v4 self-serving, rule by force and cruelty
- v10 God is against them (anti-Rom 8:31)
- v11 God will search and seek the scattered...Luke 19:10
- v15 Ps 23...sheep safe, secure, in peace
- v16 the Lord will destroy the false shepherds
(religious and political)
- v22 the Lord will save His flock
- v23 He will put One Shepherd over them...John 10:10-14
- v27 they will be safe and know He is the Lord
- v30 His flock: the house of Israel, His people

Not only is Herod put on Alert, but the religious leaders are put on Notice
by the arrival of the wise men from the east

Herod is keenly aware of the “threat”
The Priests and scribes are blind to the promise

v7-8 privily called the wise men:

Armed with Scriptural information, Herod secretly calls for the wise men/worshippers and asks them the exact time the star appeared to them

Note: The wise men could see the star...but Herod could not

Their answer (not recorded here but in Herod's subsequent order in v16):
"2 years ago."

Herod then answers their question (v2a) and sends them to Bethlehem, piously instructing them to

- make a thorough search for
 - the Messiah
 - young child vs babe (Luke 2:12)
 - report details about this King back to him
- so he can likewise worship the Messiah, the King of the Jews

NOT!

Herod has no intention to worship the young child but has every intention to kill him

But he isn't going to tell that to the wise men so he deceives/lies to them

v9-10 the star...went before them:

Implied is a reappearance of the star that appeared to them in the east and guided them to Jerusalem...it had disappeared while they were in Jerusalem but now has reappeared to guide them onward to Bethlehem

The wise men rejoiced to see the star again

The star guides them to Bethlehem, perhaps to the very house where Jesus was living...a 2 year old toddler

What is the nature of a star that appears, guides, disappears, reappears, guides again...natural or supernatural?

Why have so many people searched so hard for so long for a natural explanation?

Since Gen 1:1 is true, is this star any big deal for the God for Whom nothing is too hard?

v11 come into the house...worshipped...gifts:

Was Jesus born in a house?

No, there was no room for Him anywhere in town, He was born in a cave

Did the wise men visit Jesus in a cave?

No, in a house

Jesus was not a “babe” when the wise men visited Him, He was a “young child”,
a 2-year old

So the traditional Nativity scenes are not Biblically correct

Whom did the wise men worship?

Jesus

Not Mary

Not Jesus and Mary

Note: Mary not worshipped as Queen of Heaven until the 14th century by
RCC

Were the wise men rebuked for worshipping Jesus?

No angels appeared to rebuke the magi for worshipping Jesus
because Jesus is “God with us” and is to be worshipped!

What is the significance of their gifts?

- All valuable/costly
- Gold – for a King
- Frankincense – for a Priest
- Myrrh – for a Prophet (used in burials)

How did they know Jesus is/would be

- King...Ps 2
- High Priest...Gen 14
- Prophet...Deut 18

How does anyone know the Identity of Jesus Christ?

By revelation – the Word and the Spirit

Matt 16:15-17 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son
of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed
art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it*
unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

v12 warned of God:

Man can deceive other men...and man can deceive himself...
but man can never deceive God (although he thinks he can!)

Herod deceived the wise men but God revealed the truth to them and sent them
home another way, avoiding Herod in Jerusalem
The liar and murderer is exposed by God and the wise men are steered clear

v13-15 angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph:

Not only the wise men, but also Joseph/Mary/Jesus needed to be warned of
Herod's murderous intent
Gabriel (?) is sent to Joseph with a warning, and Joseph obeys immediately as
evidenced by their departure in the middle of the night

They went to Egypt...
site unrecorded but the Copts of Egypt have their traditions...
until Herod is dead and his threat with him

About Herod:

- Herod is a type of the antichrist
 - charming
 - self-glorifying
 - intelligent without morals or scruples
 - courageous without honor
 - ruthless and evil
 - devious and subtle
 - over-the-top paranoid
 - bitter enemy of Jesus Christ
- Caesar Augustus thought so highly of Herod and his abilities to govern and prosper that he wanted to enlarge Herod's "kingdom" by including both Syria and Egypt...but Herod died before he could
- According to Josephus, Herod died in a most dramatic fashion of a loathsome disease...
burning fever, ulcerated entrails, foul discharges, convulsions, stench, etc

- History records Herod's death in 4 BC...why was Jesus born "BC"?
At the time, the Roman Empire reckoned time from the founding of the city of Rome
Later, in 526 AD, when Christianity "conquered" the Roman world, Emperor Justinian commissioned a monk named Dionysius Exiguus to make a calendar reckoning time from the birth of Jesus Christ to replace the Roman calendar
It was later discovered that the monk made an error in placing the birth of Christ on the Roman calendar, in year 753 from the founding of Rome vs in year 749 or 748 or 747...

About the flight into Egypt:

- Did Joseph/Mary/Jesus flee in fear of their lives or with the calm of Divine protection?
- Why Egypt?
 - Proximity? (vs Syria or Arabia Petra or Nabatea)
 - Vastness? Egypt is a very long "6 mile wide" nation
 - To fulfill Scripture
Ex 4:22-23 (Israel is My firstborn) with Hosea 11:1
 - New covenant...better promises (Heb 9-10)
Deut 4:1-14 (diligently keep all Word) with Jer 31:31-34
Deut 5:22 (tables of stone) and Deut 7:7-9 (keep if love)
2 Cor 3:3 (written on tables of the heart)
 - Another exodus
 - Led by Moses (Ex 14-)
 - Led by Jesus (Luke 9:29-31)
 - the place of bondage becomes a place of refuge –
God has turned the tables to un-do the curse

v16-18 Herod...slew all the children:

The deceiver was mocked/deceived...and was furious (the people troubled)
A cold-blooded killer, Herod did not find out the identity of the King of the
Jews...so he killed all possible candidates
All 2 year olds and younger in Bethlehem...in the inheritance of Benjamin
(known as Ramah in Joshua 18:21-28), the son of Rachel...
were murdered

Also a fulfillment of Scripture given by the all-knowing eternal God
Jer 31:15

Context of Jer 31

Joy and blessing upon Israel at the time of the 2nd Coming of
Christ

In the midst, v15: great sorrow fulfilled at the 1st Coming of
Christ

The Biblical pattern: great sorrow then great joy
Phil 1:29

So...

v1b is about 2 years after v1a

v11-12 is about a 2 year old toddler, not a newborn babe

The presentation of Jesus in the Temple and the public witness by Simeon
and Anna (not popular, dangerous message) is a forgotten episode
by the time v1-3 happens

Had the traditional Nativity scenes been accurate and v1-3 happened days
or weeks after the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, Herod
would have put 2 and 2 together and known that Jesus was the
King of the Jews, would have known Who he needed to kill

This passage is about

- wise men from the east visiting...bearing witness of God's King
- God warning the faithful as a result of how that witness was received by the "king"
- the political leaders put on alert
- the religious leaders put on Notice

The wise men, these believers (be they Gentile or be they Jewish)

- came from the east, from a large Jewish population center
- were sent and guided by God to bear witness of His King, the Messiah
- were given a mixed reception in the nation's capitol...both a hopeful welcome and a deceptive and icy wariness
- "troubled" Jerusalem
- were warned by God of a mortal danger posed by a type of the antichrist
- were sent home safely
- leaving much murderous anger in their wake
 - an outraged "king"
 - people on edge
 - innocents murdered
 - the Holy calmly fleeing to a safe haven, site of exodus

I find the circumstances of that visit very interesting in light of the events in our nation earlier this week...striking similarities on the surface but the depths of the similarities remain to be seen

I am simply making observations

I am not saying anything more than I am saying so please do not read into it

The similarities, the observations from this week started with a prophet sent by God to Benjamin Netanyahu

Tuesday at breakfast with Pastor John (while BN was before Congress regarding nuclear Iran): events that happened years ago that 2 different eyewitnesses at 2 different times years ago bore witness to him:

A pastor of a small church (name withheld intentionally because the name of God is more important than the name of the prophet) is told by the Lord:

Go to Israel. You will deliver a message for Me.

The pastor/prophet went, not yet knowing the message.

He walked the streets of Jerusalem waiting for direction from the Lord.

In front of a particular house, the Lord said:

This house. Go knock on the door

The prophet did.

The man of the house, a senior aged man, answered the door
The prophet: I have a message from the Lord for you.
Man: You do? What is it?
Prophet: I don't know. He has not told me yet.
Man: Come in. Any man who comes to my door and tells me he has a message from the Lord for me must share a meal with my family.
At the man's table were his two sons, one of which was named Benjamin
The senior man's name was Benzion Netanyahu

Time passes, the prophet comes repeatedly to Israel, visits the Netanyahus,
is always asked what the message of the Lord is, is never able to answer
One year, the prophet is having coffee with Benjamin in the Jewish Quarter
Prophet: I have a message from the Lord for you.
BN: Yes I know, but you don't know what it is.
Prophet: I do now, the Lord has told me. You will be the PM of Israel.
BN: Impossible. I have absolutely no interest in politics, I am going to go to NYC and make a bunch of money.

After a series of events...BN is elected PM of Israel
During his term as PM, BN gave away some land in a negotiation for peace
His government fell and BN was removed in a vote of no-confidence

BN went on the speaking tour...making a bunch of money
One of his speaking stops was a large church in FL (where the 2 eyewitnesses were present at a meeting with him before he spoke)
Into that meeting walked the prophet, whom BN had not seen for quite some time
Prophet: I have a message from the Lord for you.
BN: We are going to go through that again?
Prophet: You will be the PM of Israel again.
BN: Impossible! I am despised by my people, they will never vote for me for anything.
Prophet: (Rebuke) You will be PM of Israel again and this time do not give anything away! And do what God tells you to do!
Prophet turns to leave
As he goes, BN: If this happens, then I know Yeshua is the Messiah

Well...BN was again elected PM of Israel
BN holds Bible studies every week in his home

This week BN spoke to Congress
This time, was he the prophet?

The similarities to the passage this morning are striking to me

A wise man, a believer/witness (Jewish) and his entourage

- came from the east, from a large Jewish population center
- was sent and guided by God to bear witness of...trouble, a mortal danger posed by a type of the antichrist
- was given a mixed reception in the nation's capitol...both a hopeful welcome and a deceptive and icy wariness
- "troubled" Jerusalem...and Tel Aviv and Washington DC
- returned home safely
- leaving much anger in his wake
 - an outraged "king"
 - people on edge

Was BN's visit and message one of God's last warnings to USA?

- Future: innocents murdered?
- Future: the Holy calmly fleeing to a safe haven, site of exodus?

How is the news of Jesus Christ the King of kings received in these political times?

- hope
- fear
- rage
- heartbreak
- during perplexity of nations (Luke 21:25)
 - Iran
 - Iran helping to fight ISIS
 - Jerusalem a burdensome stone

Ezk 34 still applies...self-serving false shepherds are in

- The Church
- The halls of Gov't...in Washington DC

The political leaders are on alert

The religious leaders are put on notice

Be comforted!

As lawlessness and darkness rises, the Sovereign King of the Universe
reigns over the kingdoms of man

We need not flee in fear...

- we have not been given the spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind
- we sojourn calmly with Divine protection to a site of our exodus

Do you know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God?

If not,

- hear our witness
- seek Him while He may still be found
- the rage of the antichrist is coming
- the wrath of God is coming
- receive God's grace/forgiveness right now