

## When did the Magi go to Bethlehem?

**Question:** When did the wise men (magi) come to Bethlehem to worship Jesus after His birth?

**Answer:** The Scriptures don't tell us the exact time of their visit, but it was sometime after the shepherds arrived to find Him in a manger. By the time they came, Joseph and Mary had moved **into a house**. We know that they took Jesus to the temple on the **8<sup>th</sup> day after birth** to be dedicated. The Law told them to sacrifice a lamb as an offering for the first-born, but if they could not afford a lamb, they could offer two turtledoves (Lev. 12:6-8). Because Joseph and Mary offered two turtledoves (Luke 2:24), we know they were **poor at this time**—which means that the magi had not yet come and given then the gift of gold. If they had received the gold by this time, they would have been rich enough to buy a lamb.

After they made the sacrifice, they returned to Bethlehem. Luke says they went to Nazareth after this, but he does not mean immediately. Luke's account omits the visit of the magi and the fact that Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt, so he just says that Nazareth was where He would grow up. It's likely that **the gift of gold funded their stay in Egypt**, which could have been two or more years.

Joseph kept his family in Egypt until the death of Herod. **Herod died in the thirty-seventh year** of his reign, supposedly when Jesus was between two and four years old. The exact date cannot be determined.

Incidentally, the Bible does not tell us how many wise men came to worship Jesus. Tradition says there were three magi because three gifts were presented, but this is just an assumption.