

## More Lessons from the Magi

**Matthew 2:1-11:** *“<sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. <sup>3</sup> When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. <sup>5</sup> And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, <sup>6</sup> And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. <sup>7</sup> Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. <sup>8</sup> And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. <sup>9</sup> When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. <sup>11</sup> And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”*

### I. Verse 3—“Herod the king...was troubled”

- A. Now, when Herod heard that question, he did not share their feeling of happiness that the King of the Jews had been born as we read in **Matthew 2:3**.
  - 1. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was **troubled** and all Jerusalem with him.
- B. He is called in verse 3 **Herod the King**, and that is a very significant note about Herod. Herod was the King, and Herod was jealous over anyone that might threaten his kingship.
  - 1. As a matter of fact, Herod had done everything to establish himself as the king.
  - 2. This is Herod who had the title of Herod the Great.
  - 3. What is significant about Herod was that Herod was an Edomite, and Edom was the name for Esau so the Edomites were the descendants of Esau.
  - 4. Herod was the first Edomite or descendant of Esau to rule over the land.
  - 5. The fact that Herod was a descendant of Esau was interesting because that meant that when before the Cross the Lord Jesus finally does stand before Herod.
    - a. It will be the continuation of the conflict between Jacob and Esau where Jacob took the place of Esau as the head. Esau vowed to kill him for stealing his birthright when Esau said in **Genesis 27:41**, “*I will slay my brother.*”
    - b. Then, Esau in the person of Herod will kill Jacob in the person of the Lord Jesus. It will be Esau’s final revenge on Jacob.
  - 6. Now, Herod was fanatic to destroy any threat to his kingship, and Herod knew about how the Jews had overthrown the Greeks through the Maccabees.
  - 7. Herod rebuilt the temple and had his name on it in order to affix himself as the permanent king of the Jews.
  - 8. Herod was paranoid of a rival king.
    - a. For example, some of the Pharisees told a female relative that her descendant would take the throne, and that Herod would be destroyed.
    - b. So, as a result of that, Herod ordered the murder of several Pharisees.
  - 9. Herod was familiar with the Old Testament prophecies about the coming King of the Jews.

10. Herod would have been told that the Book of Daniel predicted that Herod was living in the time when the King of the Jews would have come.
  11. This is the backdrop for Herod when Herod heard that the King of the Jews had been born.
- C. Herod was afraid that maybe all this about God and God's Word and God's prophecies are really true. That was scary for Herod.
- D. All of this is a picture of what lost man fears the most which is that the Scriptures will be fulfilled.
1. What scares the lost is that the Scriptures are actually true, and the Scriptures will be literally fulfilled.
  2. That is what scared Herod, and that is the reason we read in verse 3 that Herod was troubled. He had built his life on the foundation that the Scriptures will not be fulfilled. When he heard that the Scriptures were being fulfilled in that the predicted King of the Jews had come, that troubled him.
  3. The lost fear nothing more than that the Scriptures will be fulfilled because if the Scriptures are fulfilled, that means that the lost will be cast into hell.
- E. Herod was such a ruthless murderer that there was no telling what Herod might do, and that is the reason verse 3 says, *"And all Jerusalem with him."*
1. When Herod was troubled, Jerusalem knew that blood was going to flow.
- F. This picture of Herod troubled over a foreign group of men seeking the Messiah is instructive for us
1. It shows how the lost are disturbed when they see someone come to the Lord Jesus.

## II. Verse 4—*"He had gathered all the chief priests"*

A. **Matthew 2:4** says, *"And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born."*

B. This is quite a scene of *"he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together."*

1. Can you imagine how every chief priest and every scribe had to come immediately to Herod?
  2. This alone would be very unsettling because they all remembered how Herod had killed all those Pharisees because they predicted that Herod would be destroyed.
- C. But, Herod calls them together because he has questions.
- D. That is what God said that the Levites were to be for the people in **Malachi 2:7**.
1. **Malachi 2:7** says, *"For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."*
    - a. That word "keep" is the Hebrew word *"Shamar"* which means to guard or protect from attack.
    - b. Since we are called a "Royal Priesthood" in **1 Peter 2:9**, this is our function in life. We are to "guard knowledge" of the Word of God by making known what the Bible teaches.
  2. We do the **Malachi 2:7** job of keeping knowledge when we continually tell what the Bible teaches.
- E. So, **Malachi 2:7** instructs the people to see the priests as the messengers from God and go to them to understand what God says. That is why the scene of Herod asking the priests questions is so interesting—especially because Herod had no interest in obeying God.

## III. Verse 5—*"They said into him, In Bethlehem"*

A. **Matthew 2:5** says, *"And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,"*

- B. The common thinking among the Jews was that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.
- C. The priests knew that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, and it seems as though later the priests did not know that the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem. They assumed He was born in Nazareth, and they used that wrong knowledge to argue that He was not the Messiah in **John 7:40-42**.
1. The verses say, *“<sup>40</sup> Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. <sup>41</sup> Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? <sup>42</sup> Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?<sup>42</sup>”*
- D. The priests said clearly in **Matthew 2:5** that Jesus would be born “in Bethlehem.”
- E. They said that the Lord Jesus was to be born in a place called “the House of Bread.”
1. As a matter of fact, in verse 6, it says, *“For out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.”*
  2. The literal meaning of the Greek word translated as “rule” is “feed.”
  3. Verse six literally reads, *“A Governor shall come out of the House of Bread who will feed Israel, God’s people.”*
  4. **John 6:51** says, *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”*
    - a. The living bread that came down from Heaven was born in a place called “the House of Bread.”
    - b. The living bread that gave His life for the world was born in a place called “the House of Bread.”
  5. Not only was Bethlehem “the House of Bread” that the Living Bread was born in, Bethlehem had a famous well that David longed to drink from in **2 Samuel 23:15**.
    - a. The verse says, *“And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!”*
  6. From the place of the well is born the person who said all of the following about Himself:
    - a. **John 4:10** says, *“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee **living water**.”*
      - a) The One born in the place with the famous well is called the **Living Water**.
    - b. **John 7:37** says, *“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him **come unto me, and drink**.”*
      - a) The One born in the place with the famous well said, **“Come to Him and drink.”**
    - c. **Revelation 22:17** says, *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take **the water of life** freely.”*
      - a) The One born in the place with the famous well is called the **Water of Life**.

- F. It is interesting to look at the Magi as the Gentiles who want to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and they know to come to Him by a star which is like the stirring within their hearts.
1. The picture here is of Gentiles coming to God because God has led them with just a star.
  2. The Jews have the Scriptures, and they are able to direct the Gentiles to Bethlehem because the Scriptures say that the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem.
  3. The Magi and the Jews show us how those who were so far away from the Lord Jesus were actually close to the Lord, and those who were close to the Lord Jesus were actually far away from the Lord.
- G. The picture of the Magi seeking the King with the religious leaders in Jerusalem who had no interest in the King is a picture of how religious hypocrisy coexists alongside of true faith.
- H. What we see here is how the Magi with the star obtain the knowledge of the Scriptures and how the Jewish leaders with the knowledge of the Scriptures lose the star.
1. **Matthew 25:29** says, *“For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”*
- I. This picture is a great motivation for carrying the Gospel to the Jewish people because the Jewish people wrote, kept, and gave the Scriptures to us. Yet, they did not come to God through the Scriptures.
- J. Imagine if there was a person who led you to the Lord Jesus and taught you the Bible. Sadly, that person fell away from God. Would you just say, “Oh well. Too bad for him.”
1. Or would you say, “He brought me God and the Bible. I am going to make it my business to bring God and the Bible to him.”
    - a. That is what Jewish evangelism is all about.
- K. What is also so interesting from this scene is to see the Jewish leaders directing and guiding to where the Messiah should be born, but having no interest themselves in going to the Messiah.
- L. It is just so interesting to see this interaction between the Jews and the Magi in these opening verses in Matthew 2. The Gentiles and the Jews are helping each other.
1. The Gentile Magi know the time of the birth of the Messiah, and the Jewish priests know the place of the birth of the Messiah.
  2. Because they had that interchange of what they each knew, they would have helped each other and gone together to Bethlehem.
    - a. It is that interchange of what each person knows that increases knowledge.
    - b. This is what makes the breaking of bread so great a service. A person sharing what he has found in the Scriptures, and another person sharing what he has found is the end result of knowledge being increased.
      - a) **Daniel 12:4** says, *“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”*
  3. The Gentiles and the Jews need each other, and that is also seen in **Romans 11:11**.
    - a. **Romans 11:11** says, *“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.”*

- b. The Gentiles need the Jews to see how God fulfills His promises as the Jews are a visual evidence of the link between the Old and New Testaments that they are one book.
- c. The Jews need the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy to come to God.

IV. Verse 6—*“Thou Bethlehem...art not the least”*

- A. **Matthew 2:6** says, *“And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.”*
- B. This wording seems to imply a question like, “Bethlehem, are you too small to be counted as one of the thousands of towns in Israel?”
- C. He uses the word “princes” when in Micah the word “town” is used. He does this to personify the towns to persons.
- D. *“Out of thee shall come a Governor”* were the very words that terrorized Herod. It told him that a rival was coming.

V. Verse 7—*“Herod...privily called the wise men”*

- A. As soon as Herod hears the Scripture, Herod swings into action in verse 7.
  - 1. The verse says, *“When Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.”*
- B. Now, Herod is showing particular interest in the time that the star appeared because Herod is assuming that the time of the star’s appearance was the time that the child was born.
- C. Herod is calculating to know how old the child is so that he can be sure to murder the right child.
  - 1. Both the Magi and Herod made the assumption that the star first appeared when the Messiah was born, but this was not true because the Magi found the child in the manger just after He was born. That meant that the star appeared to the Magi two years before the Messiah was born.
  - 2. Herod was covering himself for this because when he will order the murder of all the babies, he will order that they be killed from two years old and younger.
  - 3. What is interesting about this is how God got the Magi on their journey two years before the Lord was born so that they could be there after the birth of the Lord.
    - a. That was perfect timing for God; God always knows what He is doing.
    - b. This is what God does in the lost; He works in their lives long before they come to the Lord Jesus Christ.
    - c. When we bring the Gospel to the lost, let’s not think that we are the only God influence in their lives. We are just one link in the chain of events that leads to the Lord Jesus.
  - 4. Herod has reigned for 35 years, and Herod is probably at least 60 years old at this time. At this time, Jesus was just a newborn and would not likely be a problem for at least 20 more years when Herod would be 80 years old.
    - a. It is essential to Herod to have this newborn king killed, and Herod will not rest until he is sure that he has spilled the blood of this newborn king.
  - 5. Herod would not openly let it be known that he was interested in this newborn Messiah King. That might be dangerous for Herod’s plan to murder the new King.
- D. Herod has this highly secret meeting with the Magi and lets them in on a great secret which was the Herod is also a worshipper of the Lord Jesus. This was a lie, but he seems sincere to the Magi.
- E. When we see Herod so diligent in his efforts to try and kill the Lord Jesus, it is a testimony to the truth of the Bible.

1. After all, if the Bible is not true, then why work so hard to fight it? If the Lord Jesus is not the Lord of Lords, then why fight Him?
  2. The hatred of the world to the Lord Jesus only confirms that the Lord Jesus is the Lord of Lords.
- F. Just think of how the Lord Jesus in his manger cradle in a barn was the terror of a tyrannical king on his throne in a palace.
- G. It is interesting to put the Magi and Herod side by side in how they saw the Lord Jesus because we see how the same Lord Jesus is the hope of the saved and the terror of the lost.
- VI. Verse 8—*“He sent them to Bethlehem”*
- A. Herod seemed to bring those Magi into his confidence that he is a secret believer also in the King of the Jews. Herod now sends the Magi off as his friends in **Matthew 2:8**.
    1. **Matthew 2:8** says, *“And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.”*
  - B. The Magi are fooled and are happy to be able to serve Herod, who they think is their brother in Christ. They are looking forward to how they can be such a blessing to Herod to tell him where to go to worship the King of the Jews.
  - C. God did not allow Herod to follow through with his plan. God intervened on Herod’s plan to kill the Lord.
- VII. Verse 8—*“Go...search diligently...that I may come”*
- A. When Herod told the Magi in verse 8 to search diligently for the Lord, we see just how agitated Herod was over the report that the King had been born.
- VIII. Verse 8—*“When ye have found him, bring me word”*
- A. In verse 8, Herod said to bring him word as to where the Lord Jesus was, so he could worship Him. We so clearly see hypocrisy in action.
    1. This is like if the Nazis celebrated Christmas and murdered Jews.
- IX. Verse 9—*“Lo, the star...went before them”*
- A. Verse 9 says that the star went before the Magi.
  - B. Even when the Magi were surrounded by religious hypocrisy and by a murderous tyrant, still the star reappeared.
    1. **Isaiah 9:2** says, *“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”*
    2. **John 1:5** says, *“And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”*
- X. Verse 10—*“When they saw the star, they rejoiced”*
- A. The Magi must have been so disappointed and frustrated at all the religious hypocrisy around them, but when they saw the star, they rejoiced to know (in spite of all the obstacles in their way to the King), God directed them.
    1. With the many discouragements we face in life and the many obstacles that are in our way to the Savior each day, we be comforted knowing that God directs us.
    2. When we take time to open the Bible, the light shines through all the gloom and darkness. Like the Magi, we also rejoice at God’s continued light that leads to the King.
- XI. Verse 11—*“They were come into the house”*
- A. Verse 11 says, *“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”*

- B. Now, we are told that the Magi came into the house, and that is not a stable like the manger scenes show.
1. What happened was that the shepherds first came after the Lord was born to see the baby.
  2. In all probability, one of the shepherds said, “What are you doing here in a stable? I have a house you can stay in.”
  3. So, it was likely that soon after the Lord was born that the family moved into one of the shepherd’s homes.
  4. Then, they remained there until the eighth day when they made the five mile trip back to Jerusalem for the Lord to be circumcised.
  5. And it was probably while they were in Jerusalem that Joseph had the dream in which the angel appeared to Joseph and told him to go down to Egypt.
  6. It was probably before the eighth day after His birth that the Magi reached the Lord in a shepherd’s home to worship Him and present their gifts.
- C. There is no evidence that Joseph and Mary set up their new home in Bethlehem, but only that they went there to be taxed. After, they intended to return back to their home in Nazareth.
- D. The possible sequence of events was that the Lord was born in a manger and immediately visited by shepherds and then moved into one of the shepherd’s home and then visited by the Magi and then went to Jerusalem for the eighth day circumcision and then departed to Egypt.
1. That means that the Lord Jesus was brought as a baby right into the city of Jerusalem when the blood thirsty Herod who was in Jerusalem was trying to find the Lord Jesus to murder Him.
  2. When the Lord Jesus was brought into the Temple on the eighth day for His circumcision, there was a certain man named Simeon who knew who the Lord Jesus was from.
    - a. **Luke 2:25** says, “*And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.*”
    - b. **Luke 2:34** says, “*And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;”*
- E. So, there was Simeon in the Temple saying that this eight day old baby was the Messiah.
- F. It was just amazing that the Lord was brought back from Bethlehem right to the same city that Herod was in while Herod was searching for where the Lord was so he could murder Him
- G. That shows how God is able to protect whether in Jerusalem with a murderous tyrant or in a lion’s den with hungry lions ⇒ God protects

**XII. Verse 11—“They worshipped...presented...gifts”**

- A. Now we are told what the *Magi did when they found the Lord in verse 11.*
1. *The verse says, “And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”*
- B. We are told that they first thing they did was to fall down and worship Him. They did not come to first give their gifts or any service to the Lord Jesus. They came first just to worship the Lord.
- C. That is so instructive for us to follow the Magi’s example.

1. We get so caught up with everything else except worship, and worship is not the first priority for us.
- D. We come to the Lord and think, “The first thing I need to do is to read and study my Bible.” No, the first priority is to worship the Lord Jesus like the Magi.
- E. Or, we come to the Lord and think, “The first thing I need to do is to serve the Lord like serving in the church. No, the first priority is to worship the Lord Jesus like the Magi.
- F. Perhaps, we come to the Lord and think, “The first thing I need to do is to give to the Lord with my tithes and offerings.” No, the first priority is to worship the Lord Jesus like the Magi.
- G. Notice how verse 11 reads, *“They saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him.”* Verse 11 does NOT read as “They saw Mary his mother with the young child, and fell down, and worshipped her.”
1. Their focus was on the Lord and not on Mary. They saw the Lord and they worshipped Him.
  2. That over exaltation of Mary is a horrible abuse that would make Mary protest. It is totally against what the Bible teaches to worship Mary. Mary has been put way over her appropriate place.
- H. Then, after they had worshipped the Lord, we read in verse 11 that they opened their treasures and presented three gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
1. Gold which represents wealth of a king.
  2. Frankincense has a bitter taste that was used for incense of the sacrifices. Frankincense speaks of sacrificial suffering.
  3. Myrrh was used to cover the body of the deceased. Myrrh speaks of death.
- I. All together the gold, frankincense and myrrh carry a message that the King of the Jews would die.
- J. Just think of the Magi compared to us.
1. The Magi only had a star, and we have the Scriptures.
  2. The Magi only saw the Lord Jesus as a babe, and they worshipped Him. We see the whole of the Lord’s life and death and resurrection.
  3. The Magi had a long two year journey to get to the Lord, and we barely have to take a step to get to the Lord.