

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 1ST-2ND // BOOK OF MATTHEW

THE KING (MATT. 2:1-6)

WHY ARE ALL THE PARTICULARS IMPORTANT?

Remember Matt is the journalist of the group. He mentions "Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod" and "wise men from the east" that "arrived in Jerusalem."

- Matthew is building a case that will convince the Jews that Jesus was the Savior. Faithful Jews would have known the prophecies (Micah 5:2).

HEROD THE GREAT (37-4B.C.)

There were many Herods, but this one is particularly important. Herod won favor with the Romans and was given the title "King of the Jews" by Rome. Also, notice his death doesn't line up with the birth of Christ. His appointment by the senate and his coveted title is why he was "deeply disturbed" about the prophecy of Jesus.

SOME OTHER WELL KNOWN CHARACTERS

The Magi, or 3 wise men, were more than likely from Babylon. They were highly intelligent and influential students of astronomy. They were not magicians or sorcerers.

- They probably traveled with a huge entourage because of the long journey. This is why they got the attention of King Herod.

HOW DID THE MAGI KNOW ABOUT THE MESSIAH?

The Magi were Gentiles, but many scholars believe that someone in Babylon must have had a copy of the scriptures from centuries before.

- What's important is that their involvement shows us that **Jesus' birth would have a global impact and His message is for all people.**

MAYBE NOT THE NATIVITY WE'RE USED TO

The trip from Babylon (Iraq) to Jerusalem is roughly 800 miles and would have taken 6 months to 2 years to make. This alters our notion of the wise men and a newborn baby.

- These are minor things that in no way alter the major lesson and point. **Don't get suckered into arguing over minors!**

THE PEOPLE THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN WATCHING

It is interesting that the Jewish leaders were not spiritually sensitive to the sign around them of the coming Savior, but Gentiles 800 miles away were.

- **As "one nation under God," are we spiritually aware and biblically literate enough to recognize how God is moving (or not) in our culture?**

ANOTHER ROUTE (MATT. 2:7-12)

HEROD WANTED TO FIND THE POTENTIAL KING

He "secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared" in the hopes they'd lead him to Jesus so he could kill Him (he had killed before).

- The shepherds would have been present at the birth, but more than likely Jesus was probably a year old when the Magi arrived.

GOD BALANCES LOGIC AND THE SUPERNATURAL

The Magi followed a star similar to how sailors and astrophysicists do, but the Bible gives every indication that this was also a supernatural phenomenon.

- **The Bible isn't anti-reason or science. God wants us to worship in Spirit (heart and emotion) and Truth (logic and reason).**

"...THEY WERE OVERWHELMED WITH JOY."

The Magi were traveling to a person, not a place. When they finally saw Jesus, they fell to their knees and worshiped Him and gave gifts of frankincense, gold, and myrrh.

- These were the most common and practical means of exchange for people while traveling. They became very helpful when Jesus' family fled to Egypt.

"...AND BEING WARNED IN A DREAM."

The Magi must've been some extraordinary men. After receiving a dream "not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route."

- To disobey Herod would have been exceptionally dangerous, but **their encounter with the King of Kings outweighed any fear of an earthly king.**

MASSACRE (MATT. 2:13-18)

JOSEPH RECEIVES ANOTHER DREAM

An "angel of the Lord" woke Joseph up and told him to take his family to Egypt, Israel's biggest enemy, until further instruction.

- The gifts from the Magi would provide enough money to afford the travel and escape the plot of Herod to kill Jesus. **If we are faithful and listen, God provides.**

WHY EGYPT?

Not only was it the most unlikely place to escape, but it fulfilled an almost 800 year old prophecy from Hosea 11:1. This further builds the case to the Jews that Jesus is the Savior.

- **Though it may not always be easy, God always provides a means of escape in times of trouble (1Cor. 10:13).**

BRILLIANT AND BRUTAL

Herod was one of the most brilliant architects and leaders of his time, but he was also a paranoid king that had killed family out of fear of losing power. To kill dozens of baby boys in hopes of killing Jesus was not a stretch for this man.

- Jesus was probably about 2 years old when the massacre took place.

CONSIDER THE EXTREME ARROGANCE OF THIS MAN

This Jewish leader knew the prophecies of the OT, hence why he went to the lengths he did, and thought he could outsmart God.

- We sometimes do this don't we? **We know right and wrong and many of us even know the direct instruction of God, but we do what we want, thinking we can manipulate truth.**

MORE COMFORT THAN PROPHECY

Matthew quotes Jer. 31:15 in v18. This was not really a prophecy, but a similar event from the past that may bring some comfort to the devastated parents of the slain children.

- **We will all suffer in this life. The Bible and God's Spirit give us comfort during those times.**

THE NAZARENE (MATT. 2:19-23)

HEROD WAS DEAD, BUT HIS SON WAS EVIL TOO

- After Herod's death, another "angel of the Lord" came to Joseph in a dream and told him to go back to Israel. In yet another dream he was warned about Herod's son, so he moved his family to Nazareth in the northern province of Galilee.
- Nazareth was actually Joseph and Mary's hometown.

NAZARETH WASN'T THE BEST OF PLACES

This town had a bad reputation, but even in the beginning of Jesus' life on earth, we see that He came for all kinds of people.

- We need to celebrate but not overcompensate for this fact. **God loves ALL people; the poor and the rich, the humble and the arrogant, the neglected and the privileged.**

EVERY DETAIL IS WORTH NOTING

In this story it seems as though God makes use of even the smallest details, and after time, the "coincidences" start to build into a strong case for Christ.

- This will happen in the life of every Believer. **We start to see God build a reputation over time of coming through for us.**

BUILDING A CASE

Virtually all Jewish adults would know the OT prophecies about the Messiah. V23 mentions a juxtaposition of several of them about Jesus coming from Nazareth.

- **There are over 300 prophecies fulfilled by Christ. Matthew alone covers 13 of the most blatant ones.** Remember, Matt is building a case.

TIMELESS PRINCIPLES

- Like the Magi, we should be looking up and praying for **wisdom and discernment.**
- Like Joseph and Mary, **we will all face some level of adversity because of our faith.** How will we handle that strain on friendships, status, comforts, and family?
- We need to trust that **God is omniscient and will provide a means of escape if we trust Him (1Cor. 10:13).**
- We know from the Bible that **bad things happen to good people**, but God promises peace and contentment in the end.
- Like the outcasts of Nazareth **we are all lost and sick without the Great Physician.** The real question is if we realize just how lost and sick we are without God.