

**Matthew 2:1 ¶ 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, Matthew 2:2 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.**

Matthew makes note that Herod was king in Israel when Jesus was born. He also notes that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Luke informs us that his birth in Bethlehem was due to the census and tax that required his parents to register there in person. I know that it was because of the sovereign hand of God at work to fulfill prophecy (as will be referenced below).

*Luke 2:1–5 “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.”*

Suddenly, wise men from the east showed up in Jerusalem seeking the child that had been born King of the Jews. They declared that they had seen his star in the east, and they wanted to worship him, to honor him as a king.

I think it is quite likely that these men from Babylon were descendants of those that had been instructed by Daniel concerning the prophecies of the coming Jewish Messiah and knew that the time foretold had come. They seemed to be aware of the fact that this child was of royal lineage, and that his birth was sufficient to assure his right to assume the throne.

That the wise men would first go to Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, the city of David, was only logical.

**Matthew 2:3 When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.**

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

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

**Matthew 2:6 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.**

These wise men must have made quite an impression for the news to get back to Herod and for it to trouble not only Herod, but also all the people of Jerusalem. The Greek for “trouble” states, “to stir or agitate (roil water): trouble.” It makes sense that Herod would have felt threatened by such an announcement. I think that “trouble” in reference to the people is in reference to the excitement such news would cause in light of expectations of a coming Messiah. Considering his reputation, it could also be that the people were afraid of how Herod would respond to this news.

Chuck Smith provides a bit of insight to Herod's character: "He also was horribly cruel and paranoid. He thought that his sons and his wife, Miriam, were plotting against him, so he had them all put to death. Then he began to miss Miriam, so he built a big monument to Miriam because he missed her after he had killed her. They used to say, "It's safer to be Herod's pig than to be his son," because he was always paranoid that his sons were trying to take over his throne. So he was having them killed all the time and wiped out most of his sons because of his paranoia."

Herod called together all the chief priests and scribes, those most learned in the scriptures, and demanded to know where the Messiah was to be born. This implies that he was aware that the scripture proclaimed a coming Messiah, One who would deliver Israel and rule as their king.

The religious authorities told Herod that it had been prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, in the land of Judah according to the prophet Micah.

*Micah 5:2 "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*

**Matthew 2:7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.**

**Matthew 2:8 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.**

The CJB translation of verse 7 is clear and self-explanatory: "Herod summoned the Magi to meet with him privately and asked them exactly when the star had appeared."

After their meeting, Herod sent them on to Bethlehem to find the child with instructions to come back and tell him where to find him so that he could go and worship him also. Again, subsequent scripture will reveal that his true purpose was to kill the child and eliminate any threat to his throne.

**Matthew 2:9 ¶ 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.**

**Matthew 2:10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.**

**Matthew 2:11 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.**

When the wise men left Jerusalem, the star went before them guiding the way to where the "young child" was. Though many have tried to posit scientific

explanations of this star, I am convinced that no natural single star in the sky could have guided them with such pinpoint accuracy; I believe it was a miraculous special star of specific purpose. It is also interesting to note that Matthew referred to Jesus as a “young child,” not a baby.

The wise men were naturally overjoyed to have such miraculous guidance. Upon arriving at the “house,” they saw the “young child” with His mother and fell down and worshipped Him. Matthew details that the family was living in a house when the wise men visited; they were no longer in the stable where Jesus was born. Again, the reference is to a “young child,” and subsequent scripture will indicate that He could have been almost two years old.

The wise men opened their treasures and gave the child gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. I have been taught (and I see no reason to disagree) that the gold was appropriate to His royalty, the frankincense appropriate to His divinity, and the myrrh to His suffering and death. Obviously, the wise men weren’t thinking so specifically; they were just honoring the child with valuable gifts befitting a king. Once again this speaks of supernatural oversight.

Matthew never tells us how many wise men there were. It is inferred from the mention of three gifts that there must have been three wise men.

I liked this observation by David Guzik: “We see here three different responses to Jesus; one may say that all people respond in one of these three ways.

- Herod displayed an open hatred and hostility toward Jesus.
- The chief priests and the scribes were indifferent toward Jesus, all the while retaining their religious respectability.
- The wise men sought out Jesus and worshipped Him - even at great cost.”

**Matthew 2:12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.**

Isn’t it interesting that these Gentile wise men did not hesitate to heed a warning of God that was given them in a dream! I believe that probably each one was given the same dream; and when they realized the next morning that they had dreamed identical dreams, they knew the source had to be from “God.” Maybe they were actually believers in the God of Israel; only the future will tell. The important thing is that they ignored Herod and returned home using a different route than that used when journeying to Israel.

**Matthew 2:13 ¶ And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.**

**Matthew 2:14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:**

**Matthew 2:15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I**

**called my son.**

After the wise men left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph once again in a dream. He told Joseph to flee with his family to Egypt because Herod was seeking to kill “the young child.” He told Joseph to stay in Egypt until he appeared to him again to tell him that it was safe to return to Israel.

Joseph didn’t hesitate. The wording indicates that he got right up that night and started for Egypt with his family. He stayed in Egypt until Herod died. This, too, was in fulfillment of a prophecy by Hosea.

*Hosea 11:1 “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.”*

I loved it when I looked at the Hebrew for “Israel”; it stated, “he will rule as God,” an obvious reference to the Messiah (representing true Israel) as the Son of God.

**Matthew 2:16 ¶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.**

**Matthew 2:17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,**

**Matthew 2:18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.**

It probably wasn’t long before Herod realized that the wise men had ignored his request to report back to him. He was furious and immediately ordered that all the little boys in Bethlehem and its environs that were two years old and under be killed. I believe the word “children” references little boys since the purpose was to kill one identified as a future king. The age of two was chosen in light of the information provided as to when the wise men had first seen the star. Again, this event was in fulfillment of prophecy.

*Jeremiah 31:15 “Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.”*

Yes, the context of the verse in Jeremiah is that of the Babylonian captivity. Based on the Holy Spirit’s inspiration here recorded by Matthew, it also served as a type to Herod’s murder of the children. Guzik quotes Bruce as observing: “Rachel was to the Hebrew fancy a mother for Israel in all time, sympathetic in all her children’s misfortunes.”

The NIV Commentary makes a helpful observation: “That there is no other historical confirmation is not surprising. The death of a few children (perhaps a dozen or so; Bethlehem’s total population was small) would hardly have been recorded in such violent times.”

**Matthew 2:19 ¶ But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Matthew 2:20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. Matthew 2:21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. Matthew 2:22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: Matthew 2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.**

After Herod died, the angel of the Lord once again appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him that he could take his family back home to Israel since the one who sought to kill the child was dead.

Joseph and Mary must have been thrilled with this news and eagerly set out to go home. At some point Joseph got word that Herod's son, Archelaus, was the ruling authority in Judea. Again, being warned of God in a dream, he decided to return to Nazareth in the Galilee rather than Bethlehem. Matthew also again notes that this choice was in accordance with prophecy.

I could find no specific quote in reference to this prophecy. David Guzik quotes from a couple of different commentators regarding the lack of a direct quote.

1. "Yet what specific prophecy from the Old Testament tells us that the Messiah would come from **Nazareth**? France notes that there is something peculiar in the way Matthew worded this reference. "It should be noted, however, that the formula introducing the quotation differs from the regular pattern in two ways: it refers not to a single prophet but to *the prophets*, and it concludes not with 'saying' but with 'that'. This suggests that it is not meant to be a quotation of a specific passage, but a summary of a theme of prophetic expectation... Thus it has been suggested that Matthew saw in the obscurity of Nazareth the fulfillment of Old Testament indications of a humble and rejected Messiah." (France)
2. "If there *was* any specific passage in Matthew's mind, it was likely Isaiah 11:1: *There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots*. The Hebrew word translated *Branch* sounds like "Nazir" (*neser*). "Jerome, following the Jewish scholars of his time, believed the reference to be mainly to Isaiah 11, where mention is made of a branch that shall spring out of Jesse's root... The epithet **Nazarene** will thus mean: 'the man of Nazareth, the town of the little shoot'." (Bruce)