

## II. Early Childhood of Jesus Christ (2:1-23)

In the first chapter of Matthew, the gospel writer presents Jesus as the rightful heir to the throne of Judea as well as the realization of the promised Messiah of Scripture. “One of Matthew’s approaches to reaching Hebrew readers was to use extensive quotes from the Old Testament. In his 53 direct quotes and many allusions, Matthew draws from no less than 25 of the 39 Old Testament books! Clearly, Matthew was determined to bridge the gap between the Old and the New.”<sup>28</sup> Lawrence Richards continues by saying, “There are no less than 16 references to the Old Testament in these first two chapters of Matthew.”<sup>29</sup> This will be a focus in our study this evening—the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the early years of Jesus of Nazareth.

### A. Worshiping the Christ-child

*Matthew 2:1-12*

#### Wise Men from the East

*When did the wise men from the east arrive in Judea?*

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- It's not what most people think!
  - The wise men did not arrive simultaneously with the shepherds as many works of art and nativity scenes at Christmas.
  - “Though not all scholars agree on the timing of the arrival of the Magi from the East, they apparently came some time after the birth of Jesus. Jesus and Mary and Joseph, though still in Bethlehem, were now in a house (v. 11), and Jesus was called a Child (*paidion*, vv. 9, 11) rather than a newborn Infant (*brephos*, *Luke 2:12*).”<sup>30</sup>
- The Magi had been on an extended journey which accounts for the timing of their arrival.

*Who were these wise men? From where did they originate?  
How did they know to look for the King of the Jews*

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<sup>28</sup> Richards 527.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> *TBKC-NT* 20.

- It is impossible to determine an exact answer to this question.
  - Most likely, these wise men were “Gentiles of high position from a country, perhaps Parthia, northeast of Babylon, who were given a special revelation by God of the birth of the King of the Jews.”
  - “This special revelation may simply have been in the sky, as might be indicated by their title (specialists in astronomy) and by the fact they referred to a star which they saw. Or this revelation could have come through some contact with Jewish scholars who had migrated to the East with copies of Old Testament manuscripts.”<sup>31</sup>
- Could there have been a “Daniel Connection”?

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*What led the wise men to come seeking the baby born King of the Jews?*

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## Herod the Great—King of Judea

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*Why was Herod troubled by the news shared by the wise men from the east?*

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- To understand Herod’s mindset, we have to understand some of his family background.
  - “Herod was not the rightful king from the line of David. In fact he was not even a descendant of Jacob, but was descended from Esau and thus was an Edomite... This fact caused most of the Jews to hate him and never truly to accept him as king... If someone had been rightfully born king, then Herod’s job was in jeopardy.”<sup>32</sup>
  - So how did Herod become the King of Judea? “Herod’s father had attached himself to Julius Caesar’s party, been made a Roman citizen, and appointed procurator (ruler) of Judea. Herod and his brothers were given government roles, but a decade of battling followed before Herod was proclaimed king of Judea by Rome, and was able to enforce his rule. As king, Herod was both brutal and decisive, punishing or executing his enemies, and rewarding his friends. Rivals were murdered.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> TBKC-NT 21.

<sup>32</sup> TBKC-NT 21-22.

<sup>33</sup> Richards 528.

- “While Herod’s power was growing, his control over himself and his family was slipping. Herod had married 10 wives and had a number of sons. While these sons schemed to gain the throne, his wives hatched plots and counterplots. Herod became more and more suspicious and paranoid... Herod finally had the two sons of his favorite wife, Mariamne, executed by strangulation in the very city where he had married their mother 30 years earlier. Antipater, Herod’s oldest son and designated heir, tried to poison his father and was put in chains.”<sup>34</sup>
- Now an old man with a fatal disease, Herod is still grasping to maintain power and control over the people of Judea. The threat of a new born king of the Jews only fueled his suspicions.

### *What did Herod do as a result of his paranoia?*

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- He sought the counsel of the scribes and Pharisees as to what the Old Testament taught about the birthplace of the Messiah.
  - Why didn’t somebody get excited about this possibility?
- He shared this information with the wise men.
  - He asked them to return to him and tell him where the one born King of the Jews was located.
  - He also inquired about the time frame in which the star appeared.
- He killed all the male children 2 years old and under in the area of Bethlehem.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.