

Encounter with the Christ Child

How were the wise men able to find the Christ child?

What are some unusual things about this?

- Directions
 - Told by the scribes and Pharisees that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem.
 - “The star they had seen in the East now reappeared and led them to a specific house in Bethlehem where they found the Child Jesus.
- There were several unusual things about the star that they were following.
 - “Bethlehem is about five miles south of Jerusalem. ‘Stars’ (i.e. planets) naturally travel from east to west across the heavens, not from north to south. Could it be that ‘the star’ which the Magi saw and which led them to a specific house was the Shekinah glory of God? That same glory had led the children of Israel through the wilderness for 40 years as a pillar of fire and cloud.”³⁵
 - “All other efforts to explain this star are inadequate (such as a conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars; a supernova; a comet; etc.).

What did the wise men do once they found Jesus?

- They worshiped the Christ child.
 - They fell down and worshiped Him.
 - “Their worship was heightened by the giving of gifts . . . gold . . . incense and . . . myrrh. These were gifts worthy of a king and this act by Gentile leaders pictures the wealth of the nations which will someday be completely given to the Messiah.”³⁶
- The Significance of the Three Gifts
 - There are some that see great significance in the character of the gifts that were given by the wise men to the Christ child. People often see the gifts as symbols:
 - Gold – representing His deity

³⁵ TBKC-NT 22.

³⁶ Ibid.

- Incense – representing the fragrance of His life
- Myrrh – representing His fatal sacrifice because it was used for embalming
- “These gifts were obviously the means by which Joseph took his family to Egypt and sustained them there until Herod died.”³⁷

*In what unique way did the Holy Spirit choose to communicate in Matthew 2?
List all the instances where He worked in this way?*

- The Holy Spirit warned of impending danger multiple times through dreams.
 - Matthew 2:12 – the wise men were warned in a dream to not return to Herod.
 - Matthew 2:13 – Joseph was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt with his family.
 - Matthew 2:19 – Joseph was told in a dream that it was okay to return to Israel.
 - Matthew 2:22 – Joseph was warned in a dream to go to Galilee, not Judea.
- These were not the first time that the Lord communicated to Joseph through a dream.
 - Matthew 1:20
 - Why do you think God communicated to these men in this way? How did God normally communicate to His people?
 - God normally communicated through His prophets, but it has been about 400 years since God had raised up a prophet to speak to His people.
 - This time between the Old Testament prophets and the birth of Christ is referred to as the Intertestamental Period or *Silent Period* of biblical history.
 - It is my opinion that:
 - These were very important messages that needed to be heeded and miraculously speaking to a person in a dream would get his attention.
 - God chose to communicate so often through dreams here in Matthew 1-2 because it was the most expeditious way to communicate with Joseph and the wise men.
 - These heavenly visions occurred in Galilee, Judea, Egypt and Israel.

³⁷ Ibid.

B. Fulfilling Old Testament Prophecies

What events in Matthew 2 were fulfilling Old Testament prophecy?

- Jesus being born as “king of the Jews” (2:2) – Jeremiah 23:5-6
 - ⁵“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’”
 - “The promised Messiah of the Jews was to be God and man. He is called in this context ‘The Lord Our Righteousness’ (v.6), and was to be born of David’s line.”³⁸
- A star led revealed the time and place of the Messiah’s birth (2:2) – Numbers 24:17
 - “I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near:
a star shall come out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;
it shall crush the forehead of Moab
and break down all the sons of Sheth.”
- Jesus was born in Bethlehem (2:6a) – Micah 5:2
 - “In context that Old Testament prophecy speaks of the Messiah, whose origins lie hidden in eternity. He is to rule in Israel in the name of Yahweh, and to be great to the ends of the earth. It is through this Person that Israel is to find peace.”³⁹
- Jesus would shepherd the people of Israel (2:6b) – Ezekiel 34:23
 - “And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.”
- Kings of foreign lands would bring gifts to the Messiah (2:11) – Psalm 72:10-11
 - ¹⁰May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands
render him tribute;
may the kings of Sheba and Seba

³⁸ Richards 527.

³⁹ Richards 527.

bring gifts!

"May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!

- The Messiah was to come out of Egypt (2:15) – Hosea 11:1
 - “When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.”
- Mourning the death of the children 2 years old and down (2:17-18) – Jeremiah 31:15
 - Thus says the LORD:
“A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more.”
- Mirrors the directions given to Moses to return to Egypt (2:20) – Exodus 4:19
 - And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.”
- Jesus’ home town was Nazareth, making Him a Nazarene (2:23) –
 - “The fact that the family moved to Nazareth was once again said to be in fulfillment of prophecy (Matt. 2:23). However, the words **He will be called a Nazarene**, were not directly spoken by any Old Testament prophet, though several prophecies come close to this expression.”⁴⁰
 - “Isaiah said the Messiah would be ‘from [Jesse’s] roots’ like ‘a branch’ (Isaiah 11:1) ‘Branch’ is the Hebrew word *neser*, which has consonants like those in the word ‘Nazarene’ and which carry the idea of having an insignificant beginning.”⁴¹
 - “Since Matthew used the plural **prophets**, perhaps his idea was not based on a specific prophecy but on the idea that appeared in a number of prophecies concerning Messiah’s despised character... [T]hose who lived in Nazareth were thought of as compromisers who consorted with the enemy, the Romans. Therefore to call one ‘a Nazarene’ was to use a term of contempt.”⁴²
 - Consider John 1:46 – ““Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

⁴⁰ *TBKC-NT* 23.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

These verses show how that Jesus' first coming literally fulfilled prophecy, but people did not recognize Him as the Messiah immediately. How likely do you think that we will make the same mistakes as we look for His second coming?

How likely is it that when Jesus returns the second time, He will do what modern writers on prophecy say He will do? Why or why not?

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 11/4/2018)