

## The Magi Visit Jesus

### 2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea

The wise men, or Magi didn't arrive until after Jesus' birth. Just when is a matter of conjecture. But there are clues (see Leviticus 12:1-4). It took a full forty days before her purification would have been completed. Luke 2:39, 39 **And when His parents had completed everything in accordance with the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.** Then this suggests that they moved back to Nazareth as soon as they could after presenting Jesus at the Temple and offering the sacrifice according to the Law of Moses. The wise men found them in Bethlehem in a house.

### in the days of Herod the king

The Herod here is Herod the Great, who ruled as king from 37 to 4 B.C. Although he professed Judaism and is responsible for expanding the rebuilt temple on a grand scale, along with a lot of other building projects, he also erected many pagan temples. And his reign was not peaceful. **Behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying <sup>2</sup>“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”**

The Magi were part of the Medo-Persian empire that had defeated Babylon and took over their kingdom. The ancient Magi were a hereditary priesthood of the Medes. The Magi mostly served as court advisors, making forecasts and predictions for their royal patrons based on their study of the stars, about which they were quite knowledgeable. In Matthew's gospel the Magi attending Jesus' birth testifies to the validation of Jesus' kingship. They represent a foreshadowing of Jesus' acceptance by the gentile world.

### For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”

The Magi must have had an unmistakably clear astronomical/astrological message to urge them on such a long, dangerous journey. They saw something in the night sky that was so significant it convinced them to make the trip of over a thousand miles to Jerusalem to look for this new king. How could seeing “signs in the sky” inform the Magi that a King of the Jews had been born? During the Babylonian exile, King Nebuchadnezzar assigned the prophet Daniel to the high office of “chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners” (Daniel 5:11). In other words, Daniel was appointed Chief of the Magi. The Magi of the first century would have most certainly studied the writing of Daniel, and the Scriptures of the Israelites who remained in Babylon.

### <sup>2</sup>“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?

A visit by these powerful and important officials to pay homage to a newborn king would have fit the Magi's usual job description perfectly to the original readers of Matthew's gospel, but it would also signal big trouble.

<sup>3</sup>**When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.** When Herod was troubled, all Jerusalem was troubled, because he tended to fly off the handle like a megalomaniac and go slaughtering people.

<sup>4</sup>**And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.** <sup>5</sup>**They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:** <sup>6</sup>**‘AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR FROM YOU WILL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’”**

The term Chief priests is used to signal that the upper echelon of the priestly order. They should have been the ones looking for Jesus, since they were the ones supposedly following God. They were supposedly the ones following God as His Worshipers, but they sold their birthright for a little stew, to a descendant of Esau. They served Herod, their political master instead of God. Bethlehem means house of bread, and so it was a fitting place for the bread of life to be born. Bethlehem is where the Passover lambs were born, and so it was a fitting place for Christ, our Passover to be born. And it was the birthplace of King David, to whom God gave the Davidic covenant that one of his descendants would rule forever on his throne.

Who do you serve, in your heart? Do you serve God, willing to follow the path that He has laid out for you, or do you serve political masters, or the Dow Jones, or your position and power, or simply yourself?