

The Four Gospels of the Bible, Visit by the Magi

Matthew 2:1-12

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem... ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to the country by another route. (NIV)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory—this was during Herod’s kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, “Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth. We’re on pilgrimage to worship him.” When word of their inquiry got to Herod, he was terrified—and not Herod alone, but most of Jerusalem as well. Herod lost no time. He gathered all the high priests and religion scholars in the city together and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

They told him, “Bethlehem, Judah territory. The prophet Micah wrote it plainly: It’s you, Bethlehem, in Judah’s land, no longer bringing up the rear. From you will come the leader who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel.”

Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. Pretending to be as devout as they were, he got them to tell him exactly when the birth-announcement star appeared. Then he told them the prophecy about Bethlehem, and said, “Go find this child. Leave no stone unturned. As soon as you find him, send word and I’ll join you at once in your worship.”

Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!

They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh.

In a dream, they were warned not to report back to Herod. So they worked out another route, left the territory without being seen, and returned to their own country.

(The Message)

The Wise Men

Scholars came from the East to bring gifts to the Messiah. How did they know about Christ; how did they know where to locate him but the star. The big, beautiful and brilliant star showed them the way...And so they came – they sought him out...

The Frightened King

King Herod was an installed leader; appointed by the ruling Roman Empire. Herod was not Jewish – which meant that he was less favored among the citizenry; what’s more, he was wicked and reckless.

On learning of the Christ child, Herod used his wicked and reckless way in an effort to find and end the child; but an angel intervened to warn of his scheme.

H. Kirk Rainer

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Wise Men Warned

The wise men had learned of the Messiah, had followed the star, and had found him at last. But they were also being used in Herod's scheme; they were being set-up by Herod and the others involved in the scheme to find and en the child. Yes, many were apparently afraid. Why were they afraid of a child?

The Wise Men may been fooled by Herod's portrayal of piety, but a subsequent dream warned them of Herod's true intentions and, consequently, they returned East by another route...to avoid him.

Go Down Egypt

This was not the first time that Egypt was a refuge; remember that Jacob sent his remaining sons to Egypt to purchase food...during a famine. They ventured to this land for food, but Jesus was carried there for his safety; they returned to Canaan as a new nation, while Jesus is returned to establish a new covenant. The "new nation" was released from the bondage of slavery, while the new covenant releases sinners from the bondage of sin.

Micah's Message

From the Old Testament, the prophet Micah told of the city of David hundreds of years before the birth. He spoke of the Christ child, his family and the re-unification of "scattered brothers". Yes, Christ came to bind-up and to restore...that which had been (or is) lost. Like the star above him, Christ shines for the world to see, to come and to worship against the fears of men...and even kings.

But you, Bethlehem, David's country, the runt of the litter—From you will come the leader who will shepherd-rule Israel. He'll be no upstart, no pretender. His family tree is ancient and distinguished. Meanwhile, Israel will be in foster homes until the birth pangs are over and the child is born, And the scattered brothers come back home to the family of Israel.

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