

Matthew 2: HG Bishop Youssef

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His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاين تاطع • MATTHEW 2 ~ Bible Study

Wise Men from the East

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

³ When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

- St Luke recorded in detail the events related to the day of the birth of Christ. But St Matthew did not mention those details.
 - St Matthew was writing to the Jews and wanted to tell them that Jesus is the King of Israel and Messiah that they are waiting for. So he didn't go into the details of the birth but chose certain events to prove to the Jews that Jesus is King
 - Wise men who followed the star to find the infant and worship Him
- Bethlehem
 - Means "house of Bread" like bet la7m in Arabic
 - John 6:35 Christ refers to Himself as the Bread of Life who descended from heaven. So it's befitting that Christ is born in Bethlehem since He is the Bread of Life.
 - This Bethlehem is the one mentioned in Judges 17:7 belonging to Judah different from Joshua 19:15 Bethlehem belonging to Zebulun.
- Jesus was born in time of King Herod, Edomite, son of Antipater who was made king by the Romans
- Wise Men
 - Proper word is Magi - priests and philosophers from Persia and Media. These were dedicated to the study of the stars as astrologers and magicians. We read about them in the book of Daniel. They lived in Iran around the region of the Euphrates.
 - Most icons and pictures portray three wise men as three. There is no biblical documentation for that assumption. We usually assume they are more than three - but because of the three gifts we usually think of them as three. It's unlikely that only three people would make that trip from Iran.
- These wise men discovered an unusual luminous star.

- Maybe they were originally Jewish and were familiar with Prophecies and how He is called the Star by Balaam (Numbers 24:17)
- They did not comprehend that Jesus is a heavenly king, not an earthly king. So they went to the palace to find this king.
- Why would King Herod be troubled?
 - This means a threat and danger to his throne
 - Although most rejoiced at the birth of Christ (shepherds, angels, etc) some were troubled (Herod and his friends "all Jerusalem")

⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

⁵ So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

⁶ 'But you, Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah,
Are not the least among the rulers of Judah;
For out of you shall come a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel.' "

- He inquired of the chief priests and scribes
 - The chief priests were the 24 heads or chiefs of the priests (King David has decided the priests into 24 groups and each one had a chief) - 1 Chronicles 23, 24, Ezra 8
 - Scribes are the successors of Ezra. Ezra used to transcribe the scripture and the Scribes were the ones who transcribed it. So they knew scripture by heart since they were always transcribing and copying it. They are the Theologians.
 - Herod did well by calling these two groups because they are the right ones to answer it.
 - His question to them implies three things
 - The Jews expected the Messiah
 - The Scripture foretold His coming
 - The very place of His birth is foretold
 - They answered without hesitation they knew exactly where He would be born and quoted Micah 5:2
 - They said Bethlehem of Judah to differentiate from Bethlehem in Zebulun
 - In that prophecy, the place of his birth and the Character of the Messiah are made clear: He is a ruler and a shepherd. Though he is a ruler, he will rule with compassion as a shepherd
 - He wanted to know when the star appeared because in his mind the appearance of the star indicated when Jesus was born exactly.
 - He said he wanted to worship Him but this is a plain lie. Hypocrisy. He wants to know where the child was born in order to kill him.
 - God, who searches the minds, knew Herod's plan which is why He redirected the wise men
- He instructed the wise men to go and come back with his authority as King

⁷ Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

⁹ When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

- They departed immediately after talking to Herod
- St John Chrysostom said this star is not a regular star
 - You cannot follow a star and walk behind it... So this star must have been very low
 - The star was moving from the East to Jerusalem and this is against the natural movement of stars
 - This star stood in place to point out where the child was born
 - So this star must have been a heavenly or angelic power appearing in the form of a star to guide the wise men. The star reminds us of the pillar of fire that guided Israel
- They rejoiced when they saw the star because it confirmed to them that their journey was not in vain, but it must be a true revelation about where the king is to be born. Any vision or revelation from God is cause for rejoicing as the Lord said to us "I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you." (John 16:22)

¹¹ And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

- It was the custom of the people of the East when they visit kings to present gifts to them.
 - Frankincense to represent his priesthood
 - Expensive fragrant gum from a tree in Arabia
 - Gold to represent his kingship and Kingdom
 - Myrrh represents his suffering.
 - It's an aromatic gum from a thorn bush in Arabia and Ethiopia that has a sweet aroma. It represents the words of the Prophets because their words are like a sweet aroma.
- God uses the magi in a prophetic way to tell us about the role of Christ.
 - Prophet because he told us about the Father. No one has seen the Father but the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father has revealed Him to us. Hebrews 1 "God who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son"
 - King, but His kingdom is not of this world. He is a Heavenly King who came to restore and re-establish the Kingdom of God that was destroyed by Satan
 - The High Priest who offered Himself as the Sacrifice.
- The three gifts prophetically represent the three roles of Christ as the Messiah: King, High-Priest, Prophet
 - At Theophany, the Holy Spirit came down and anointed Christ. Anointed as King of kings, prophet, High Priest

¹² Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

- Divine Intervention
 - Sometimes we are afraid because of threats of persecution or someone wants revenge on us or someone wants to attack us, but we forget that while we are afraid God has His own plan for our protection.
 - He destroyed the plan of Herod and warned the wise men in a dream, and warned Joseph in a dream.
 - Either way, if God allowed us to be killed, it's for our benefit and if He allowed us to live it's for our benefit
 - "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21)

The Flight into Egypt

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, ¹⁵ and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

- Hosea 11:1
- "Spoken by the Lord" is accurate because whatever is written in the Scripture are not the words of Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc. but the words of God, Himself. The prophets were merely a channel.
- This prophecy can be interpreted in two ways:
 - Looking back to the calling Israel out of Egypt
 - Prophecy about calling the Lord Christ out of Egypt after the death of Herod
- **ἐκκλησία** - Church - literally means "called out"
 - As God called His people out of Egypt, and called His Son out of Egypt, so He is calling us out of the world
 - The Church is "not of this world"
 - "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:19)
 - The Church is the Assembly of Believers which are those who are called out of this world.
- Why Egypt?
 - Egypt has an intimate connection with Biblical History
 - Some scholars say the most frequent country named in Scripture after Israel is Egypt
 - In the 1st Century, it was the closest Roman province independent of King Herod
 - Many Jews there with their synagogues
 - It is close to Jerusalem
 - It is considered a place of refuge to many prophets

- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons, Jeremiah, etc.
- We can call Egypt a Holy Land because Christ lived there for 3.5 years
 - Children start speaking at the end of their 1st year, during their 2nd year
 - We can assume that Christ's first words were uttered in Egypt
 - Many scholars assume that Christ probably spoke Coptic when He was young
- Joseph obeyed the vision immediately
 - This should be our attitude when God asks us to do something... sometimes we have a whisper in our ears. We remember to pray before sleeping or eating, or to read the Bible when we wake up... this is the Holy Spirit speaking to us. And we ignore it.

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying:

¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning,
Rachel weeping *for* her children,
Refusing to be comforted,
Because they are no more."

- Massacre of the Innocents
 - The harshness of the heart of King Herod
 - Regardless of how hardened your heart is, when you see a little child, your heart becomes soft. To kill children two years and under reflects how hard his heart was.
 - When we become so attached to the pleasures, mind, prestige of the world, it hardens our heart. All of this was done lest he lose his power and his throne
 - He became so angry feeling a mockery of his authority
 - Herod died just a little while later
- Some confuse the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation with the children of Bethlehem.
 - Of course, they are not the same.
 - Bethlehem is a small town with few people
- By slaughtering the infants at Bethlehem, the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:15 is fulfilled
 - Jeremiah is speaking back about the desolation of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar and the survivors of the Israelites were gathered at Ramah and the voice of their lamentation was heard... mothers leaving their offspring. Rachel being the mother of three great tribes: Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin
 - Jeremiah is prophesying about the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem. Rachel is buried in Bethlehem

The Home in Nazareth

¹⁹ Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." ²¹ Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.
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."

- Herod left three sons and the Kingdom was divided at his death into three parts
 - Herod Archelaus: Judea, Idumea, Samaria
 - Herod Philip: Batanaea and Trachonitis
 - Herod Antipas: Galilee and Perea
 - These three are referred to frequently in the New Testament
- Death of Herod the Great was a signal to Joseph to go back to Israel
- The angel appeared to Joseph
 - He gave him freedom to choose any place in the land of Israel - he didn't tell him to go back to Bethlehem
 - "Those who sought the young Child's life are dead" - it wasn't just Herod who wanted to kill the Lord
- Joseph goes to Galilee
 - Herod Archelaus was said to be harsher than his father Herod the Great
 - Galilee was under Herod Antipas who was much more mild
 - Joseph went to a small village called Nazareth
- Nazareth
 - Was a despised village and the people of Nazareth were despised
 - And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46)
 - This fulfills a prophecy:
"Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground.
He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him." (Isaiah 53:1-2)
- He shall be called a Nazarene
 - There is no prophecy in the Old Testament that says this
 - Nazarene means "a branch" in Hebrew
 - "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1)
 - St Matthew may be using word-play in Hebrew
 - St Jerome has another opinion: That Nazarene refers to the Nazirite - people who separated and consecrated themselves to God. St Matthew says "spoken by the prophets" instead of "prophet" which he said in the previous prophecies. So he may just be referring to a general theme in the Old Testament that the Lord will be dedicated to the ministry of the Lord.