

Matthew 2

“¹¹ He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believed in His name.” **John 1**

1. If the fullness of the time involved the setting of the stage (and the hearts of Israel) for Messiah, the disinterest and even fear of Jesus by Herod is a dramatic show of insensitivity.
2. Jn.1 provides a theological explanation of what we see in Matthew 2 where a contrast between the Gentile believers and the Jewish critics is revealed. Matthew will emphasize the inclusion of Gentile believers throughout his gospel.
3. Again, Matthew demonstrates that all the critical events in Jesus life were predicted long ago by the Prophets and consistent with God’s unfolding story of redemption.
4. This chapter shows us how Jesus’ story retraces Israel’s history so as to reveal God’s empathy with His people. As we reflect upon the life of Moses we see many parallels in the story of Jesus.
 - Herod is like the Egyptian pharaoh
 - Jesus baptism is like the crossing of the Red Sea
 - The forty days of testing are like the forty years the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness
 - The Sermon on the Mount is like the Law of Moses delivered on Mount Sinai
 - Jesus, like Moses attacked the people’s carnality and suffered rejection in the process.

Why was the respect and worship of the Magi significant?

C. His acceptance (2:1-23) In this passage we will see significant contrast between the Jewish hostility and the Gentile openness toward Messiah. Two types of hearts are present here. One is very sensitive to spiritual light while the other is unaware of the light and then fearful and hostile when it is revealed. A great truth is revealed in this chapter. Personal hunger and faith are more critical to the emerging Kingdom of God than are religious heritage and tradition.

1. The Worship of the Magi: The soft heart of God fearing Gentiles (2:1-12)

a. Magi Coming to Jerusalem (2:1-4)

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² "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.**" ³ And when Herod the king heard it, he was **troubled**, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he {began} to inquire of them where the Christ was to be born.

- The Magi were specialists in astronomy from an area north of Babylon. We do not know how many there were. The fact that there were three gifts suggested to some, three givers.
- The word used for “child” in verse 11 suggest that Jesus was a young boy not an infant.
- Herod was a Jew who wore the title “King of the Jews” by the Roman government. He was ruthless, and a puppet to Rome. His insecurity was revealed with the word that a rival king was born.
- The contrasting fear and awe of Herod and the Magi is striking. The Magi and Herod represent two extremes in culture. The Magi were not expect to know, respect, or worship the Christ while Herod’s unmasked self interest revealed the heart of Jewish religion in Jesus’ day.

b. The Fulfillment of Prophecy (2:5-6)

5 And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet, 6 ' *And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Ruler, Who will shepherd My people Israel.*' " (Micah 5:2)

- It is significant to note that the Jewish leaders knew how to direct others (the Magi) to Messiah but had little interest in going themselves.

c. Magi Worshipping the King (2:7-12)

7 Then Herod secretly called the magi, and ascertained from them the time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, "Go and make careful search for the Child; and when you have found {Him,} report to me, that I too may come and worship Him." 9 And having heard the king, they went their way; and lo, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. 10 And when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him; and opening their treasures they presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned {by God} in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their own country by another way.

- The significance of this story may be to prepare the readers to not be afraid to worship Jesus even though the official authorities did not.

What does the behavior of Herod reveal about Herod, and Jesus?

2. The Escape to Egypt: (2:13-15)

a. The Escape to Egypt (2:13-14)

13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord *appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." 14 And he arose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt;

- The angel's warning indicates that God knew (for certain) what Herod would do.
- This raises an important question about the nature of God's sovereignty – was Herod's behavior orchestrated or simply foreseen as inevitable given Herod's nature?

b. The Fulfillment of Prophecy (2:15)

15 and was there until the death of Herod, that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "*Out of Egypt did I call My Son.*"

- The passage links Jesus with the nation Israel (both were displaced in and came out of Egypt).

3. The Slaughter of the Innocent Ones: The hard heart of Herod (2:16-18)

a. Herod's Slaughter of the Babes (2:16)

16 Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi.

- There is no record of this outside this text although the action is consistent with everything we know about Herod's character and style.
- It illustrates the treachery of Messiah's environment and of the trauma that is a part of the incarnation.

b. The Fulfillment of Prophecy (2:17-18)

17 Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying, 18 *"A voice was heard in Ramah, Weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; And she refused to be comforted, Because they were no more."*

- The passage in Jer.31:15 referred to the Babylonian captivity of Israel. Again, we see Jesus story paralleling Israel's story.

4. The Return to Nazareth: Foreshadowing of Jewish Rejection of Jesus (2:19-23)

a. The Return to Nazareth (2:19-22)

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 20 "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." 21 And he arose and took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned {by God} in a dream, he departed for the regions of Galilee,

- The hostility toward Jesus is still present. We see His vulnerability in this story. God chooses to protect Him through natural means (location).

b. The Fulfillment of Prophecy (2:23)

23 and came and resided in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "

- "He shall be called a Nazarene." There is no OT text that makes this statement. To be from Nazareth was to be from the wrong side of the tracks.

INSIGHTS AND LESSONS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- **THE HEART OF GOD IS REVEALED IN THE INCARNATION WHERE JESUS' STORY PARALLELS ISRAEL'S STORY SHOWING HIS INTIMATE IDENTIFICATION WITH HIS PEOPLE. THIS THEME IS AN EXTENSION OF THE REVELATION OF OUR LORD AS "IMMANUEL" IN CHAPTER 1.**
- **HIS STORY ALSO PARALLELS OURS IN THAT HE BORE OUR WEAKNESS, TEMPTATION, VULNERABILITY, AND EVEN OUR SHAME.**
- **OUR DESTINY IS SHAPED BY OUR RESPONSE TO JESUS NOT BY OUR ASSOCIATION WITH RELIGIOUS TRADITION AND CULTURAL POSITION (BOTH OF WHICH MAY BE CHALLENGED BY JESUS AND HIS KINGDOM.)**