

Matthew 2

Read Matthew 2:1-12:

The coming messiah is one of the most important fulfilled prophesies in scripture. We learn about history through the Bible. Sometimes we have to use facts not included in the Bible to see the significance of details within the Biblical record.

We hear of the Magi in relation to their long trek to see the King of the Jews, and to have audience with Herod the Great. Cesar gave Herod the title "King of the Jews".

Matthew tells us the Magi were "from the east" and followed a star all the way to Judea, where they then seek Herod's help in located Christ. Note that whoever these wise men are, they are important enough to receive an immediate audience with the busy King Herod. Herod finds out from the priests and scribes that the Messiah will come from Bethlehem.

To see what's happening more-clearly, we need to look more closely at Herod and the Magi. Judah and Bethlehem sat in between two of the largest world powers as an outpost that changed hands between the Romans and Parthians. *← HAD CONTROL OF BETHLEHEM ALSO*

We can more-accurately understand Herod by knowing about some of the things Herod did in his 32 years of rule prior to Christ's birth (37 to 5 B.C.). He was a ruthless, cunning control freak; and a climber. He is known to have appointed people as High Priest then later have them killed. He pillaged Jerusalem's treasures and robbed the city's wealthy so that he could give money to friends in order to curry their favor. He searched for and took from the dead any silver, gold or other valuables they had on them. He had King David's tomb opened and personally searched it for anything of value. Herod also

had family members killed, such as his own sons, whom he accused before Caesar in Rome.

The Magi would have to have been high-level Parthian priests and very influential members of one of Parthia's two assemblies which elected the empire's monarchs and helped rule the empire. **Parthia as an empire** began in 247 B.C. and rivaled of the Roman Empire at the time of Christ. In fact, the Parthians dealt the Romans one of their worst defeats in history.

Rome was not the undisputed master of the Near East. The empire of Parthia stretched from modern Afghanistan through Iran to the Euphrates River in Iraq, encompassing territories once ruled by Persian kings and then by Alexander the Great and his successors. Existing for nearly 500 years (c. 250 B.C.E. to the 220s C.E.), the Parthian state was the only advanced civilization that bordered the Roman Empire. At its height, the Parthian Empire stretched from the northern reaches of the Euphrates, in what is now central-eastern Turkey, to eastern Iran. The empire, located on the Silk Road trade route between the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean Basin and the Han Empire of China, became a center of trade and commerce. Parthia was ruled by satraps/provincial governors.

Like God
It was only six years before Christ was born that Bethlehem and Judah changed from Parthian control to Roman control. Between 39–38 BC, the Roman general Publius Ventidius Bassus defeated the Parthian army, sending troops under the command of Poppaeus Silo to await the arrival of Herod. Herod landed at Ptolemais and began his campaign against Antigonus with the conquest of the Galilee, marched down the coast to take Jaffa and then relieved Masada, where his family was still holed up. He then marched on Jerusalem, hoping to capture the city and bring a swift end to the war.

Herod was a ruthless and paranoid tyrant. There are at least three main reasons why Herod did not dare go after and punish those Magi whom he doubtlessly thought slighted him. Keep in mind that job # 1 for a Roman Governor was to keep territorial peace and collect taxes.

1. Herod was deathly afraid of Parthia. Just before Herod became the King of Judea his Roman rival Antigonus offered the Parthians a very large sum of money to KILL Herod! Herod was so afraid of them that he fled Jerusalem under the cover of night (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 14, Chapter 13). No doubt this event caused Herod to think twice before trying to exact revenge on high-ranking members of Parthia's ruling elite.
2. Judea was located at a battlefield if Herod upset the neighboring world power Parthia. Herod did not want to risk incurring the wrath of Rome. "there is no record that he (Herod) made any attempt to overtake or punish the Magi. As high Parthian nobles, they had 'diplomatic immunity,' and Herod dared not anger Caesar by provoking the Parthians." (*Lost Ten Tribes of Israel . . . Found!* by Stephen M. Collins, pages 385 – 386)
3. The Magi were not just magic men or counselors. They were high-level empire decision-makers. Because of who they were, what they carried (gold, frankincense, myrrh), and the distance of their travel, the Magi came to Judea with a fairly large caravan. This caravan included servants, cooks, and so on, plus an armed escort of perhaps a few hundred Parthian soldiers. The entourage was so HUGE that when they first entered Jerusalem looking for the Christ they GREATLY alarmed the king AND the entire city (Matthew 2:3). It would have been suicide for Herod to even try to attempt revenge against the Parthians. As author Stephen Collins states "the size of the Magi's armed escort apparently dissuaded Herod from attempting to pursue them"

Herod faced this volatile situation and ^{HE ALWAYS} exploited it to his advantage. Indeed it was no coincidence that the Romans entrusted the throne of

Judaea to Herod the Great at the close of 40 B.C.E., the same year of the Parthian conquest. During the campaign the Parthians installed Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II and scion of the Hasmonean dynasty, as king of Judaea. Herod fled to Rome to use this event to make a bid for kingship. He sought out Antony and underscored the Parthian

threat (and threw in a bribe for good measure!). As the ancient sources make clear, the strategy worked; the Parthian actions motivated the Senate to make Herod the Great king. In this situation, Herod is best seen as a manipulator of Rome's confrontation with Parthia for his own advantage.



This chapter speaks of kingdoms in conflict on multiple levels. Israel was a spoil located on territorial boundaries traded from one world power to the next. Life was a burden with their neck under the boot. God's Kingdom of Light is here. We are called to support our King.

Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way

of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:1-7)

Immanuel is a title, not a name. The original prophecy of a virgin giving birth to one who is called "God with us" is located in Isaiah. The first mention was a house cleaning. Originally it was a prophetic child symbolic to Israel being taken out of the land to cleanse the filth and violence. God told Isaiah to have a child with the virgin prophetess. His name was to be prophetic, meaning. It meant "Hurry to the spoils!" or "He has made haste to the plunder!"

MILITANT
FULFILMENT

Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Call his name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz; for before the child shall have knowledge to cry 'My father' and 'My mother,' the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria." The LORD also spoke to me again, saying: "Inasmuch as these people refused The waters of Shiloah that flow softly, And rejoice in Rezin and in Remaliah's son; Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them The waters of the River, strong and mighty—The king of Assyria and all his glory; *God gives the concurring people and strength to over flow the borders like the river waters.* He will go up over all his channels And go over all his banks. He will pass through Judah, He will overflow and pass over, He will reach up to the neck; And the stretching out of his wings Will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel. "Be shattered, O you peoples, and be broken in pieces! (Isaiah 7:3-9)

Read Matthew 2:13-23: Hosea 11:1 says that God called Israel out of Egypt when it was young.

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son. As they called them, (Hosea 11:1a)

This is the prophecy cited for the Christ child coming out of Egypt after fleeing for his life from Herod's massacre in Bethlehem. His also doubles as a prophecy that the nation Israel was birthed in Egypt; and became a nation.

But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day. (Deuteronomy 4:20)

Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "I remember you, The kindness of your youth, The love of your betrothal, When you went after Me in the wilderness, In a land not sown. (Jeremiah 2:2)

Another fulfillment of prophecy is that Jesus would be called a Nazarene. The root word of Nazarene is *the branch*. He is like a sprig that shoots out of a sawed-off stump (Israel); bringing new life. The roots go back to Abraham; as the first regular human, father of the faithful. *ISRAEL IS A SAWED OFF STUMP*

Isaiah 4:2 In that day shall the branch [NKJV: the Branch] of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

That branch can take the form of a tree (Menorah); with each branch representing an aspect of the Holy Spirit *SEVEN BRANCHES*

Isaiah 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

nêtser, nay'-tser; from H5341 in the sense of greenness as a striking color; a shoot; figuratively, a descendant:—branch.

A shoot represents new life and vitality. Being the first born from the dead; Jesus is like a tender green shoot popping out of a tree stump. It also is a special designation:

In the Hebrew Bible, a **nazirite** or **nazarite**, (in Hebrew: נָזִיר, *nazir*), refers to one who voluntarily took a vow described in Numbers 6:1–21. "Nazarite" comes from the Hebrew word *nazir* meaning "consecrated" or "separated".^[1] This vow required the person to:

- Abstain from wine, wine vinegar, grapes, raisins, intoxicating liquors,^[2] vinegar made from such substances,^[3] and eating or drinking any substance that contains any trace of grapes.^[4]
- Refrain from cutting the hair on one's head; but to allow the locks of the head's hair to grow.^[5]
- Not to become ritually impure by contact with corpses or graves, even those of family members

Jeremiah 23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David **a righteous Branch***; and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

Jeremiah 33:15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the **Branch of righteousness** to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

Zechariah 3:8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant **the BRANCH**.

Zechariah 6:12 And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is **The BRANCH**; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

REOPEN
BAIN TO
CHAPTER 1
"SON OF
DAVID"

Kingly
CHARACTER