

Matthew 2

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Matthew 2

The story of Christmas

Once upon a time, there was a small town in Judea called Bethlehem. There, a couple named Mary and Joseph were on their journey, and Mary was pregnant and about to give birth.

As the Roman Empire required everyone to return to their hometowns to register, the inns in Bethlehem were full, and Mary and Joseph could not find a place to stay. So they had to spend the night in a manger. On that cold night, Mary gave birth to Jesus and put him in a manger.

Several shepherds were keeping vigil in the field, and an angel announced the good news to them. The angel said, "For you today in the city of David was born a Savior, the Christ." When the shepherds heard the news, they immediately went to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and the newborn Jesus, and paid their respects to them.

In addition, three wise men came to Bethlehem from the East to follow a star in the sky. They brought valuable gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which they offered to Jesus. They thought that this baby would be the great king of the future.

This is the story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. This story is still told by the world and is celebrated every Christmas

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Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Judea; The star guided the Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem. And the star had been guiding before the Wise Men, who were well versed in astronomy and geography, and who had a great understanding of the spiritual realm, so they understood that this star was the guiding of the spiritual realm, and received that a new king was about to be born. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly. When he entered the house, he saw the child and his mother Mary, and he

fell down and worshipped the child, and opened the box, and offered him gold, frankincense, and myrrh as gifts. He prepared gold, frankincense, and myrrh for the worship of Jesus.

"Gold" symbolizes the noble glory of divinity, "frankincense" symbolizes the fragrance of resurrection, and "myrrh" symbolizes the suffering of death. These three gifts speak of three characteristics of Christ: that is, the incarnation, that is, the incarnation of God into the world ('gold'), the death of us sinners ('myrrh'), and the ultimate resurrection and exaltation ('frankincense').)。

Oriental always ride camels when they go out of the country, and camel teams always go out with dozens or even a hundred camels. Because they had to bring tents and food, they had to have people to manage the camels, and those important people had to go out of the house, and they had to call in bodyguards and even militia to protect them. Therefore, this caravan of camels was able to shake Jerusalem as one of the important events of the day (Matt. 2:3 says: The people of Jerusalem were also troubled).

King Herod bribed Julius with money Julius Caesar's Council of the Roman Empire, led by Julius Caesar, was crowned King of Judea and ruled Judah for 37 years. He slaughtered his wife, his three sons, his mother-in-law, his brother-in-law, his uncle, and many others, and he sent for all the boys in the city of Bethlehem and in all its borders, all those who were two years old or younger, as he had examined the wise men. At that time, the city of Bethlehem was very small, and there were probably less than 20 children under the age of two, and the cruel Herod killed even three of his own sons in his later years. When the King of Heaven came to earth, he was rejected by the earth and could not contain him, and he wanted to destroy the king who came from heaven to earth. But God was in complete control of all things in the highest, and He did not destroy Herod, but He sent Joseph into flight. For the Lord Jesus is the Lamb, who retreats without contention and prevails in the end, wandering for us from a baby, that we may have rest through him.

Joseph, Jesus' physical father, knew that the child was the prophesied Savior, Jesus. Therefore, we are fully committed to protecting the Lord Jesus. In every circumstance he paid the price, and immediately obeyed God's instructions: as soon as the messenger warned him in his dream, as soon as he reminded him, he arose, and fled by night with his children and mother to Egypt. His movement was: 'Immediately, 'get up.'"

Joseph's response to the Lord - immediate obedience.

Let's pray together:

Thank you, Abba Heavenly Father, for renewing our understanding of your eternal plan of redemption by sending your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to redeem all mankind. Lord, make us desire you all the more, worship you alone, and give your life to you, because you are worthy. Help us to be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit throughout our lives, and to bear witness to you and to bring others to you. Thank you Lord for hearing our prayers.

In the holy name of Jesus Christ. Amen!

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The Visit of the Magi

2 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of ^[a]Herod the king (Herod the Great), ^[b]magi (wise men) from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, ²“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star ^[c]in the east and have come to worship Him.” ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ So he called together all the chief priests and ^[d]scribes of the people and [anxiously] asked them where the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed) was to be born. ⁵ They replied to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what has been written by the prophet [Micah]:

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‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are not in any way least among the leaders of Judah;
For from you shall come a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel.’”

⁷ Then Herod secretly sent for the magi and learned from them ^[e]the [exact] time the star [had first] appeared. ⁸ Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.” ⁹ After hearing the king, they went their way; and behold, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them [continually leading the way] until it came and stood over *the place* where the young Child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And after entering the house, they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, after opening their treasure chests, they presented to Him gifts [fit for a king, gifts] of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned [by God] in a dream not to go back to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

The Flight to Egypt

¹³ Now when they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod intends to search for the Child in order to destroy Him.”

¹⁴ So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. ¹⁵ He remained there until the death of Herod. *This was* to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet [Hosea]: “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

Herod Slaughters the Babies

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he realized that he had been tricked by the magi, was extremely angry, and he sent [soldiers] and put to death all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that area who were two years old and under, according to the date which he had learned from the magi. ¹⁷ Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

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“A voice was heard in ^[f]Ramah,
Weeping and great mourning,
^[g]Rachel weeping for her children;
She refused to be comforted,
Because they were no more.”

¹⁹ But when ^[1]Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, ²⁰ “Get up! Take the Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child’s life are dead.” ²¹ Then Joseph got up, and took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea ^[1] in place of his father Herod [the Great], he was afraid to go there. Then being warned *by God* in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee, ²³ and went and settled in a city called Nazareth. *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: “He shall be called a ^[1] Nazarene.”

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Matthew 2 recounts pivotal events following the birth of Jesus, emphasizing the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and the universal scope of Jesus' mission. The chapter is divided into four main sections:

1. The Visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12)

Description:

Wise men (Magi) from the East arrive in Jerusalem, guided by a star, seeking the "King of the Jews." They meet King Herod, who, alarmed by their inquiry, consults the chief priests and scribes. Learning that the Messiah was prophesied to be born in Bethlehem, Herod deceitfully asks the Magi to inform him of the child's location. The Magi, led by the star, find Jesus, worship Him, and present gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Warned in a dream, they return to their country by another route.

Key Verses:

- *Matthew 2:2* – "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."
- *Matthew 2:11* – "On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

Spiritual Influence:

This passage highlights Jesus as the universal Savior, worshiped by Gentiles (Magi) and foretold by prophecy. It teaches believers to seek and honor Christ wholeheartedly, offering Him their best.

2. The Flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15)

Description:

An angel warns Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus, as Herod intends to kill the child. The family stays in Egypt until Herod's death, fulfilling the prophecy, "Out of Egypt I called my son" (Hosea 11:1).

Key Verse:

- *Matthew 2:14-15* – "So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'"

Spiritual Influence:

This event reflects God's providence and protection over His plans and His people. It reminds believers to trust God's guidance, even in difficult circumstances.

3. Herod's Massacre of the Innocents (Matthew 2:16-18)

Description:

Herod, enraged that the Magi did not return, orders the killing of all male children in Bethlehem aged two and under. This fulfills the prophecy from Jeremiah 31:15 about Rachel weeping for her children.

Key Verses:

- *Matthew 2:16* – "When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under."
- *Matthew 2:18* – "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

Spiritual Influence:

This tragedy illustrates the depth of human sin and the cost of resisting God's purposes. It also points to the hope and comfort Jesus brings to a broken world.

4. The Return to Nazareth (Matthew 2:19-23)

Description:

After Herod's death, an angel instructs Joseph to return to Israel. Fearing Herod's son Archelaus, Joseph moves to Galilee and settles in Nazareth. This fulfills the prophecy, "He will be called a Nazarene."

Key Verses:

- *Matthew 2:22-23* – "But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth."

Spiritual Influence:

This passage highlights Jesus' humble beginnings and God's sovereign orchestration of events. It reminds believers that God often works through unexpected and humble circumstances.

Overall Spiritual Influence of Matthew 2

1. God's Sovereignty and Faithfulness:

Matthew 2 underscores God's control over history, fulfilling prophecies through events and people.

2. **Jesus as the Universal Savior:**

The Magi's visit signifies that salvation through Jesus is for all nations, not just Israel.

3. **Trust in God's Guidance:**

Joseph's obedience to divine instructions models faith and reliance on God's leading, even in uncertainty.

4. **Hope Amid Suffering:**

The massacre of the innocents reminds believers of the reality of evil but also points to the ultimate victory and comfort found in Christ.

5. **Worship and Devotion:**

The Magi's journey and gifts inspire believers to worship Jesus with reverence and offer Him their best.

Matthew 2 is a powerful chapter that encourages believers to trust God's plan, worship Christ as King, and find hope in His redemptive work despite the challenges of a broken world.