Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Why the Little Town of Bethlehem?
Scripture: Matthew 2
Code: BQ122512

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, "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." And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 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. And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet, '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.' "

Then Herod secretly called the magi, and ascertained from them the time the star appeared. 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." 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. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 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. And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their own country by another way. (Matthew 2:1–12)

Continuing his thrust to establish Jesus' right to Israel's true and final kingship, in chapter 2 Matthew gives three additional evidences of Jesus of Nazareth's legitimate, unique, and absolute royal right to the throne of David. In chapter 1 we saw the evidence of Jesus' royal **genealogy** and of His **virgin birth**. In the present chapter we first see the testimony of the magi, who came to give homage and gifts to the infant Jesus, "He who has been born King of the Jews" (Matthew2:2). The powerful oriental kingmakers from Persia traveled a great distance to recognize and honor a **King** in whose coronation they had no part, a King far greater than any they had ever, or would ever, set on a **throne**.

The next evidence of Christ's kingship is shown in a negative, or reverse, way, through the antagonism and hatred of **Herod**. Herod's devious scheme to discover and destroy this unknown baby shows his fear that the magi's declaration about the Child could be correct, and gives

unintended testimony to Jesus' true royalty. Herod knew that he himself was a usurper to the throne on which he sat only by virtue of Rome-who herself ruled Judah only by the "right" of military force. Herod was an Edomite, not a Jew, and had no legitimate claim to be the Jew's king. He therefore feared and hated even the suggestion of a rival claimant. But even the hatred of the false king gave indirect testimony to the identity of the true **King**.

The third evidence of Christ's kingship given in chapter 2 is presented through four fulfilled messianic prophecies. Some three hundred thirty Old Testament predictions concern, **Jesus Christ**. In chapter 2 Matthew points out four of those prophecies that were fulfilled during Jesus' infancy. There is no reasonable possibility that even those four-much less all three hundred thirty-could have been fulfilled accidentally in the life of a single individual. That fact in itself is overwhelming evidence of God's sovereign control of history and of the utter reliability of His Word.

Matthew uses the four prophecies as a literary framework around which he presents the events recorded in this chapter. Each of the predictions is directly related to a geographical location closely related to Jesus' birth and early childhood. The four locations are **Bethlehem**, **Egypt**, **Ramah**, and **Nazareth**.

The present passage-built around the prediction of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem-focuses on the coming of the magi to worship Jesus, the One they somehow knew had been born **King of the Jews**. Within this story we also see the reaction of Herod and of the chief priests and scribes to that same news. In this brief text we see examples of the three basic responses that men made to Jesus when He was on earth, the same three responses that men throughout history have made to the Lord Some, like Herod, are hostile to Him; some, like the chief priests and scribes, are indifferent to Him; and some, like the magi, worship Him.

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