

“Star Search”

(Matthew 2:1-23)

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I. Introduction

A. Facebook video

1. Comments on the video
2. *“His name shall be JESUS!”*

B. Let me read the story behind this statement

1. Luke 1:26-33

(26) In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, (27) to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. (28) The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” (29) Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. (30) But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. (31) You will be with child and give birth to a son, and his name shall be Jesus. (32) He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, (33) and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end

C. Many were waiting for this great moment

- b. Historians said you could feel the sense of anticipation
 1. Like we feel the second coming approaching
 1. New discovery after 250 years in the Vatican
 2. A book, “The Revelation of the Magi”
 3. Let me show you what the Bible says about their visit

II. Text...Matthew 2:1-23

A. First, Some basics (v. 1)

(1) After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem

1. The place of the birth (v.1)

a. “in Bethlehem of Judea” (v.1)

1. Small town 5 miles south of Jerusalem

b. Not much to look at

1. Tourists are disappointed at first

2. Mangy looking old town

3. Strange looking old church

4. Site of the “Midnight Mass”

c. Importance

1. Jacob buried Rachel there

2. Ruth lived there when she married Boaz

3. It was called “the city of David”

d. But most importantly

1. Bible scholars expected the Messiah to come from there

2. Micah 5:2

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from everlasting.

e. Lots of caves in Bethlehem

1. With houses built on the slopes above them

2. Used for stables
- f. One cave now covered by “The Church of the Nativity”
 1. Over the cave where Jesus was born
 2. Where God became one of us
 3. The central truth of Christianity

2. *The time of the birth (v.1)*

(1) After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod

- a. King Herod the Great
- b. This is not the night of Jesus’ birth
 1. Probably several months later
 2. Magi had to travel quite a distance from the East
 - a. Most likely from modern day Iran (Persia)
- c. Jesus had already been taken to the temple to be “purified”
 1. At least 40 days after a birth
 2. Jesus is called a “child” in v.11
- d. They came to the “house” not the stable
- e. It occurred sometime prior to Herod’s death in 4 BC

C. The Magi (vs. 1-2)

(1) ...Magi from the east came to Jerusalem (2) and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

1. The approach of the Wise Men
 - a. As the caravan approached Jerusalem...
 1. Up the Jericho Road

- a. Winding up the narrow path
 - b. Jerusalem sat on a 2600 foot plateau
 - 2. The people watched as an army approached
 - 3. Who were they?
- b. The “magicians” of Daniel
 - 1. “Wise men” = “Magi”
 - a. The name of a tribe
 - b. Like the “Levites”
 - 2. From the empire of the Persians which included:
 - a. Medes = Kurds
 - b. Persians = Iran
 - c. Babylonians = Iraq
 - d. Called the Parthians
 - 3. They were honored for their knowledge
 - a. The wisest of the wise men
- c. Daniel and the Persians 600 years earlier
 - 1. They came in contact with Daniel in Babylon
 - a. When Persia conquered Babylon
 - *When Iran conquered Iraq
 - 2. Daniel appointed “chief of the magicians (magi)”
 - a. Many sought after the God of Daniel
 - 3. They must have pored over the prophecies of Daniel

- a. I marvel at the details
 - b. Told of the coming of a Messiah
- 4. They knew that according to the prophecies of Daniel, it was time for the Messiah to come
 - a. And they knew it would be in Bethlehem
 - b. And they knew he would be no ordinary man
- 5. The “Star”
- d. They were rich and powerful
 - 1. Called “the King Makers”
 - a. They decided who would be king
 - b. Like the College of Cardinals deciding on a Pope
 - 2. May have been hundreds of Magi
 - a. Riding camels or exquisite Persian horses
 - 3. And they never traveled unguarded
 - a. Typically had at least 1,000 mounted Persian soldiers
 - b. Plus the rest of their entourage:
 - 1. Attendants
 - 2. Infantry
 - 3. The power of the Persian Empire
 - 4. Persia was the only empire that had not fallen to Rome
- 2. Historians record a sense of anticipation in the world at that time
 - a. Historians said you could feel the sense of anticipation
 - 1. Like we feel the second coming approaching

b. Examples:

1. Tacitus: looking for a universal ruler from Judea
2. Suetonius: looking for a world ruler from Judea
3. Josephus: looking for one to govern the known world

c. The writings of Daniel gave them an accurate timetable for the Messiah's arrival

3. Looking for the "King of the Jews".....v.2

(2) and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

4. As the caravan clogged the narrow streets

a. Searching for the *new* king of the Jews

5. The Persian Empire was also searching for its new king at that time

a. Phraetes IV had died with nobody to succeed him

D. Herod's Problems (v. 3)

(3) When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

1. He had a military problem

a. Persia was the one group Rome had been unable to conquer

1 Fought against Rome in 63, 55, and 40 B.C.

2. Persians were great warriors

b. Persians had lost Palestine to Rome

1. And they wanted it back!

c. Herod's main garrison was on the coast at this time

d. The Persians had the power to put their man on the throne

2. He also had a personal problem

- a. Herod called himself “the king of the Jews”
 - 1. ...but wasn’t even a Jew
 - 2. He was a descendant of Esau and not Jacob
 - a. An Idumean from the “Edomites
 - b. Another reason why the Jews hated Herod
- b. Herod was a jealous ruler
 - 1. Killed his:
 - a. Wife
 - b. Brother-in-law
 - c. Mother-in-law
 - d. Three of his sons
 - c. Feared the loss of power

E. Herod’s Inquiry (vs. 4-8)

(4) When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

1. He called a “cabinet meeting”....v.4

a. “Where is he to be born?”

2. Their response....v.5-6

(5) “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

(6) “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.”

a. They quoted the prophet Micah 5:2

(7) Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. (8) He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

3. He fully expected them to report back

F. Visiting the Christ Child (vs. 9-12)

(9) After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. (10) When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. (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 and of frankincense and of myrrh.

1. Following the star....v.9-10
2. Supernatural light
3. The Wise men were no Dummies (v. 12)

(12) And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

4. They took the back road out of Bethlehem

G. Escape to Egypt (vs. 13-15)

(13) When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

(14) So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, (15) 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.”

1. An angel told them to go to Egypt
 - a. They snuck out by night
 - b. The journey across the Sinai

*175 miles

2. Egypt....a place of refuge

- a. Many Jews had already fled there from Herod
- 3. They waited for Herod's death
 - a. Used the gold from the Magi to live

H. Herod's Rage (vs. 16-18)

(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, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

- 1. He felt "mocked" by the Magi.....v.16
 - a. In a blind rage
 - 1. "Who is this king?!?"
 - b. Bethlehem was a small village
 - 1. Approximately 30 babies
 - 2. Including the area around it
 - c. Each child two years of age and under
 - 1. He didn't want to miss the real one
 - 2. All who had celebrated their 1st birthday were considered in their 2nd year
- 2. The sadness in the area (vs. 17-18)

(17) Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled.

(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."

- a. Quotes Jeremiah 31:15
- 3. "**Ramah**" was a small town 5 miles north of Jerusalem
 - a. On the border between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms
 - b. Where foreign conquerors took Jews to begin "deportation"

1.and mothers wept
4. The story of "**Rachel**"
 - a. She symbolized all of the mothers of Israel
 1. She was the mother of Joseph & Benjamin
 - b. She loved and pleaded for children
 1. Gen. 30:1 "give me children or I die!"
 - c. Her tomb in on the edge of Bethlehem
 1. Visiting it on the way to Bethlehem
5. Through the years as conquerors took away young captive Jews
 - a. And, the mothers of Israel wept

I. The Death of Herod (vs. 19-23)

(19) After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt (2) and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

1. Herod is dead!
 - a. They were told by an angel in a dream
 - b. Probably headed back toward Jerusalem
 - c. After all....that is where a king belongs
2. On the way they hear some disturbing news (vs. 21-22)

(21) So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. (22) 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,

- a. The kingdom ruled by the sons of Herod
- b. In the north...Galilee....Herod Antipas

- c. In the South...Judea...Archelaus
3. Archelaus was as cruel as his father...but without his strengths
- a. Put a golden eagle over the entrance to the temple
 - b. It represented Zeus and Jupiter
 - c. The zealots chopped it down
 - d. Archelaus had 3,000 Jews murdered at Passover to quell the fervor
 - e. Rome later replaced him with Pontius Pilate
3. Joseph and Mary headed north to avoid the maniac (v. 23)

(23) and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "he will be called a Nazarene."

- a. To Nazareth in Galilee
- b. Ruled by another son of Herod the Great
- c. His name was Herod Antipas
- d. 30 years of growing
- e. Know hardly anything about those years
 - 1. Except the most important fact
 - 2. He did not sin
- f. Thirty-three years later Herod Antipas would attempt to kill Jesus
- g. When I return in a couple of weeks
 - 1. "Worth Imitating"

III. Summary

A. Why Jesus came the first time

1. To pay for our sins
2. He had to become one of us
 - a. The vulnerability of a baby
 - b. As the angels watched, he humbled himself and made himself a little lower than the angels
3. It was all pointing toward the Cross
4. Invitation

B. We now await his return

1. But he's not coming as a helpless baby this time
2. Will return in power and great glory
 - a. As the darkness is shattered
 - b. With his angelic escort
3. His names
 - a. He shall be called *Jesus*
 - b. Where is he that is born the *king of the Jews*
 - c. He will be called a *Nazarene*
 - d. Isaiah 7:14

(14) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (God is with us)

1. *Oh come, Oh come Immanuel...*

e. Isaiah 9:6

(6) For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

4. ...And wait till he comes back

a. Revelation 19:11-16

(11) I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. (12) His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. (13) He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. (14) The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. (15) Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. (16) On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.