

The Magi – Matthew 2:1-12

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, 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** When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. **5** They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what 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.’” **7** Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. **8** And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “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 the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. **10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. **11** After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. **12** And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

- The magi came from the east (Babylon or Susa). We do not know how many magi there were, but they brought three gifts. They might have come a year after Jesus’ birth because Jesus was now living in a house. And it would have taken them many months to travel from Babylon area.
- Tradition says the magi were students of astronomy or astrology. But how do we know that? They are not kings. They might be magicians. We know people like them served several of the kings of Babylon (Daniel 2:22, 48) who were not able to tell the dreams and interpretations.
- There was probably influence from Jews still in Persia which sent them to Jerusalem. Notice that God led “seekers” not to their own gods but to the baby in Bethlehem, because of Acts 4:12.
- They did not follow the star to Jerusalem. They saw the star in the east, came to Jerusalem probably from the advice of the Jews. After they were in Jerusalem, the star reappeared to them and they followed it to Bethlehem.
- The scribes and priests tell them to go to Bethlehem because of Micah 5:2. They knew where the king was to be born, but did not go there themselves. They misquote the verse. They say, “by no means the least” but Micah says Bethlehem “is the least.” Matthew is not quoting Micah, he is quoting what the scribes and priests said.
- Herod asks the magi the time the star appeared, but we do not get the answer.
- He sent them to Bethlehem to look for the child (*paidia*). This word is sometimes used for a young infant before he is weaned. However, it is also used for all children of a family in Luke 11. Because it is a general word for child, we do not know exactly the age of Jesus at that time.
- When the magi leave, they see the star again. It came over where Jesus was, in a house. *They saw the Child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshipped Him.* Mary is not the mother of God. Mary is the mother of the physical body of Jesus, that is all. Mary is not worshipped, Jesus is. She was not someone to be adored spiritually. The magi looked right past her to the Child. They presented gifts to the Child and worshipped the Child.
- The early church fathers said the meaning of the gifts: gold (Christ’s deity), frankincense (purity, used by priests), and myrrh (used for embalming at His death). It seems they become believers because they worshipped the King of Kings, having left their own country’s gods.
- Worship focuses on God the Son plus nothing. The magi travelled for months, worshipped baby Jesus, gave Him gifts, left, and travelled months back home. They asked for nothing. They had no other agenda, they ignored the Temple in Jerusalem, they ignored the synagogues, they came to a house, looked past Mary, and **worshipped only Jesus.**