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**C1415 – April 23, 2014 – Matthew 2:1-12**  
**The Reception Of The King**

The argument in the first half of Matthew's Gospel is that Jesus is the King and in this half we will start observing tonight the various responses to the King. How did the Jews respond to the King? How did Gentiles respond to the King? In the first pericope of 1:1-17 Matthew shows that Jesus has the genealogy of the King. In verse 1 Jesus has the right genealogy rooted in David and Abraham. Abraham because he was given the Abrahamic covenant of Gen 12:1-3 and its promises of a land, seed and worldwide blessing. The seed had to come through Abraham. David because he was given the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam 7:12-16 and it elaborated on the prior seed promise by narrowing the seed line down to the house of David and giving further clarification that the seed would be an eternal king, rule an eternal kingdom and sit on an eternal throne. Furthermore, though Solomon was not yet born the seed line would be narrowed to the Solomonic line and God would establish his king, kingdom and throne through Solomon. David had other sons but none of them were of the royal seed line. Importantly then verses 6 and 7 specify that David's rights were passed to his son Solomon, to Rehoboam, and so forth. So the genealogy is showing that the kingly line and throne rights were transmitted through Solomon. All the men following Solomon sat on the Davidic throne and exercised their kingly throne rights by ruling over the tribe of Judah. However, when you come to verse 11 you find Jeconiah, sometimes referred to as Jehochin or Coniah. This king was cursed so that no one in his seed line could exercise throne rights though they could transmit the throne rights to the next generation. The line finally comes to rest in verse 16 on Joseph. Joseph was the legal heir of the throne rights and he could transmit his throne rights but he could not exercise them. When verse 16 breaks the pattern and specifies that Jesus was the son of Mary and not Joseph then light is cast on how Jesus could receive throne rights from Joseph but not be excluded from exercising those rights. He could

receive them through adoption and exercise them because he was not a natural seed of Coniah. Matthew's point is that Jesus' genealogy proves that He is the King.

The second pericope is the virgin conception in 1:18-25. This shows how God ensured that Joseph would go ahead and marry Mary when he found out she was pregnant during the betrothal. It was essential that he marry her so that Jesus would legally be adopted into the throne line. Joseph's initial conclusion was that Mary had committed fornication and his plan was to divorce her privately. However, if he had done that Jesus would not have received throne rights and then He could not possibly have been the King. So the pericope is very important for establishing the reason that Joseph changed his plan to divorce her and went ahead and married her, keeping her a virgin until she had given birth to this Son. When he was born Joseph called His name Jesus, an act that only a legal father could accomplish showing that indeed Jesus did receive throne rights. The difficulty is verse 22. Matthew insists that "all this took place to fulfill" OT prophecy. In other words, Matthew interpreted the virgin conception as the fulfillment of OT prophecy. He quotes the LXX version of Isa 7:14. The difficulty is how Isaiah 7:14 retains any relevance for his generation in light of the dire historical situation. There are several views, two of which I have found over the years to be most convincing. In the first view the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14-16 has a double fulfillment. Double fulfillment means that there is one prophecy with two valid interpretations and therefore two valid fulfillments. This view hinges on the ambiguity of the Hebrew term *almah* which technically refers to "a young woman of marriageable age." However, in Israel a young woman of marriageable age would almost always be "a virgin." Indeed, most passages require this sense. Nevertheless, the ambiguity in the term opens up the validity of double fulfillment. The first fulfillment would be relevant to King Ahaz; a young woman of marriageable age would marry and become pregnant and have a child whom she would name Immanuel, which means "God with us." Before this child would grow to moral discernment the Aram-Israeli Alliance would be broken. The reason for the name Immanuel would be to reflect that indeed God was with them in protecting them against this threatening alliance. The second fulfillment would be relevant to the whole house of David; a virgin would become pregnant and have a child who would be called Immanuel. Matthew picks up this portion only and says it was fulfilled in Jesus. The second view of the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14-16 that I

have found convincing is that of double reference. Double reference means that there are two prophecies butted up one against the other, each having its distinct fulfillment. This view argues against ambiguity. It hinges on the switching in the Hebrew from the singular second person pronoun “you” to the plural second person pronoun “you all,” a switch which cannot be seen in the English. When the singular form is used King Ahaz is in view; when the plural form is used the whole house of David is in view. So there are two prophecies or signs, one to King Ahaz in the near future and one to the whole house of David in the far future. The first prophecy or sign is to King Ahaz in vv 15-16. It rests on the singular pronoun and identification of the son as Isaiah’s son who was instructed to go with Isaiah to meet Ahaz earlier in verse 3. The prophecy would mean that before Isaiah’s son would be old enough to use moral discernment the Aram-Israeli Alliance would be broken. The second prophecy or sign is to the whole house of David in verse 14. It rests on the plural pronoun. The second prophecy is that of the virgin conception. In this view Matthew, who knew Hebrew, saw two prophecies in Isaiah 7; one in vv 15-16 referring to the near prophecy to Ahaz and one in verse 14 referring to the far prophecy to the whole house of David. Both of these views have some merit in my eyes. The more important thing to grasp in the big picture is that Matthew considered this a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. This was also the interpretation of all the ancient rabbi’s before the time of Christ. This is why the LXX (250-150BC) translates the Hebrew *almah* with the Greek word *parthenos* which always means “virgin.” This interpretation was held until 11 centuries after Christ when Rashi started to argue that Isaiah was not predicting a virgin conception. We suspect that he shifted the interpretation because Jews were tired of trying to answer this troubling argument. The Jewish view today is the same as the liberal view, that there is only an historical fulfillment in King Ahaz’s day. We would reject that view and point to the ancient rabbi’s and the LXX as confirmation that indeed the earliest view of the Jews is that the Messiah would be conceived of a virgin.

Now that Matthew has proven by genealogy and supernatural conception that Jesus is the King the logical question would be, “How was the King received?” Matthew 2 is the first peek we get into how the king was received. In order to understand the chapter we need to establish Matthew’s main purposes. There are three. The first purpose is the most important; to demonstrate that Jews have a pathetic response to the King and Gentiles a remarkable one. Matthew includes it to show in hindsight the reception the

King received from Jews and Gentiles even from his birth. Toussaint says, “The leading aim is to indicate the reception given to the Messiah by the world. The Jews are antipathetic and Gentiles worship Him. Skillfully Matthew employs this series of events to anticipate the reception which shall be given by Jew and Gentile to the Messiah. This chapter sets the stage for the remainder of the book.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, Matthew is looking in hindsight on how the king was received and he was very interested to find that even from the beginning the Gentiles had a remarkable response comparable to the Jews. If you miss this point you miss the whole chapter. This is the chief purpose of the chapter and we’ll see more of this as we work through the first half of Matthew. Remember the Gentile centurion who Jesus said, “I have not seen such faith in all Israel.” That’s in Matthew’s Gospel. He is making a point to show that Gentiles are responding positively to the King. The Jews on the other hand, particularly the leadership, have a pathetic response. The second purpose of the chapter is to show the Satanic strategy to destroy the King of the Jews at his birth. His attempt to do this through the Idumean ruler Herod, was anticipated by the longstanding hatred of Edomites for Jews (cf Gen 27:41; Obadiah). Esau hated Jacob. He wanted to kill him. That enmity has grown and culminated in the person of Herod. Herod was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau, and these people had been forced to convert to Judaism by John Hyrcanus a century before he came to rule. He was a sly devil and being named king of the Jews by the Roman senate in 40BC he returned and established his rule at Jerusalem. So you have a usurper, a very paranoid usurper. This guy killed anyone he suspected. He even married one of the famous Jewish women of history, a daughter of the Maccabee family named Mariamne, had two sons by her and murdered them all. He was extremely suspicious and guarded his throne by murderous exploits. So it’s apparent that one of the purposes of this chapter is to show that Herod is satanically energized to destroy the Messiah at his birth. The third purpose is to show how OT prophecy was fulfilled in the King. Toussaint says, “This is evidenced by the number of allusions to the Old Testament prophets and prophecies (2:5-6, 15, 17-18, 23).” These are actually quotations. These quotations will appear seemingly strange but we will do our best to unfold just what principles Matthew was employing in order to exegete the OT. There are four hermeneutical principles Matthew is using to exegete the OT and we can learn from these. We can’t use them with infallibility, he used them under divine inspiration, but we can and should still use them. So we’ll have to stop and deal with each of these as we march through. So there are

three purposes of this chapter; first to indicate the world's reception of the King, second to show the satanic strategy to destroy the King and the third to show how OT prophecy was fulfilled in the King. But the most important is to show the world's reception of the King.

In 2:1 the **Now** [*de*] is Matthew's way of changing the subject. He did this earlier in 1:18 when he shifted to the virgin conception. So now that he has finished that subject he changes to the world's reception of the King. How did people respond to the King? **Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem.** The Greek tells us that the events here occurred after His birth, not at His birth.<sup>ii</sup> It's a mistake to set up a nativity scene with the shepherds and the wise men all gathered together around Jesus at the stable. The shepherds were there at the birth; the wise men were there sometime after the birth. How long after is a subject of debate but it could not possibly have been more than two years and it was probably only 3-5 months. We're told that this occurred in **Bethlehem of Judea**. There was another Bethlehem in the Galilee. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah and therefore born in **Bethlehem of Judea**. David had also been born in Bethlehem of Judea. Only the first legitimate Davidic king and the last legitimate Davidic king were born in **Bethlehem of Judea**. So this town is the source of the stream of royalty and between David and Jesus the stream wandered far off course, but it returned to the source in Jesus, that is why Matthew includes **of Judea**, to establish Jesus as in the kingly line and uniquely associated with David. Another hint at the timing is **in the days of Herod the king**. Only one of the Herod's was given the title **king**. This was Herod the Great. He had received it from the Roman senate in 40BC, returning and taking his seat on the throne in Jerusalem in 37BC. He had a long rule by this time. According to Harold Hoehner in his book *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* Herod died in March/April 4BC. So Jesus was born before Herod's death in March/April 4BC, and very probably during the winter of 5/4BC, which is why I reason that Jesus was between 3-5 months old at the time of this meeting.

At the end of verse 1 we meet a strange group called **magi** and we're told they are **from the east** and that they **arrived in Jerusalem**. Who are the **magi**? One of the interpretations is that they were representatives of the three branches of the human race; Shem, Ham and Japheth. Going along with this interpretation they are assumed on the basis of the Christmas song *We Three Kings* that they were kings. Three kings that represent the three

divisions of the human race. That's cute and all but they're not kings, they probably served a king but they were definitely not kings. Other people say they were wise men. They were wise, I won't dispute that, they were coming to worship the King; they were bringing gifts to the King. So they were wise but they're not just wise men. The Greek word is *magoi*, the plural of a Persian loan word. It refers to a special caste of priests who studied astrology and searched the heavens for significant movement in the stars. They were probably more akin to modern day astronomers who study constellations and stars. "In the East they were looked upon as professionals."

Notice where they came from with respect to Jerusalem. **From the east.** What is **east** of Jerusalem? Mesopotamia, the fertile river valley of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. They were probably from Babylon or that general area, especially since the word **magi** is a Persian loan word and the Persian's ruled over Babylon.

Where did they come to? **Jerusalem.** Why did they come to Jerusalem? In verse 2 they're asking, **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.** So they've come to find the King of the Jews and worship Him but this raises a number of difficult questions. How did they know this star was associated with the birth of a Jewish King? Why did they come to Jerusalem searching for Him? And most troubling, if they were from the east and saw His star in the east why did they walk west, away from where they'd seen the star? And why would Gentile astronomers want to come worship a Jewish King anyway? Didn't they have their own king? If they were kings, of course, they wouldn't be coming to worship this king, the kings of the ancient world were revered as deity.

Now we say a few words about this **star.** Verse 2 says they saw His star in the east? So if they're from the east, over in Mesopotamia, and they look up in the sky every night, they were astronomers, they studied the movements of stars, they knew the constellations and the seasons of their visibility and one night they go out and see a new star appear in the east. This is not on the eastern star charts. Where did they see the star? Toward India. Why if they saw the star over India didn't they walk toward India? Why did they walk away from the star? Because the star isn't there to guide them anywhere. That's the typical thing people say who don't read the text. But this star is



strange. It appeared east of them, then apparently it disappeared and they traveled to Jerusalem, and then in verse 9 they mention that the same star reappeared and led them to a house in Bethlehem. Verse 10 is perfectly clear that it had disappeared for a long time and had only just reappeared, that is why they were rejoicing exceedingly. So the star appears and disappears, appears again several months later, moves south for six miles and stops over a single house. If that's a natural star it's not like any natural star I ever heard of. I never saw how a star could stop over a single house. That is absurd. This is clearly not a natural star but a supernatural star. Why is it supernatural? Because the person is supernatural and his birth is supernatural. The entire context is supernatural. That's why it's so hurtful for people to present an explanation of this star by some natural phenomena. Every generation since Kepler in AD1603 has had its proponents of a natural explanation of the star.<sup>iii</sup> The most recent popular proponent is Rick Larson, a lawyer and law professor who presents *The Star of Bethlehem*. In this mesmerizing drama he repeats the same tired attempt to explain naturally what can only be explained supernaturally. The star appears and disappears, appearing again several months later, moving south for six miles and stopping over a single house. As Toussaint says, "This unusual stellar manifestation attests the supernatural character of the person the Magi were seeking. It is included in Matthew's argument for this apologetic reason."<sup>iv</sup> To remove it would be to remove the apologetic power of the argument. Pentecost says, "It would have been impossible for the confluence of stars to single out an individual dwelling in the village of Bethlehem." Glasscock says, "Had these been planets or a comet, such terminology would have been nonsensical. At best, this natural phenomenon would have indicated no less than a nation, certainly not a house. It is not the responsibility of the Christian community to make God's word more acceptable to the world but to state the Word of God accurately."<sup>v</sup> What was the star then? Think back to the OT. What was the burning oven, the light, the fire, the smoke that led Israel? It was the Shekinah Glory of God, a visible manifestation of God's presence. Pentecost concludes, "This star is better explained as a manifestation of the shining glory of God that He reveals to those who are recipients of revelation."<sup>vi</sup> Walvoord says, "The most probable explanation is that the star in the East as well as the star that guided them to Bethlehem were supernatural rather than natural phenomena."<sup>vii</sup> So while those who give naturalistic presentations may have pure intentions they are sorely misguided. The text clearly indicates that the Shekinah Glory of God

announced the First Coming of the King to dwell with man in the same way that He will announce the Second Coming of the King to dwell with man (cf Matt 24:29-30). A supernatural person is announced by a supernatural light.

But there are more difficulties. How did they know that this star signaled the birth of a Jewish King? Somehow they associated the appearance of this star with the birth of a Jewish King. You don't just take a trip from Babylon to Jerusalem on a whim. They are very certain of these associations. The star relates to the Jews. The star relates in particular to a King. And the star relates to a birth. Evidently they saw all these relationships. How did they know all that? Where did they get this information? There are two views. First, they received special revelation. This view is based on the fact that in verse 12 they received special revelation in a dream. If they received divine revelation at this later time then why could they have not received it at an earlier time while still in Mesopotamia? This view is further substantiated by the observation that Gentiles of high status in the OT occasionally receive special revelation through dreams (e.g. Nebuchadnezzar). This view is therefore possible. Second, they knew it from the OT text of Numbers 24:17. What is Numbers 24:17? It's within one of the prophecies of Balaam. Balaam too was from the east. His prophecy says, "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel..." Now the "star" in the ancient world signified kingship and this is confirmed by the parallel use of "a scepter" the instrument of rule. So the prophecy is very definitely predicting the coming of a Jewish king. Being astronomers, did they somehow latch on to the star and consider it a signal of His birth? Apparently they did. But how did they get access to Numbers 24:17? How did they know about that text? Well, where were these astronomers from? Mesopotamia. Who had gone down to Mesopotamia six centuries before? Daniel, his friends, Ezekiel, thousands of Jews, they were all taken captive to Babylon. What did Daniel and other Jews bring with them when they were taken into Exile in Babylon? They took the Tanakh, the Jewish Scriptures. We know they did because we have the Babylonian Hebrew text type that was copied for centuries in Babylon by Jews who never returned to the land. So we know Daniel and others had Hebrew texts in Babylon when they went into Exile. Was Daniel influential in Babylon? He wasn't initially but he became influential. How did it happen? He was in the pagan university being indoctrinated in Babylonian thinking. In fact, he was being trained by the very priestly caste members that we find in Matt 2, they



were known as the conjurers and they had an official position with all the wise men under the King of Babylon. They were his trusted advisors, dream interpreters and so forth. Daniel was in their school. What happened? Nebuchadnezzar had this repetitive dream. It bothered him. He was skeptical of the abilities of the magicians, conjurers, sorcerers, etc...the whole group known as wise men, so he challenged them to tell him the dream and its interpretation. Could anybody do it? No. So the king was right, these people were frauds propagating phony vocations. What do you do with frauds and phonies? You eliminate them. So the king set out to slaughter all of them and their families. Daniel was on the hit list too. He was scheduled for slaughter. But they prayed to God, God revealed the dream and its interpretation, he went in before the king and declared it. Needless to say the king was impressed. What happened? What did he do for Daniel? He promoted him to ruler over the whole province of Babylon and made him president over the university of wise men. It was at that time that the slaughter stopped. Daniel saved all the remaining wise men of Babylon and their families. Now he was the head of the school. Do you think they appreciated Daniel? Do you think they asked Daniel, how'd you do it? Yeah, there is a God of heaven who reveals things. It's my take that Daniel shared the word of God with that school and lots of them believed. Do you think they studied Num 24:17? Yeah. And they keyed in on the star. If I was an astronomer I'd key in on the word star. "A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel." So we have the star related to the Jewish people, we have a king related to the land of Israel. And if you're an astronomer in Babylon and this information in the Jewish scriptures has been passed down from the time of Daniel through your school, it's part of the astronomy curriculum that each generation has to study and you open your astronomy text and you study the heavens, you memorize the map of the heavens and every semester the students have to study this text of Numb 24 and every class of students goes through this. No class of students has ever seen it and then one night you're out doing your observations to write your dissertation and you see a new star in the sky - what do you do? You go get your professors, you pull out your textbook, you start reviewing Numb 24 and then you pack your bags, that's what you do. They were convinced this star in the east over India signaled the birth of a Jewish king in the land of Israel, so you walk west, away from the star.

Now you don't know where exactly you're going but if you're going to the land of Israel where does it makes sense to start your search? In the capital city.

So verse 1 they arrive **in Jerusalem**. Verse 2, they get an audience with Herod. How did they do that? Not a problem, the magi of the east were very well-known, very sought after, very wealthy nobility. What's their question? **"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."** Notice, **we saw**, aorist tense, they saw it but they were no longer seeing it. It appeared in the east but they did not follow it to Jerusalem, it appeared in the east, they packed their bags and it disappeared. Not exactly your normal star.

Note his response in verse 3. **When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.** Why was he troubled? What news has he just received? A king has been born. We said he's paranoid about his throne. The guy married the most beautiful Jewish woman in the whole land, Mariamne, had two sons with her and when he became suspicious of her he brutally killed her and her sons. He was terrible. Augustus is rumored to have said he would rather be Herod's pig than son, that way he'd have a better chance of surviving. The guy was ruthless but if he hadn't been ruthless he would have been assassinated decades before. So he was quite successful. If anyone and I mean anyone was suspicious, they were eliminated, and anyone associated with a suspicious person was eliminated. So a throne contender has been born and a Jewish one at that. Why is that significant? There was a Messianic expectation in the air. Herod knew that, he was not stupid; he had some training in Judaism. Of the Messianic expectation in the air, Luke 3:15 says "the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he might be the Christ." Most authors agree that "At this time, there was a widespread expectation of the coming of a great ruler, a truth which was inherent in Jewish prophecy and spread by Jews as well as others over the Roman world." Now he's born. It troubled Herod. But notice it didn't just trouble Herod, it troubled **all Jerusalem with him**. Why were they troubled? Because Herod is ruthless and they don't want to face his reprisals. Shepard says, "The city feared now the revenge of this cruel and cunning king, who had in the beginning of his reign destroyed the Sanhedrin, and now in the last years of his blood reign, might seize and execute the chief Jews."<sup>viii</sup> Who does the NT say we should fear? God or men? God. Who did they fear? Men.

Just an aside here but do three wise men showing up to worship some supposed Jewish king stir up trouble? Why do people think there were three kings? Because they've been getting their theology from Christmas songs rather than Scripture. Why did the songwriters originally think there were three? Because they bring three gifts down in verse 11; gold, frankincense and myrrh. But does the number of gifts indicate the number of givers? No, the three gifts actually were standard gifts for a king. It had nothing to do with the number of gift givers. There could have literally been hundreds of magi. They would be travelling in a luxurious caravan; they were wealthy nobility; an entourage of this grandeur arriving to worship a Jewish King would be extremely troubling to a fearful flock of Jews. So let's see what happens in verse 4. **Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.** So he calls in the experts on the law, not so much the **chief priests** but the **scribes**. What did they say? **They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what 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."** Are they able to quote chapter and verse? Absolutely. These people knew the text. Actually what text did they quote? This is the first of the four quotations of the OT and it's the simplest, it's a literal prophecy with a literal fulfillment, very straightforward. What passage is literally fulfilled? It's actually two passages, Micah 5:2 and the end of verse 6 most people miss, but it comes from 2 Sam 5:2, the part about a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. That must have struck Herod, he wasn't exactly a shepherd; he was a tyrant. Lots of connections here, the King is a shepherd, the city he's born in, Bethlehem, all this links back to King David. In their mind these passages looked to David's Messiah.

**Then**, verse 7, notice that word because it's a Hebraism used by Matthew 90 times, it shows how Jewish this book is. He uses it to shift scenes. So verse 7 is a different occasion. He's got a private audience. **Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared.** Why **secretly**? Because Herod's up to no good. He feels threatened. He's paranoid. He's caught wind of the birthplace of the Messianic king. He knows it's **Bethlehem**. What he does not know is how long ago this star appeared. What's he trying to do? Minimize damage but secure his throne. He does want to maintain as Jew friendly relations as he

can so he doesn't want to just go in with an armed force and wipe out all the kids. He's trying to acquire the age limit of this Messiah.

He acquires that through the unsuspecting wise men who reveal the time the star appeared. And apparently from verse 16 we infer that it was no more than about one year earlier because Herod says to slay all the baby boys in Bethlehem in the vicinity two years of age and under. Knowing Herod he would tack on some time just to ensure that he was successful.

Verse 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.** Here he's trying to get exact location, he's got town, he's got approximate age and now he's commanding these unsuspecting magi to come back and report to him his precise location. All under the pretense that he wants to come worship Him. Of course this is the formation of an assassination attempt so similar to that of Pharaoh in Egypt that there's no need to mention it.

Verse 9, and did you notice any of the Jewish scribes or chief priests racing off to Bethlehem? Here they are, they can quote chapter and verse of the OT, they've memorized it cold. You'd think if they were really with it spiritually they'd be off to the Bethlehem. Do they go anywhere? They go nowhere. This is one of the most pathetic pictures of spirituality in all of Scripture. The Messiah has been born, a huge caravan of Gentile astronomers are on the doorstep trying to find him and you can quote chapter and verse but you have not the slightest inclination of trotting six miles down the road to see for yourself? This is one of the most damning passages of the Jewish leadership in all the NT. This is spiritual apathy. This is what the chapter is all about. This chapter is in seed form what Matthew is going to show through the rest of his Gospel. The King is born right under their noses and the Jewish leadership could care less; Gentiles travel 800 miles and are beating down the door to find Him! It is a revealing commentary on the religious complacency among the leadership in Israel!

So verse 9, **After hearing the king, they [the magi] 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.** Verse 11 shows that we're to gather that the **star** came to rest directly over a single house.

Now tell me this is a natural star. It rests over one house. No confluence of stars can explain that, it's foolish. The star appeared briefly in verse 2, disappeared, hadn't seen it for months, they go to Jerusalem on the basis of Num 24:17, they get there, still no star, they find out the birthplace through Herod who sends them on a mission, they walk outside, bingo, verse 10, the star appears again. Look at verse 10, the star just re-appeared. **When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.** Their reaction tells you they hadn't seen the **star** in a long time. So on the way from Jerusalem the star does lead them, just like Shekinah Glory led the Israelites through the wilderness, it takes them to one house and stops right above it. Talk about being ahead of the technological curve, these men enjoyed something superior to our GPS devices. Verse 11, **After coming into the house,** not a stable, he was born in a stable but now time has passed, they're in a **house, so they came into the house and they saw the Child with Mary His mother,** not an infant, a **child,** again, time has passed, the Greek words are different; **and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him.** That right there is a proper response to the king. It should have been the chief priests and the scribes. They should be there worshipping Him. The whole nation should have come. The leaders should have led them. He came to His own, His own received Him not, the kingdom is postponed and the floodgates of salvation will soon open to the Gentiles. That's what Matthew's getting at. Do you see how pivotal this chapter is? It's absolutely in seed form the direction Matthew is taking us.

Middle of verse 11, **Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.** Some people attach symbolic significance to these; gold was the possession of kings so it symbolizes his royalty, frankincense was a pleasing fragrance so it symbolizes that he would please God, and myrrh, myrrh was used in embalming the dead and so symbolizes His sacrifice. Makes for a good story but probably not true. There's no indication of symbolism in the text. These were the standard gifts for a great king. In any case, what they undoubtedly do is fund the family's trip to Egypt in vv 13ff when they are warned to escape the satanic plot of Herod.

Verse 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 revelation by dream is why some think they originally went to Jerusalem

because of some special revelation. That's possible but I think the better evidence is they got the Scriptures opened to them through Daniel. In any case, what principle do we see here? Gen 12:3. Those who bless the Jews will be blessed. They blessed the Jew of Jews and so God granted them revelation **in a dream not to return to Herod**. "Apparently the Magi did not suspect the treachery of Herod's heart." If they had they would have no need for the warning. As it was God was already blessing Gentiles who received His Son properly.

In summary, what can we say? The response to the King by the Jewish leadership was dismal. They were responsible to lead the nation in the proper response to the King's arrival. They can quote chapter and verse but they don't move an inch toward Bethlehem to find out for themselves. Instead they feared Herod's reprisals. The leadership were pathetic, their opposition to the King and his kingdom was already underway. The Gentiles, on the other hand, were exceedingly joyful, they inquired and set off with eagerness to worship the King. As Toussaint said, "This chapter sets the stage for the remainder of the book."<sup>ix</sup> He couldn't have made a more astute observation.

So here we have Matthew's argument; the King came into the political kingdom of Rome and the King came to the people of Israel but the kingdom and the people to whom He came did not come to Him. Only the Gentiles, to whom He did not come, journeyed hundreds of miles bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, to worship the King. All because they studied the OT Scriptures deposited by Daniel centuries before and were convinced that the King of the Jews was the solution to their sin problem. In anticipation of His arrival when the star appeared in the east, they set their course to the west to find and worship the One in whom is salvation.


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<sup>i</sup> Toussaint, p 47.

<sup>ii</sup> The aorist participle ("was born"), which occurs in the genitive absolute of verse 1, usually indicates action is antecedent to the main verb ("arrived"). Toussaint, fn 32, p 48.

<sup>iii</sup> "The great astronomer Kepler observed in 1603 A. D. an unusual conjunction of stars, and found by diligent search that in 747 A. U. C. (or 7 B. C.) There was a similar conjunction three times, of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces. In 748 A. U. C. (or 6 B. C.) Mars joined the conjunction. Consequently Kepler placed the Nativity in 748 A. U. C. Furthermore, trustworthy astronomical tables of the Chinese testify to the appearance of an evanescent star, probably a comet, in February 750 A.U.C. This would agree with the date approximately of the birth. The Magi probably placed the date of the rising of the star at two years before their appearance in Jerusalem. This would agree roughly with the time of the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. The fact that they rejoiced at the reappearance of





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the star when they left Jerusalem would synchronize with the appearance of the comet or evanescent star.”

iv Toussaint, p 50.

v Ed Glasscock, *Matthew*, p 52.

vi Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 67. In another place he says, “Only if the light were similar to the pillar of fire that led Israel in the desert could the house be positively identified.”

vii Walvoord, p 23.

viii Ibid., p 68.

ix Toussaint, p 47.

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