

## Episode #652 Matthew 2 Part 1-Coming of the Magers

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. Last time we saw the birth of Christ from the perspective of Joseph, the faithful father. Now, we consider the story of the wise men who came from the east.

### II. Magers from the East.

A. Verse 1. There is a 1-2 year gap of time between chapters 1 and 2.

1. Born = *gennao*, same word as “generated” in Christ’s lineage. Bethlehem means “House of Bread.” “Judea” is not just to distinguish it from Bethlehem of Galilee, but also to connect it with David’s line, this being the city of David
2. Herod means “Heroic.” This was Herod the Great, who got Rome to appoint him king over Israel. An Idumean (Edomite), which people had taken over southern Judah after being driven out of their mountain. He married Israelites so his children were at least partly Jews. A despot, he laid heavy taxes on Israel to fund his many building projects. He feared any uprising and executed his own wife and children out of fear of intrigue. Imagine how such a king would take news of the arrival of Messiah! This is not long before his death, at the height of his paranoia and mania.
3. Wise men = Greek *magoi*, but not sorcerers. These were truly wise men in its highest sense: wisdom that comes from above.
4. East = *anatole*, the sunrising. Where from? Astronomy and astrology were very uncommon in Assyria and Persia. These magers were from Babylon.
5. It would have taken a while for them to figure out what the star meant, then time for preparations for a long journey and extricating themselves from their home duties, then a long and difficult journey. They arrived much later than the shepherds, over a year later. They erroneously go to the capital.

B. Verse 2. The first question in the New Testament. “King of the Jews” shows these magers were not Jews themselves. The star was in the east: they did not follow it all the way west to Jerusalem. How did God communicate with them what it meant? We can only speculate. They wish to worship, the Greek *proskuneo*. Some try to make out this means oriental obeisance, but the Lord denies this in Matthew 4:10. Whenever it is done to Godly men or angels they refuse it. These magers were on a religious mission.

C. Verse 3. This was the last thing a cruel dictator wanted to hear! Jerusalem is disquieted as well. Why?

1. They knew it would stir up trouble with Herod.
2. Babylon was the major competitor with Rome, and a large caravan from Babylon would trouble the Roman authorities. These wise men (we have no evidence there were only three, other than that they brought three gifts) were doubtless wealthy and powerful men coming with a huge entourage.

D. Verse 4. He gathers or “synagogues” the chief members of the Sanhedrin. Chief priests = *archiereus*, the arch-priests. The scribes were skilled at writing and knowledgeable in the Scriptures. Bullinger identifies these with the Sopherim or “wise men” of Israel, in contrast to the wise men of the east. Herod enquired of them, not demanded. The blind man in Luke 18:36 does this.

E. Verse 5. These men knew the answer, and it condemns all Jews reading this book who would deny the truth of what they said. Notice that these wise men knew the answers, but they did not care to search out the Messiah in their backyard, whereas the wise men of Babylon crossed land and sea to find Him!

IV. Conclusion: The wise men, these mages from Babylon, show a Godly attitude not matched by the wise men of Jerusalem. They make a long and dangerous journey to worship the King God sent. Yet the wise men of Israel, living right next door to where the King was born, could not even be bothered to leave Jerusalem to find Him! Are we willing to do whatever it takes to worship the King?