

Matthew's Gospel—Chapter 2

Part 1

By Glenn Rymza

The Birth of Jesus Continued—The Magi: (Mt 2:1-12): *The Greek word for wise men is Magi. This is defined as follows: The high priestly caste of Persia; a wise man of the Magian religion; a magician, sorcerer, one using witchcraft or magic arts; one trained in astrology and dream interpretation.*

1. How many Magi were there?
2. Read Micah 5:1-4. Does Matthew quote this verse the same? Bethlehem was the town of King David & thus where the Messiah would be born. Summarize what Micah 5:2-5 is describing? In the RSV version of Micah 5:3 who is the “he”, who is the “them”, who is the “she” and who is the “his” referring to?

3. Why have the Magi come?

4. The word translated "disturbed" in Mt 2:3 is also found in Mt 14:26. What does this tell us about Herod's reaction? Why was King Herod so disturbed (Your teacher can help you with this)?

5. Herod tells the Magi to bring him back word of the whereabouts of the child so that he could worship him too. Is Herod sincere about his desire to worship the child?

6. Mt 2:10 describes the magi as being "overjoyed." The Greek word for joy (xara) appears in the following places: Mt 13:20, Mt 13:44, and Lk 15:7. How can we relate these to the Magi?

7. The magi present Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. What is the significance of these gifts to the Magi or to a Jew? Read Ex 30:1-6, 23-28 and Ex 29:42-46 and answer the following questions below.
 - a. What did you learn from Ex 30 about where gold, frankincense and myrrh are used?

- b. What is the significance of the Temple for the Jews? Who did they believe dwelt in the Temple?
 - c. The Magi come and they offer 3 gifts to Jesus. What then is the significance of what the Magi are doing?
 - d. Why is it appropriate that the Magi fell down and worshipped him?
 - e. Read John 1:14. The Greek word for “dwelt” is “*skenow*” means “to tabernacle.” The tabernacle was what the first Temple was called. How does John 1:14 relate to Matthew 2?
8. It has been held in tradition that Ps 72, Is 49, and Is 60 are related to the story of the Magi in Matthew. Read these and show how some parts of these relate to the Magi story. I wonder if the notion that the magi were kings comes from scripture?
9. When the Jews were exiled in Babylon in 598 BC the hope developed that God would conquer Babylon and bring them back to the land of Israel. This would be a declaration that God was the true King of the world and he would begin his good rule. This is what is called “The Kingdom (reign/rule) of God.” There were other expectations about what would happen when the Kingdom of God was ushered in. One of these was that the enemies of Yahweh (the Gentiles) would be conquered/judged or that they would come to worship Yahweh as the true God. Second, the Jews believed that Yahweh would return to dwell with them in Jerusalem in the Temple.
- a. Which of these two expectations for the Kingdom of God do you see in the three passages you read above: Ps 72, Is 49 and Is 60?

The Birth of Jesus Continued—The Star: (Mt 2:1-12):

- 11.** What was the “star” that the Magi were following? What did it mean? Why did it lead the Magi to think that an important King of the Jews was to be born? And furthermore, why did it lead them to want to acknowledge him as their king and to “worship” him? Watch the video, “The Star of Bethlehem” to learn about a fascinating explanation of what transpired in the skies at the birth of Jesus. Summarize some of the key ideas here.