

The Mystery of the Magi and the Star of Bethlehem

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The traditional nativity sets have the Magi in it, but they were not there.

The Magi came 1 – 2 years later, after the birth of Jesus.

Mt 2:1-2 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.”

The Magi came into the house (not the cave)

Mt 2:11-12 After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped 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.

Herod kills the baby boys under 2 years of age.

Mt 2:16-18 Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. 17 Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: 18 “A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN; AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE.”

This reminds us of the time of Moses when Pharaoh also killed the baby boys (Ex 1:15-22)

In Exodus Moses escapes the edict of the king - through whom the Old Covenant is given.

Jesus also escapes the edict of the king - through Whom we receive the New Covenant.

The enemy always tries to kill God's plan (Rev 12:3-6).

Why did the Magi care about a Jewish King?

Why was their visit necessary in God's plan?

Magi were priestly astrologers from the East, from the tribe of the Medes (Persian). They were from the east - Babylon.

The wise men were magi - members of a learned class that emerged in ancient Persia as advisors to powerful kings. The original magi were trained in agriculture, mathematics, history, the occult, and especially in astronomy and astrology. In the ancient world, the last two disciplines were joined together. It was not just about studying and charting the motions of stars and planets. More importantly, the stars were believed to influence the course of nations and especially the destiny of royal families. It was undoubtedly the magi's careful and constant observation of the heavens that caused them to discover the unusual star that shone in their western sky.

But how would they be able to discern the significance of the star?

There is one place in the Bible that gives the exact time of Messiah's birth.

Dan 9:24-27 “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. 25 “So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 26 “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.

And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.
27 “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

The year that Messiah would be cut off for sin would be 483 years from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem [given by Cyrus, the Media/Persian king, who issued a decree to rebuild Jerusalem (2Chr 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-2; Isa 44:28; 45:1; Dan 1:21). This prophetic word was given in Babylon.

In Dan 2 Nebuchadnezzar has a dream in which the wise men of Babylon could not interpret. Daniel gives the dream and its interpretation to the king.

Dan 2:48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

It is likely that many of these wise men of Babylon learned from Daniel's prophecy of the timing of Messiah's birth.

How did they know about the star? The star prophecy of Balaam [he is from the east – Babylon].

Num 24:17 “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, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth.

The star and scepter point the kingship, to Messiah.

The prophecy of Daniel and the prophecy of Balaam connect to the prophecy of Jacob.

Gen 49:10 “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples (nations).

The wise men coming from the east fulfill this prophecy. They represent the nations recognizing Jesus as the King.

The decree of Caesar Augustus (Lk 2:1-3) for everyone to register for the census in their own city (probably for tax purposes) was God's provision to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, where Messiah was to be born.

Lk 2:1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. 2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.

The birth of Jesus gives us hope -

God is working behind the scenes for His purposes in our lives.

We see the fingerprints of God in this story, in all history, over our lives.

He is working all these things out in ways that we can't think or even imagine.

Eph 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think,

Hope is rooted in the knowledge that God is in control, He is working on our behalf.

Jer 29:11 ‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.

Rom 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.