

Matthew 2:1-6

**The Gentile astrologers arrive with anticipation—2:1-2** <sup>1</sup> *Now, behold, magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem,*

- 1) Who are they?
  - a) Tertullian first identified the magi as kings in the early 200's. Perhaps associated with Psalm 68:29, 31; 72:10.
  - b) The idea of three kings is based upon three gifts.
  - c) They received names in the 500's: Melchior, Balthasar, and Gasper
  - d) They were astrologers and interpreters of dreams (Daniel 2:2, 10, 27; 5:7, 11, 15).
- 2) What happened before their arrival? *after Jesus was born*
  - a) Where? *in Bethlehem of Judea*
    - i) Perhaps contrasted with Bethlehem of Zebulun; cf. Joshua 19:15
    - ii) Most like to show that Jesus was of the tribe of Judah
    - iii) Where Jacob buried Rachel (Genesis 35:19); where Ruth meets and marries Boaz (Ruth); where the angels announced the birth of the Son (Luke 2)
  - b) When specifically? *in the days of Herod the king,*
    - i) Herod ruled from 37 – 4 BC; known for construction and cruelty
    - ii) Jesus was probably born in late 5 to early 4 BC.
    - iii) This event probably takes place within the 1<sup>st</sup> year after Jesus' birth.
  - c) Matthew makes no mention of Jesus' actual birth or the arrival of the shepherds.
- 3) What did they ask?—<sup>2</sup> *saying, "Where is He who has been born [aor. pass. ptc. τίκτω] King of the Jews?*
  - a) Jesus would not **become** king (like Herod the Edomite, the usurper put in place by the Romans), but He **is** king from the time of His birth.
- 4) Why did they ask about this king? *Because we have seen His star in the East*
  - a) How did they know?
    - i) They had Balaam's prophecies—Numbers 24:17
    - ii) They had Daniel's prophecies—Daniel 9:24-27
  - b) This was no ordinary star: it moved east to west, north to south, it appears and disappears, it hovers over a single house in Bethlehem
  - c) Perhaps this is the Shekinah glory?
- 5) Why did they come to Jerusalem? *and (we) have come to worship [aor. act. inf. προσκυνέω] him."*
  - a) Perhaps to do homage to this new king, but perhaps also this was genuine worship.

**Two-fold response by Herod—2:3-4**

- 1) <sup>3</sup> *Now, Herod the king was unsettled [aor. pass. ind. ταρασσω]*
  - a) When? *when he heard this,*
    - i) He was troubled at the thought of a potential rival.
  - b) Along with whom? *and all Jerusalem with him.*

- i) They knew how cruel and ruthless Herod could be.
- 2) <sup>4</sup> *And he kept inquiring* [impf. dep. ind. πυνθάνομαι]
  - a) From whom? *from them ... all the chief priests* (Sadducees) *and scholars* (Pharisees) *of the people*,
    - i) Those living in or near Jerusalem who could be quickly consulted.
  - b) When? *after he had gathered together*
  - c) About what? *where the Messiah* (equivalent of the king in 2:2) *was to be born*.

**How did the religious leaders respond to Herod's question?—2:5-6** <sup>5</sup> *And they said to him,*

- 1) Where specifically was Messiah to be born? "*In Bethlehem of Judea,*
  - a) Cf. John 7:42
- 2) How did they know this? *for it stands written in this way through* [διὰ] *the prophet:*
  - God the Spirit wrote through the prophet. The NIV gets it wrong here, implying that the prophet was the actual source of the prophecy.
  - a) The insignificant location is Bethlehem—2:6a <sup>6</sup> *'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah;* (cf. Micah 5:2)
  - b) The leadership of the One born—2:6b
    - i) Why? *because out of you will come forth a Leader* [ἡγέομαι]
    - ii) What will this leader do? *who will shepherd* [ποιμαίνω] *My people Israel.*"  
(cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 5:2)
      - (1) Recognition that they understood Messiah as the ultimate descendent of David.
- 3) Though Jesus was the Messiah, born in David's line and certain to be Shepherd and Ruler of Israel, it was the Gentiles, and not the religious Jews, who came to do homage to him.

**Take-home truth:** Religious privilege often blinds our hearts.