

# “Homage from Afar – Hostility at Home”

## Matthew Chapter 2

Chapter 2 begins “Now *after* Jesus was born.” Possibly 1 – 1 ½ years have passed since the birth of Jesus.

Spurgeon -- “A stir begins is soon as Christ is born. He has not spoken a word; he has not wrought a miracle; he has not proclaimed a single doctrine; but ‘when Jesus was born,’ at the very first, while as yet you hear nothing but infant cries, and can see nothing but infant weakness, still his influence upon the world is manifest. ‘When Jesus was born, there came wise men from the east,’ and so on. There is infinite power even in an infant Savior.”

Matthew’s purpose for this chapter is multipurpose.

- A. To bring into focus the world’s reception of the King’s arrival. Homage and Hostility.
- B. To deal with four prophecies concerning the Messiah’s beginning that require fulfillment and explanation. They are:
  - 1) He was to be born in Bethlehem - Micah 5:2
  - 2) He was to be called out of Egypt - Hosea 11:1
  - 3) There was to be weeping in Rama - Jeremiah 31:15
  - 4) He was to be called a Nazarene - Isaiah 11:1

Mat 2:1

### 1) Homage from Afar vs 1-12

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

Mat 2:2

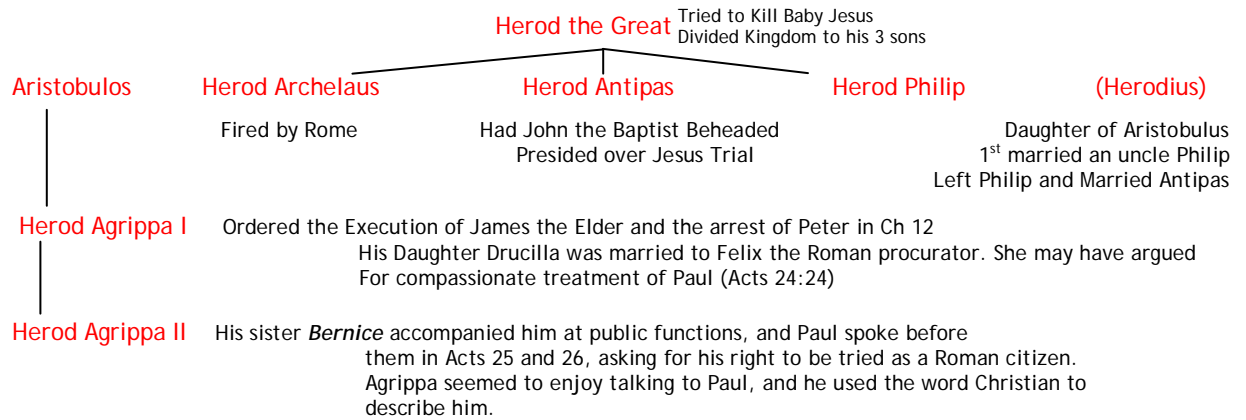
"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

- WHO WERE THE MAGI? Tradition of Christmas carols teaches these were kings. The carol also teaches there were 3.
  - Magi were considered “wise men” for they studied all kinds of academic disciplines. Languages, Arithmetic, Philosophy, Geography, Religions and Science of all types and in this case Astronomy. (*Do not confuse astronomy with astrology. Astrologers have attempted to have credibility given to their imaginations with this account. The magi would have known about practices that we not real science but they would have leaned more on true science of Astronomy.*)
  - There is no mention of the number 3. The number 3 is derived from the gifts given which 3 are listed: gold, frankincense and myrrh. 3 is an assumption that is not defined in scripture. Also, Herod and Jerusalem took notice of their arrival. 3 men would not have been noticed. But 300 would have been.
  - More likely there were a large number of “wise men” who would travel together to discover the wisdom from prophecies fulfilled through a star that seemingly was leading them.
- These Magi arrived from the East
  - Coming from the east, many scholars cite the influence of Daniel in Babylon. Daniel was known to be one of the better “wise men”
  - Daniel 1:19-21 “The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so **they entered the king’s personal service. As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm. And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.**”
- Coming to see the King of the Jews
  - This was remarkable to come to the Jews, a generally conquered people and a despised people. This shows that Daniels influence may have left a great understanding of the one true God.
- They saw and followed His Star
  - Some have taught that what they followed was an alignment of planets or stars in the night sky. While there is a great possibility of spectacular events in the galaxy at such a pivotal moment of the Messiah’s birth, this star has some characteristics that are unique.
  - This is not an eastern star. The text refers to the Magi being in the east and they saw this star while there and it leads them westward.
  - Verse 9-10 the star does something different. It appears again and changes its path. It was headed westward, then it heads southward and then it stops. In Bethlehem.
  - A Star? An Angel? Numbers 24:17 “A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel”
  - I cannot help but see that a “star” in the kingdom of God leads men to Jesus.

Mat 2:3

When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

- WHICH HEROD? The Herod is Herod the Great.
- Later in the Gospel we will hear about Herod Antipas and Herod Philip. In the book of Acts we will hear about Herod Agrippa I and Herod Agrippa II.



- Herod was a short man (4 ½ ft tall) was famous for building huge structures. One of which was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple in Jerusalem.
- Herod was ruthless and paranoid. Prior to this account Herod had his first of 10 wives killed, 2 sons, a brother in law and a mother in law killed also. Also prior to this Herod had to deal with uprisings from rebels from the east.
- So it was the nature of Herod to "*be troubled*" when there was news of another King. And when Herod was troubled - All of Jerusalem was troubled.

Mat 2:4

Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

Mat 2:5

They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

Mat 2:6

'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.'"

- This is amazing and sad commentary of people who have the scriptures, and know the scriptures and do not live accordingly.
- Herod gathers the chief priests and scribes and asks them where this Messiah is to be born.
- THEY KNOW!!! THEY KNOW THE ANSWER BASED ON SCRIPTURE!!!!
- **This scripture is the 1<sup>st</sup> of the four prophecies mentioned in the introduction of this chapter.**
- We do not see the chief priests and scribes seeking to join the magi as they journey to Bethlehem. They have the scriptures. They know the truth and yet they DO NOT APPLY TRUTH TO THEIR LIVES.
- The Truth Project's motto: "*Do you really believe that what you believe is really real?*" If you did it would change your life, your outlook, your attitude, your behavior.

Mat 2:7

Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared.

Mat 2:8

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."

- Herod was not stupid. He realized that the Child King would be hidden from a man who would murder for power. So he proposed to the Magi to bring word of the location of this King to him so he too could worship the King. He not only is a murderer but a liar.
- It is important to notice that he asks them the time the star appeared. Some time has transpired. The journey from the east too some time. Possibly even a year. This was used to determine the age of this Child King.

Mat 2:9

After hearing the king, they 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.

Mat 2:10

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

- Mat 2:11 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.
- It is implied that the star had disappeared for a time. Perhaps while with Herod. But then it reappears leading the Magi to the south. The star is said to have "stood" over the place where the Child was. This star as a guide gave the Magi great joy.
  - Another evidence of the time passing, Jesus, Mary and Joseph are now in a house not in a stable. Again, how many Christmas cards do we see the 3 Kings at the stable presenting gifts. What a different story the scripture teaches.
  - When the Magi came they give gifts as was the custom of having an audience before a King. They gave GOLD = acknowledging His Royalty; FRANKINCENSE = acknowledging His Divinity; and MYRRH = acknowledging HIS death. Understandably they gave not realizing the meaning of these gifts to the work of redemption He was to perform.
    - The worship the Magi performed was not empty handed. Worship has a cost to it. A sacrifice.
    - 2 Samuel 24:24 "I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing."
  - The Magi give gifts to Jesus. Not to Mary and Joseph. But understanding that these gifts were used by those who had charge over the care of the Child.
  - In the same way, we worship Jesus with our offerings giving indirectly to those who are either in need or those who are stewards of the resources used to further the spread of the Gospel. Joseph no doubt used these gifts to fund the coming travel they will be doing to escape Herod's evil plans and to fulfill prophecy.

Mat 2:12 And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

- God protects the Child King and the Magi by warning them in a dream to not go back to Herod.

Mat 2:13 **2) Hostility at Home** vs 13-23

Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."

Mat 2:14 So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.

Mat 2:15 He remained there until the death of Herod. *This was* to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."

- God not only warns the Magi, but He warns Joseph.
- The warning was urgent. "GET UP!"
- They would flee to Egypt. This was an area where there was a large Jewish community and more importantly out of Herod's jurisdiction.
- It is also interesting to note that the Messiah followed the path of Israel. Israel as an infant journeyed to Egypt not to stay but to be brought out of Egypt to the Promised Land.
- Joseph quickly obeyed, even while it was still night. He did not reason or modify the instructions to fit his lifestyle. Simply and quickly obeyed.
- **This scripture is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the four prophecies mentioned in the introduction of this chapter.**

Mat 2:16 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.

Mat 2:17 Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

Mat 2:18 "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."

- Consistent with the character of Herod's paranoia and evil desire for power, he orders the destruction of all the children 2 years and younger in Bethlehem and the surrounding vicinity.

- His goal is to destroy the Child King. His plan is expanding the area where he might be as well as the age he might be. Both of these things were determined previously when he asked where and when of the Magi.
- Jeremiah prophesied of this when he was speaking of the nation Israel being conquered and carried away by Babylon. Yet at this time as well, the news of children in Israel being slaughtered in the area of Bethlehem reach even northward to Rama and all mothers in Israel wept for the horror of Herod.
- **This scripture is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the four prophecies mentioned in the introduction of this chapter.**

Mat 2:19 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said,

Mat 2:20 "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead."

Mat 2:21 So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

Mat 2:22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned *by God* in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee,

Mat 2:23 and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. *This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene."*

- Again, Joseph received instruction in a dream. Herod is dead. The threat is gone, or at least this one from Herod. And it is time to return to the Land of Israel.
  - Joseph had an unsure sense about where in the land. It seems he first went to Judea.
  - The Lord clarifies our concerns with His instructions. Joseph's fears were justified. Archelaus had a short reign. He was a chip off the old block. He was vicious but he did not have the gift of diplomacy that his father had. His incompetence got him thrown out. Yet at this time Archelaus ruled, Joseph was instructed to go to Nazareth.
  - Nazareth - some scholars suggest that the root word of Nazareth comes from the Hebrew word *Nazir* which means a branch or shoot.
  - **Isaiah 11:1-4** " *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a **Branch** shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.*"
  - Nazareth was a town of being a reputation of malcontents, uncultured and contemptible. There is always a culture that seems to be the butt of every joke. This was Nazareth. Nathaniel when being told of the Messiah said (John 1:46) " *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?*" .
- **This scripture is the 4<sup>th</sup> of the four prophecies mentioned in the introduction of this chapter.**
- We have seen in this chapter three different responses to Jesus; one may say that all people respond in one of these three ways.
  - Herod displayed an open hatred and hostility toward Jesus.
  - The chief priests and the scribes were indifferent toward Jesus, all the while retaining their religious respectability.
  - The wise men sought out Jesus, and worshipped Him - even at great cost.

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