

THE WONDER OF WORSHIPPING CHRIST!

SUNDAY, MAY 24, 2009

TEXT: MATTHEW 2:1-24

INTRODUCTION:

What is the most important thing to happen in the history of the human race? Was it scientific? Was it mystical? Was it industrial development? Was it politics? The answer to all of the questions is no! The most significant event to ever envelope the history of mankind was the emergence of Christ into the events of human history.

1) Jesus, life and ministry of (Jee'zuhs): The story of Jesus begins abruptly in the Gospel of Mark when He presented Himself at the Jordan River to the desert prophet John the Baptist as a candidate for baptism. All that is said about His origin is that He came to the river **"from Nazareth" (Mark 1:9)**. **"Jesus of Nazareth" was a designation that followed him to the day of His death (John 19:19)**.

2) His origins: Matthew's Gospel demonstrates that although Nazareth was Jesus' home when he came to John for baptism, He was not born there. Rather, He was born (as the Jewish messiah must be) in Bethlehem, the **"city of David,"** as a descendant of David's royal line **(Matt. 1:1-17; 2:1-6)**. This Child born in Bethlehem ended up as an adult in Nazareth, described sarcastically by his enemies as a **"Nazarene" (literally, "Nazarite" 2:23)**. The play on words seems intended to poke fun simultaneously at Jesus' obscure origins and at the stark contrast (in the eyes of many) between His supposed holiness (like the Nazarites of the Old Testament) and His practice of keeping company with sinners, prostitutes, and tax collectors **(Mark 2:17)**. The Gospel of Luke supplies background information on John the Baptist, showing how the families of John and Jesus were related both by kinship and by circumstances **(Luke 1:5-80)**. Luke added that Nazareth was the family home of Jesus' parents all along **(Luke 1:26-27)**.

Yet he confirmed Matthew's testimony that the family was of the line of David. Luke introduced the roman census as the reason for their return to the ancestral city of Bethlehem just before Jesus' birth
(Luke 2:1-7).

These biographers, either Matthew, Mark, or Luke provides glimpses of Jesus as:

- 1) an eight-day-old infant (2:21-39),**
- 2) a boy of twelve years (2:40-52),**
- 3) and a man of 30 beginning His ministry (3:21-23).**

Only when this brief biographical sketch was complete did Luke append His genealogy **(Luke 3:23-28)**, which confirms in passing Jesus' Davidic **ancestry (Luke 3:31; compare 1:32-33)**, while emphasizing above all His solidarity with the entire human race in its descent from "Adam, which was the son of God" **(Luke 3:38)**. The reflection on Jesus' baptism in the Gospel of John centers on John the Baptist's acknowledgment that Jesus "is preferred before me: for he was before me" **(John 1:30; compare v.15)**. This pronouncement allowed the Gospel writer to turn the story of Jesus' origins into a theological confession by tracing Jesus' existence back to the creation of the world and before **(John 1;1-5)**. Despite his royal ancestry and despite his heavenly preexistence as the eternal Word and son of God, Jesus was of humble origins humanly speaking and was viewed as such by the people of His day. When He taught in Nazareth, the townspeople asked, "**Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?**" **(Mark 6:3; compare Luke 4:22)**. When He taught in Capernaum, they asked, "**Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?**"

(John 6:42). Though two Gospels, Matthew and Luke, tell of His mother Mary's miraculous conception and of Jesus' virgin birth, these matters were not public knowledge during His time on earth, for **"Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2;19; compare v. 51).**

With this background in mind we can now look at the birth of Jesus both from a spiritual and historical perspective. We see from the very outset of His life that there were those who desired to worship Him as the son of the living God. This worship was an attempt by man to show, (however limited by human experience) his desire to acknowledge the importance of the existence of Christ in relation to all of human history. Early on, men could see the determination on the part of God to have contact with His creation. This was for one purpose, **(REDEMPTION).**

Worship: Human response to the perceived presence of the divine, a presence which transcends normal human activity and is holy. Thus, Jacob, fleeing away to Haran, perceived the presence of the Lord in a dream while sleeping at **"a certain place,"** and when he woke from his sleep, he said: **"Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know [it]." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome [is] this place! This [is] none other than the house of God, and this [is] the gate of heaven!" (Gen. 28:16-17 NKJV).**

Before the dream, the place had only been a stopping place reached by sunset (18:11), but when he awoke it had become a holy place. The holy presence of God had penetrated into ordinary (profane) space in a way which had aroused acute awareness on the part of a human being. The sacred (holy) and profane are united in an experience of worship.

Just as the presence of the Lord had become evident to Jacob as he was fleeing to Haran, so would the presence of

Christ become the object of worship in this world. he would be pursued by men both to be worshipped, and destroyed.

Note: In the space of just twenty three verses, Matthew mentions four fulfilled prophecies, four sensational dreams by which the baby Jesus was protected from His enemies, and tells how god provided a special star to guide men in their search for the infant King.

“VERSE BY VERSE EXPOSITION”

Matthew 2:1-23

I. THE EXPERIENCES OF THE WISE MEN! vv.1-12

v.1,2- The story of the Wise Men is one of the most intriguing in the whole Bible. There is much we would like to know about them but not many resources.

> THEIR IDENTITY....Who were they and where did they live?

A. They were known as “The Magi” from the Greek word magoi.

B. They were from a tribe emerging from the Median nation in the seventh century before the birth of Christ.

C. They were most likely into the use of occult powers. They used divination and soothsaying in their religious rituals.

D. They were part of a Magian priesthood. Part of their religious practice was the observing of the stars. **Astronomy** not **astrology**. The first being **instructive** and the second being **interpretive**.

E. From a typological view they would best illustrate those in the world who are seeking truth.

F. They were from the land of the East, which would have most likely been Arabia. They were scholars, probably gentiles, who were men of eminence in the kingdom of Persia or Arabia. A study of maps at that period of time would indicate that they traveled 1,000 miles to get to Bethlehem.

Note: Can you imagine traveling 1,000 miles on foot, a star being your only real motivation.

> THEIR INFORMATION...What did they know and why did they come?

A. They might have received their information from Hebrews who had remained after the Babylonian captivity.

B. In the writings of the Hebrews, (namely, Daniel, and Micah) the Messiah's appearance (Daniel) and the place where he would be born (Micah), could have been common knowledge to the Wise Men.

C. Many have speculated why they were motivated to travel such a difficult and long road. Whether it was the star, believed by some to be Haley's comet, by others the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, or an oral tradition. One thing is for sure the Divine hand of God was leading them.

> THEIR INSPIRATION... What did they bring and why did they disappear?

A. Possibly they had knowledge of the writings of Isaiah, their statement, **"we have seen the star in the East, and are come to worship Him" (v.2) appears to be Isaiah's reference in the 60th chapter..." And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising" (v.2).**

B. So often we focus on the three gifts brought to Jesus,

1) Gold, for a King.

2) Frankincense for a Priest.

3) Myrrh for the burial of the Lamb of God.

But let us not forget their greatest gift, **“... We are come to worship Him.”**

v.12-

C. These men had a line of communication to heaven. The fact that they were obedient to the voice of God is seen in their response to a divine dream. There was no speculation as to its content or origin, simply compliance.

II. THE INQUIRY OF THE WICKED MONARCH! vv.3-8 & 16

v.3-

> THE TROUBLED PEOPLE... “unsure of their future.”

A. Herod was troubled for two reasons:

1) He had no right to the rule of Palestine or Jerusalem. He had murdered five Maccabean princes and princesses, among them was his favorite wife, Mariamne. He was ruling by fear, murder, and constraint of the people.

2) He was a man described by Josephus in his historical writings as a man crippled by fear, insecurity, inferiority complex because of his mixed lineage, and his lusting for power.

B. The Scribes relied on the only dependable resource for their answer, God’s Word.

> THE TRUTHFUL PROPHET... “communicating details 5 centuries before the birth of Christ.”

Micah 5:2

2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, [Though] you are little among the thousands of Judah, [Yet] out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth [are] from of old, From everlasting." (NKJV)

A. In verses 5 & 6, we can begin to see the hand of God in these circumstances. Here we also see the first of four fulfilled prophecies.

vv.7-10

> THE TERRIBLE PREDICAMENT..."succumb to a King, or continue to search for the Savior?"

A. "... when had the star appeared?" This was the question asked by Herod. We might ask the question had the star ceased to shine so that these men might go into the city of Jerusalem and make the first pronouncement of their coming Messiah/King.

1) Triumphant Entry:

Matthew 21:4

4 All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: (NKJV)

Matthew 21:5

5 "Tell the daughter of Zion, `Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.'" (NKJV)

2) Lamination over their rejection of their King.

Matthew 23:37

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under [her] wings, but you were not willing! (NKJV)

If the star had stopped shining for a time it would soon light the way for all men to know that the Son of God had arrived on the earth to redeem mankind.

v.11

> THE SUGGESTIVE GIFTS... “worship has no boundaries, only bountiful blessings.”

A. The first gift was Gold. This was always presented to a King. But at this age Jesus wouldn't have any use for gold. His parents would, they had the additional burden of,

- 1) A new child in the family.
- 2) A hasty departure from their home.
- 3) And the soon to encounter expense of moving to another country.

B. The second gift was Frankincense. Used by the Priest in the Temple for purifying purposes. Its color was white at the time of being extracted from the Boswellia tree. The tree became a symbol of purity.

C. The third gift was Myrrh. This substance had one purpose only, to prepare a body for burial.

Though these gifts seem strange to be given to a child, not so strange if we understand the three vital elements recognized by these wise men.

- 1) They recognized "ROYALTY". "KING"
- 2) They recognized "REPRESENTATION". "PRIEST"
- 3) They recognized "REDEMPTION". "SACRIFICE"

III. THE EFFICIENCY OF THE WARNING MESSAGE!

vv.12,13-19,23

> **THE DREAM OF REDIRECTION...** "where God guides He does provide (wisdom)."

v.12 "Go to Arabia."

> **THE DREAM OF REPRISALS...** "where there is wickedness men want their way."

v.13 "Go to Egypt."

> **THE DREAM OF REASSURANCE...** "we may wander for a season but the Lord will call us home."

vv.14,15 'Go to Israel.' Here we see the fulfillment of the second prophecy concerning Christ.

Hosea 11:1

1 "When Israel [was] a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son. (NKJV)

> **THE DREAMS OF RE-EVALUATION...** "when the way seems clear and safe, we must still rely on the Lord."

vv.21-23 'Go to Nazareth.' Here we see the fulfillment of the fourth prophecy.

Isaiah 11:1

1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. (NKJV)

IV. THE EXASPERATION OF WEeping MOTHERS! vv.16-18

> UNRESTRAINED MADNESS... “when men can’t control God they conspire against men.” vv.16,17

> UNREQUITED MISERY... “the insanity of man brings misery on the innocent.” v.18 here we have the fulfillment of the third prophecy.

Jeremiah 31:15

15 Thus says the LORD: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation [and] bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted for her children, Because they [are] no more." (NKJV)