

Research on: The Nativity of Jesus

Matt 2:1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

“To the vision of the Wisemen, this spiritual idea of the Principle of man or the universe, appeared as a star” (Mis. 164:11-12).

Bethlehem of Judaea is located six miles south and slightly west of Jerusalem. The prophet Micah epitomizes Bethlehem as “little among the thousands of Judah” (Micah 5:2), but he prophesies that “out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel.”

King Herod asks the chief priests and scribes (whose business it was to know the prophets’ sayings) where the Messiah is to be born. They answer without hesitation by quoting from the prophet Micah where he specifically mentions Bethlehem.

The word *ruler* in Hebrew is *marshal*. The word implies someone with dominion who finds his authority in God (Strong 4910).

Wise men from the east. In Greek the term is *magi* (*magos* in the singular) which means “magician, astrologer” (Strong 3097). Were they magicians or astrologers who interpreted the stars? Where were they from? Persia? Early Christian art portrays them in Persian dress. Babylon? The Babylonians had developed a great interest in astrology and astronomy. Arabia? This area is considered because the gifts which the magi bring – gold and frankincense – are associated with the desert camel caravans coming from northwest Arabia. Arabs were also known as “wise men” for they had a reputation for wisdom.

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Mrs. Eddy writes:

“The star of Bethlehem is the star of Boston, high in the zenith of Truth’s domain, that looked down on the long night of human beliefs, to pierce the darkness and melt the dawn.

“The star of Bethlehem is the light of all ages; is the light of Love, to-day christening religion undefiled, divine Science; giving to it a new name, and the white stone in token of purity and permanence” (Mis. 320:23, 27).

In the east means “in the rising.” The magi come to Jerusalem for more information about this “sign.” Matthew contrasts the eagerness of the magi to worship Jesus with the apathy of the

Jewish leaders and the hostility of Herod's court – all of whom had the Hebrew Scriptures to inform them. Even a formal knowledge of their Scriptures does not in itself lead them to know and understand who Jesus is.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

To the sages, the star represents an crucial event of some weight, and Herod views the news of Jesus' birth as a threat to his kingdom. He is an Edomite by birth and not a full Jew, and his popularity is always very low. He's in turmoil over the news of the star, even terrified and thrown into confusion. He's asking the wise men what year, month, and day the star appeared over the horizon.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

“... when Herod asks the magi the chronological question ‘When?’ to determine the time of Jesus' birth (like v. 4, making contact with 2:1), he acts hypocritically, claiming that he too wants to worship, but with murder in his heart. Matthew will later consider hypocrisy the chief sin of Jewish leadership (see Matt. 23:1-33), already present in this initial encounter” (NIB.8.143).

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (II Pet. 1:19)

“The Wisemen were led to behold and to follow this daystar of divine Science, lighting the way to eternal harmony” (vii:11).

Mrs. Eddy connects the star that the wisemen followed with the daystar in II Peter 1:19. In Greek, it can mean *light bringer*. That's someone who who holds the light. The Christ is the light, and Jesus was the candlestick. Divine Science/The Holy Ghost is the light, and Mrs. Eddy was the candlestick.

“Until you have the clearer light which shall result from the dawning of the day. . . we should attend to the light furnished by the prophecies until the truth shall be rendered more distinct by the events as they shall actually be disclosed. Until the brighter light which shall be shed on all things by the glory of the **second advent**” (Barnes Notes).

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

The wise men see the star again and go to where the baby is. They continue to be obedient. They are literally filled with exceedingly great joy!

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