**The Nativity Story from Matthew**

Matt. 2:1,2, 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,

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 *mashal*. 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 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).

*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.

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!

Sources:

*The Anchor Yale Bible: Matthew*. Introduction, translation and notes by W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann. New York: Doubleday, 1971.

Biblos.com. Concordance, “To shepherd” (Helps) (<http://concordances.org/greek/4165.htm>). Accessed on 9-4-12.

Eddy, Mary Baker. *Miscellaneous Writings, 1883-1896.* Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1896. Concord Windows 95 version, CD-ROM.

 Morris, Leon. *The Pillar New Testament Commentary, The Gospel According to Matthew*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992.

*The New Interpreter's Bible, A Commentary in Twelve Volumes.* Ed. Leander E. Keck. Vol. 8. Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.

Strong, James. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987.

Abbreviation key:

*AYB = The Anchor Yale Bible*

*NIB = The New Interpreter’s Bible*