

Summary

- Matthew presents an account of Jesus infancy (he may have been 2 years old at this time, 2:7,16)
 - He is visited by "Magi" (Wise men or Astrologers from the East - Persia or Babylon etc)
 - They stop at Jerusalem and asks king Herod where the "king of the Jews" is
 - They go to Bethlehem, Judah to worship him, bringing gifts
 - Herod meanwhile is disturbed at the news of a king, and attempts to kill him
 - Jesus and his family flee to Egypt before settling in Nazareth, Galilee
- Matthew presents a further four evidences of Jesus as the fulfilment of the scriptures (2:5-6, 15, 17-18, 23)
 - The first of these is a direct prophecy that is unambiguously about Jesus
 - But the next two are not obviously predicative prophecies about Christ. Instead Matthew is showing us how Jesus fulfils the pattern of Israel's history - a more "full" embodiment of the words of scripture.
 - The last one is not even a direct quote. It may be a reference to the direct prophecy of Isaiah 11:1 (through a word play between the Hebrew word for "branch" and the name of Nazareth); or it may be summary of prophecies that speak of the lowliness, rejection, and humiliation of Jesus (born in Nazareth, a place of no reputation).
- Matthew shows the cosmic significance of the birth of Jesus through the manipulation of the stars, and the divine protection of God.
- Matthew emphasises how gentiles (non-Jewish people) were among the first to recognise Christ, while the Jewish city of Jerusalem was "troubled" at the news (2:3)
- Matthew contrasts the lowliness of the Saviour, with the arrogance of Herod. But God is not thwarted by human opposition and might. God will protect his purposes by his own means.
- Matthew sets the scene for the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish people (though he was their rightful king), and the mission to the rest of the world - This is an important theme in Matthew.

2:1-12 – The coming of the Magi

- Herod (the Great) was half Jewish, half Idumean. He was installed by the Romans. He was not the king that God had chosen.
- Herod evokes the memory of Saul persecuting David.
- There is no indication of the number of "wise men" who visited Jesus, or that they were kings. They were astrologers, who probably speculated about the meaning of the stars. They were certainly high ranking people in their society.
- We do not know for sure what methods they used, but clearly God intervened - not only showing them the sign in the sky, but also guiding their interpretation of it.
- "in the east" (KJV) could be translated "when it rose" (ESV).
- They came to "worship" is an extraordinary statement.
- "troubled" is too weak - The word could be translated "terrified" or "in turmoil". Their hypocrisy is exposed in rejecting the king. They are not faithful to the Lord.
- This is the first mention of the "chief priests" and "scribes" (experts in copying and teaching the scriptures)
- The quotation is from Micah 5:2. Matthew paraphrases, emphasising the new honour that Bethlehem has because of the Messiah, and his role a shepherd (pastor), which was the expectation of the OT kings.
- The gifts of the kings are interesting to consider, and many have seen symbolism in them regarding the glory and suffering of Christ.

2:13-15 – Fleeing to Egypt

- The quotation is from Hosea 11:1 and refers in the context to Israel's deliverance from Egypt.
- Israel had a close relationship with Egypt, and at many times fled there to escape danger.
- But most importantly, Egypt was the place from which God prepared and brought forth his people (starting with the Fathers of the nation in the days of Jacob, and culminating with the nation under Moses)
- Jesus is seen (not for the last time) to be following the pattern of Israel's history, signifying that God will accomplish through him the purpose and promises to Israel. (We sometimes call this interpretation "typology")

2:16-18 – The Massacre at Bethlehem

- Jeremiah 31:15, evoking the laments of Israel's mothers as their sons were taken away into exile or killed.

2:19-23 – Settling in Nazareth

- Archelaus ruled in Judea after the death of his father. He was cruel like his father, and we do have records of massacres which he committed.
- But we in fact see God's divine providence, in sending his Son into obscurity that he might be prepared for his ministry later.
- The idea that "quotation" is a summary of OT passages is supported by the use of the plural "prophets"
- Some think that "Nazarene" was a slang term for someone from a very obscure or remote place (cf. John 1:46). The most lucid prophetic passage describing the Christ in this way is Isaiah 52-53.