

Wednesday Night Bible Study

The Gospel of Matthew

Week 3 – 10/06/2021

- The Babylonian Empire is conquered by the Persians and reigned from 539-332 BC.
- During this reign, a hereditary priesthood was more established from its roots in Babylon. Magoi (Herodotus 1:101)
- Magi is the Latinized form of Magoi
- The head of the Magi was Rab-Mag or Chief of the Magi in Nebuchadnezzar's court as established in Nebuchadnezzar's court. Jeremiah 39:3,13
- Oneiromancy, not astrology, was their main skill. (Herodotus 1.107,120 VII.19)
- Oneiromancy is dream interpretation
- This started with Daniel's skill in Daniel 2
- The Magi held dual priestly and governmental offices of which included the absolute choice and election of the king of the realm.
- They composed the upper house of the council of the Megistanes – This is where we get our term magistrate
- Babylon defeated by the Persians
- Persians defeated by the Greeks
- Young Alexander the Great dies and his kingdom is split into four parts with his four generals. Ptolemy takes the south (Egypt) and Seleucus takes the east which becomes the Parthian Empire. The others become the Roman Empire over time.
- In between the Romans and the Parthians is Judea. A buffer state in a fight for 400 years.
- These 400 years are detailed in Daniel 11:5-35
- There were wars in Judea between Rome and the Parthians in 63 BC, 55 BC, and 40 BC. In 37 BC, Mark Anthony took the power back of this region and then was later pushed out with Jewish collaboration with the Parthians.
- Herod secured his title of "King of the Jews" from Caesar Augustus and could not occupy the capital city for three years because of the unrest and fighting
- Tensions are very high, and Herod is only there by Roman might.
- Note: The picture here is two might empires contending for a rebellious buffer state situated between them that are waiting on their God to deliver them as He had done throughout the Old Testament.
- Now, enter the Magi in Matthew chapter 2.
- 2:1-3
 - o Verse 1 says they left when He was born.

Side note: What about the number of travelers? The Bible does not say that there were only three "**wise men**". It only mentions three gifts that the "**wise men**" brought. To give you an idea of how big this caravan must have been, we will assume that there were only three "**wise men**". Knowing how long the trip would take, the conditions they would encounter, the things needed, etc., they would have prepared accordingly. If the trip was 1,500 miles, traveling through that type of terrain would allow maybe a couple miles per day. That means the trip would have taken

about two years. Traveling that far meant carrying a lot of money. There were no credit cards or banks. They would need to travel with valuables. This required armed protection. What about food? What about change of clothes and astronomy equipment? Remember, this is what they did per their title so equipment would have been necessary. After all, they were following a star, were they not? No doubt that with that much gold, valuables, servants, etc., there would have been literally hundreds coming in a caravan; perhaps thousands. To summarize, there would be enough cavalry escort to protect the valuables, the king makers, and all the servants. There would be enough food and servants for the trip. There would be enough equipment. This was a BIG deal!

- They are making a penetration into a hostile domain.
- Notice Herod's and the city's reaction.
- Their question to Herod was an insult.
- How do gentiles know a Jewish king has been born?
 - Because they have seen a star?
- Traditions have Daniel, while Rab-Mag, put together a cabal, a trusted few and shared a prophecy about a star and what to do when they found this star.
- It was passed down for almost 5 centuries.
- The Magi know He's a king, has a star, and have come to worship Him.
- These weren't just a group of guys, they had access to a nervous king.
- Note: The first question in the New Testament is "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" The first question in the Old Testament is God calling Adam, "Where art thou?" The first question in the Old Testament deals with the first Adam. The first question in the New Testament deals with the last Adam. Paul uses this term of Jesus in 1 Corinthians 15:45
- 2:4-6
 - Quotes Micah 5:2 – Bethlehem Ephratah
 - Two Bethlehems- one up north in Ephraim and the one referred to in Judea.
 - Micah 5:2 "Who's going ... " Will be born in Bethlehem but has been around forever; the pre-existent one.
- 2:7-8
 - Verse 8 says Herod sent them to Bethlehem
- 2:9-10
 - They see the star again and rejoice. It went before them and led them.
 - If the star is a real star, then why couldn't the bad guys see it? How could they see it in the daytime?
 - They were led to Jerusalem and then were told to go to Bethlehem and were led there.
- 2:11-12
 - There was no stable, it was in a house.
 - What communication are they comfortable with? Dreams. This is why God spoke to them in a dream.
 - There may have been more than three gifts but only three were mentioned. Why?
 - Gold – His deity

- Frankincense – His priesthood (it was mixed into the shew bread by priests)
- Myrrh – When **crushed**, it became an ointment for burial.
- They speak of prophet, priest, and king (three offices uniquely in one)
- Star was not a natural phenomenon – any competent astronomer wouldn't have been alarmed by its presence... This one caused a real stir.
- Shekinah? The visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit
 - Genesis 1 – The creation (sun, moon, and stars were not until day 4)
 - Genesis 15 – Flame in the Abrahamic Covenant
 - Exodus 3 – Burning Bush
 - Exodus 13 – Pillar of fire by night
 - Acts – tongues of fire at Pentecost
- Side note: Perhaps here? Wouldn't it be reasonable to assume it would be here since God is showing up? And for some reason, only the good guys can see it?
- Remember, it moved and showed them where to go. Stars don't move.
- 2:14-15
 - Probably that night that Joseph had the dream they left; immediately... “by night”
- 2:16
 - Diligently – To know accurately
- 2:17-18
- 2:19-21
- 2:22-23
 - Isaiah 9:6
 - Child born – man
 - Son given – God
 - Isaiah 9:7
 - Throne of David; Jesus will take this throne
 - Now sitting on His father's right hand throne
 - He couldn't sit on it during His earthly life because it didn't exist.
 - Luke 1:31 – 33 “Throne of His father David”