


Day 1

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

Magi (Wise Men) Pay Homage to The Messiah

¹After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi ^[Mädge-eye] from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

Q1. *After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea:* Why was it important that "Bethlehem in Judea" was identified as Jesus' birthplace? (Was it to fulfill prophecy? Were there other villages of Bethlehem? Other thoughts?)

Micah 5:2, 4 [NIV-1984]

[Micah lived between 750-686 B.C. He was a prophet about the same time in history as Isaiah. Micah prophesied this about the coming Messiah:]

² "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

⁴ He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

Joshua 19:15 [NIV-1984]

¹⁵Included were Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah and Bethlehem [in Zebulun (see next line, verse 16)]. There were twelve towns and their villages. ¹⁶ These towns and their villages were the inheritance of Zebulun, clan by clan.

1 Samuel 17:12 [NIV-1984]

Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse had eight sons, and in Saul's time he was old and well advanced in years.

Genesis 35:19 & 48:3, 7 [NIV-1984]

^{35:19} So, Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

^{48:3} Jacob said to Joseph . . . ⁷ "As I was returning from Paddan, to my sorrow [your mother] Rachel died in the land of Canaan while we were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath. So, I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath" (that is, Bethlehem).

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23



Location of the Tribe of Zebulun compared to the village of Bethlechem (Ephrathah or Ephrath: see Genesis 35:19 ↓) in Judah.

The precise location of Bethlechem in Zebulun is unknown; at the time it was also called Bethlechem of Galilee.

Source: <https://emmausroadministries.international/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/zebulun-and-naphtali-map.jpg>, all rights reserved.

Q2. Magi from the east came to Jerusalem: Why did God enable “learned men from eastern nations” to seek His Son? Why not Jewish religious leaders? Thoughts?

 Commentator Albert Barnes wrote:


Magi: “The original word here is μάγοι magoi, from which comes our word magician, now used in a bad sense, but not so in the original. The persons here denoted were philosophers, priests, or astronomers. They lived chiefly in Persia and Arabia. They were the learned men of the Eastern nations devoted to astronomy, to religion, and to medicine. They were held in high esteem by the Persian court, were admitted as counsellors, and followed the camps in war to give advice.

From the east: “It is not known whether they came from Persia or Arabia [see map (↓)]. Both countries might be denoted by the word East that is, east from Judea.” [©1834, *Notes on the Bible* by Albert Barnes. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/2-1.htm>]

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23



Map depicts the regions of Arabia and Persia. Bethlehem of Judah is located about 6-miles south of Jerusalem.
©Choysakanto; Source: <https://www.quora.com/Rome-always-seemed-to-be-at-war-with-Persia-Why?q=Rome%20always%20seemed%20to%20be%20at%20war%20with%20Persia.%20Why%3F> All rights reserved.

 Commentator Joseph Benson observed:

Magi from the east came to Jerusalem: “Probably Chaldean [those of Babylonian origin; Abram was originally from Ur in Chaldea (Babylonia), see map ↓] or Arabian astronomers, who, by divine grace, had been led from the knowledge of nature, to that of nature’s God. Although they are termed in the original, μάγοι, magi, we must not imagine that they were what we call magicians, or sorcerers; for the appellation was by no means appropriated in ancient times to such as practised wicked arts, but was frequently given to philosophers, or men of learning, particularly those that were curious in examining the works of nature, and observing the motions of the heavenly bodies.

From the east: “It is impossible to determine absolutely from what part of the East they came; although it is probable it was from Arabia, rather than Chaldea, for it lay east of Judea, and is mentioned by Tacitus as its boundary eastward, and certainly was famous for gold, frankincense, and myrrh, commodities which (see Matthew 2:11) they brought with them.

“Myrrh, according to Grotius, is not produced save in Arabia, where, if we may believe Pliny, it is found in such abundance, with other spices, that no other kinds of wood are in use, not even to make fires of, but such as are odoriferous. Neither is frankincense found save among the Sabæans, a part of Arabia. And as to gold, another commodity which they brought, this is well known to be produced in such great abundance in Arabia Felix, that the furniture of the whole nation shines with it.

“David and Solomon, to whom the promise of the land of Canaan was fully made good, extended their dominions over those countries, even to the Euphrates [River], and the inhabitants of them were chiefly the seed [descendants] of Abraham. Now it is more likely that these first fruits of the Gentiles should be brought to do homage to the King of the Jews, from a country that had done as much to David and Solomon, the types of Christ, than from a foreign and more remote nation; and that they should be of the seed of Abraham rather than of another race. Add to this, that Arabia abounded with magi, and was anciently so famous for wisdom, that, according to Porphyry, Pythagoras himself travelled thither to acquire it. Nay, if we may credit the learned Dr. Alix, the Jews were of opinion that there were prophets in the kingdoms of Saba and Arabia, and that they prophesied or taught successively, in the name of God, what they had received by tradition from the mouth of Abraham, of whose posterity they were, by Keturah [a wife of Abraham’s: Genesis 25:1].” [©about 1800, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments* by Joseph Benson. Text Courtesy of BibleSupport.com. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/2-1.htm>]

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23



In ~600 B.C., Chaldea extended from the east from near the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea on the west.

It encompassed the region known as the "Fertile Crescent".

Abraham (Abram) originated from "Ur of the Chaldeans" (near the Persian Gulf) — Genesis 11:28, 31.

Map source: ©Encyclopedia Britannica, All rights reserved. www.britannica.com

The following passage is reproduced (↓) for your convenience.

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

Q3. (Verse 2) **Where is the one . . . born king of the Jews:** Were the Jews expecting a Messiah? Was this expectation a result of a feeling? Or a prophecy? Or other? Would this expectation be limited to only the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem?

Were Jews expecting a Messiah? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

What caused this expectation? Feeling? Prophecy? Other? Why?

Was this expectation limited to only Jewish leadership? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Commentator Albert Barnes noted:

"There was at that time a prevalent expectation that some remarkable personage was about to appear in Judea. The Jews were anxiously looking for the coming of the Messiah. By computing the time mentioned by Daniel [Daniel 9:25-27 (↓)], they knew that the period was approaching when he would appear. This personage, they supposed would be a temporal prince [short-lived, worldly, secular-impact], and they were expecting that he would deliver them from Roman bondage [implied: military leader].


"It was natural that this expectation should spread into other countries. Many Jews at that time lived in Egypt,

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

in Rome, and in Greece; many, also, had gone to Eastern countries, and in every place they carried their sacred writings, and diffused [or mentioned, taught] the expectation that some remarkable person was about to appear.

“Suetonius, a Roman historian, speaking of this rumor, said: ‘An ancient and settled persuasion prevailed throughout the East that the Fates had decreed some one to proceed from Judea who should attain universal empire.’ Tacitus, another Roman historian, says: ‘Many were persuaded that it was contained in the ancient books of their priests, that at that very time the East should prevail, and that some one should proceed from Judea and possess the dominion.’

“Josephus also, and Philo, two Jewish historians, make mention of the same expectation. The fact that such a person was expected is clearly attested. Under this expectation these wise men came to do him homage, and inquired anxiously where he was born?” [©1834, Notes on the Bible by Albert Barnes. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/2-2.htm>]


 Based upon the prophecy of Daniel 9:25-27 (↓), Jewish religious leaders expected the Messiah to appear about the time of Jesus’ birth. However, they had a preconceived idea that the Messiah would be a military ruler and refused to consider a merciful, loving servant as God’s Son, as the Messiah. They also were monotheistic (meaning belief in one God) and, when Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), the Jewish religious leaders were enraged at Jesus because Jesus made Himself equal to God. See also StudySheet/lesson #1, page 1 for discussion on “The Godhead”.

Daniel 9:24-27 [International Children’s Bible (ICB)]

[The translators of the ICB version performed the arithmetic and converted the usual translations of “seven ‘sevens’ ” and “sixty-two ‘sevens’ ” into ‘years’, thereby making this passage easier to understand.]

²⁴ “God has ordered 490 years [seventy ‘sevens’] for your people and your holy city. These years are ordered for these reasons: to stop people from turning against God; to put an end to sin; to take away evil; to bring in goodness that continues forever; to make the vision and prophecy come true; and to appoint a most holy place.

²⁵ “Learn and understand these things. A command will come to rebuild Jerusalem. The time from this command until the appointed leader [or the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, also verse 26] comes will be 49 years [seven ‘sevens’] and 434 years [sixty-two ‘sevens’]. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and a trench around it. But it will be built in times of trouble. ²⁶ After the 434 years [sixty-two ‘sevens’] the appointed leader will be killed [Jesus was crucified]. He will have nothing. The people of the leader who is to come will destroy the city. They will also destroy the holy place [the Romans devastated Jerusalem in 67-70 A.D. and demolished the Temple]. That end will come like a flood. War will continue until the end. God has ordered that place to be completely destroyed. ²⁷ That leader will make an agreement with many people for 7 years [typically referred to as the ‘End Times’]. He will put a stop to offerings and sacrifices after 3½ years. And the horrible thing that destroys will be placed on the highest point of the Temple. But God has ordered him to be destroyed!”

 From an NIV Study Bible regarding Daniel 9:24-27:

Verses 24 & 25: “Each day of these 70 weeks (seventy ‘sevens’) may represent one year. The Bible often uses round numbers to make a point, not to give an exact count. For example, Jesus said we are to forgive others ‘seventy seven’ times (Matthew 18:22). He did not mean a literal 77 times only, but that we should be abundantly forgiving. Similarly, some scholars see this figure of 70 weeks as a figurative time period. Others, however, interpret this time period as a literal 70 weeks or 490 years, observing that Christ’s death came at the end of the 69 weeks (i.e., 483 years later). One interpretation places the 70th week as the seven years of the great tribulation, still in the future. Consequently, the number would symbolize both the first and second comings of Christ. . . .

Verse 26: “The Messiah, the Anointed One, will be rejected and killed by His own people. His perfect eternal Kingdom will come later.

Verses 26 & 27: “There has been much discussion on the numbers, times, and events in these verses, and there are three basic views: (1) the prophecy was fulfilled in the past at the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 168-167 B.C. (see 11:31); (2) it was fulfilled in the past at the destruction of the temple by the Roman general Titus in A.D. 70 when one million Jews were killed; or (3) it is still to be fulfilled in the future under the antichrist (see Matthew 24:15 ↓).” [©1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, The Life Application® Study Bible (NIV), ISBN: 9780842328753, published by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All rights reserved. Page 1496.]

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

Matthew 24:15 [NIV-1984]


[Jesus was speaking:] "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel — let the reader understand —

Q4. (Verse 2) ***We saw his star***: What was “His star”? A distant sun (a real star)? A super-nova? A comet? A meteor? Thoughts?

 Commentator Albert Barnes penned:

We saw his star in the east: “Among the ancients the appearance of a new star or comet was regarded as an omen of some remarkable event. Many such appearances are recorded by the Roman historians at the birth or death of distinguished men. Thus, they say that at the death of Julius Caesar a comet appeared in the heavens and shone seven days. These wise men also considered this as . . . evidence that the long-expected Prince was born.

“It is possible that they had been led to this belief by the prophecy of Balaam, Numbers 24:17 (↓), “There shall come a star out of Jacob,” etc. What this star was is not known. There have been many conjectures respecting it, but nothing is revealed concerning it. We are not to suppose that it was what we commonly mean by a star. The stars are vast bodies fixed in the heavens, and it is absurd to suppose that one of them was sent to guide the wise men. It is most probable that it was a luminous appearance, or meteor, such as we now see sometimes shoot from the sky, which the wise men saw, and which directed them to Jerusalem. It is possible that the same thing is meant which is mentioned by Luke 2:9; “The glory of the Lord shone round about them;” i. e., . . . a great light appeared shining around them. That light might have been visible from afar, and might have been seen by the wise men in the East.” [©1834, Notes on the Bible by Albert Barnes. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/2-2.htm>]

 Another commentator offered this explanation:

We saw his star in the east: “The simplest explanation of this is that a Star or Meteor appeared in the sky to guide the Magi on their way first to Jerusalem, then to Bethlehem. It is, however, quite possible that the Magi were divinely led to connect some calculated phenomenon with the birth of the “King of the Jews.” Among many conjectures may be mentioned one recently propounded by Prof. Lauth of Munich. It appears to be proved that the dog-star Sirius rose heliacally, i. e. appeared at sunrise, on the first of the Egyptian month Messori, for four years in succession, viz. 5, 4, 3, 2 [B.C.] before our era. The rising of this star of special brilliance on the first of this special month (Messori=birth of the prince) would have a marked significance. By the Magi it might well be connected with the prophecy of “the star of Jacob,” and become the cause of their journey to Jerusalem. This theory explains Herod’s edict, Matthew 2:16, for the destruction of all male children “from two years old and under,” for, as according to the date assigned to the Nativity of Christ, the arrival of the Magi at Jerusalem would coincide with the year 3 [B.C.] before the Christian era, the star had appeared for two years.” [©1882 and later, *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* by Cambridge University Press. Text Courtesy of BibleSupport.com. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/2-2.htm>]


Numbers 24:17 [International Children’s Bible (ICB)]

[An Old Testament prophecy]

I see someone who will come some day. I see someone who will come, but not soon. A star will come from Jacob. A ruler will rise from Israel. He will crush the heads of the Moabites. He will smash the skulls of the sons of Sheth [Or all the noisy boasters (NIV-2011 – a footnote)].

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

Day 2

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²and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

Q5. (Verse 2) ***King of the Jews***: If the Roman leader for the area King Herod was paranoid and unstable, how might he react to these three learned men asking to pay homage and worship the "king of the Jews"?

Q6. (Verse 2) ***We . . . have come to worship him***: This is an amazing proclamation from wise men who had travelled a great distance to reach Jerusalem. What must the Jewish religious leaders have thought?

Q7. (Verse 2) ***We . . . have come to worship him***: Even though Jesus was still a newborn, could this be considered the Lord's first outreach of His ministry? And, if the Magi were Gentiles, an outreach to Gentile people?

First outreach? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)


Gentile people? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.


Q8. (Verse 3) ***When King Herod heard this he was disturbed***: Why was King Herod "disturbed"?

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

Q9. (Verse 3) *When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him*: Why were the Jewish religious leaders “disturbed”? (Presumably, they should have been waiting for the Messiah with open arms to worship Him, to welcome Him.)

 If this commentator were a Jewish religious leader at the time — a Jew who is arrogantly self-righteous, legalistic, and full of pride — I would expect God’s messenger to come to the Jewish High Priest, flash credentials (perhaps, a miracle or two), overthrow the Roman government, and appoint the High Priest, myself, and all of my colleagues to positions of ruling power in His new government. The scenario described by the foreign wise men — who were dirty, uncouth, unworthy, and, perhaps, Gentiles — was anathema to me. “A baby!” “Never!” “King of the Jews!” “Impossible!” “Blasphemy!” “Sacrilege!”

Day 3

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today’s study.

⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶ " 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.' " [Micah 5:2, 4 reproduced on page 1 (↑).]

Q10. (Verse 4) *He had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law*: Why did King Herod command an audience with the Jewish religious leaders?

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

Q11. (Verse 7) ***Herod called the Magi secretly***: Why did King Herod want a secret meeting with the Magi?


Q12. (Verse 7) ***Found out . . . the exact time the star had appeared***: Why did King Herod want to know the "exact time the star had appeared"?

Q13. (Verse 8) ***So that I too may go and worship him***: Based on what you know and can surmise about King Herod, do you think his statement to "worship Him" was truth or a lie?

Truth? Or a lie? Why?

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

Q14. (Verse 9) The Magi would have been important people in their country. Why did Herod, or for that matter the Jewish religious leaders, not send a companion(s) to accompany them? To escort them?


 "The words [of verse 9] would seem to imply that they started in the evening, and, as they started, saw the star in the direction of Bethlehem. In popular language it served to guide them, and so led them on. We need not suppose that they found the child whom they sought in the "manger" described by St. Luke. There had been time for the crowds that had been gathered by the census to disperse, and Joseph and Mary may have found a house in which they could

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

lodge. The expectations that connected Bethlehem with the coming of the Christ might naturally lead them to remain there at least for a season.” [©about 1880, Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, edited by Charles J. Ellicott. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/2-9.htm>]

- Q15. (Verse 10) **The star**: The star had been their companion for the duration of their travel, leading them and encouraging them with its constancy. We can only imagine how the Magi knew they had reached the end of their journey. Can you imagine and then describe their joy?
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Day 4

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

- Q16. Imagine: what must Mary and stepfather Joseph have thought when these important foreign travelers came before their Son to worship Him and give Him lavish gifts. Was there significance to “gold and of incense and of myrrh”?

Gold?

.....

Incense (or Frankincense)?

.....

Myrrh?

.....

 The commentator Charles Ellicott wrote:

Gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh: “These were natural enough as the traditional gifts of homage to a ruler. Compare the gifts sent by Jacob to Joseph (Genesis 43:11), and Psalm 45:8, for the myrrh and spices; Psalm 72:15, for the gold; Isaiah 60:6, for gold and incense. The patristic interpretation [relating to the fathers of the early Christian church or their writings] of the gifts as significant — the gold, of kingly power; the incense, of Divinity; the myrrh, of death and embalmment — interesting as it is, cannot be assumed to have been definitely present to the mind of the Evangelist [Matthew].

“It is noticeable that there is here no mention of Joseph. Looking to his prominence in St. Matthew's narrative, we must assume that his absence on the night of their arrival was accidental [or unimportant to the narrative].” [©about 1880, *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, edited by Charles J. Ellicott. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/2-11.htm>]

 Albert Barnes commented:

Worshipped him: “Did him homage as King of the Jews. . . .

Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold: “[Gold was] presented to him as King

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

of the Jews, because they supposed he was to be a distinguished prince and conqueror. It was customary in the East to show respect for persons of distinction by making presents or offerings of this kind. See Genesis 32:14; Genesis 43:11; 1 Samuel 10:27; 1 Kings 10:2; Psalm 72:10-15. This custom is still common in the East, and it is everywhere there unusual to approach a person of distinguished rank without a valuable present.

Incense (or Frankincense): “Frankincense is a white resin or gum. It is obtained from a tree by making incisions in the bark, and suffering the gum to flow out. It is highly odoriferous or fragrant when burned, and was therefore used in worship, where it was burned as a pleasant offering to God. See Exodus 30:8; Leviticus 16:12. It is found in the East Indies, but chiefly in Arabia; and hence it has been supposed probable that the wise men came from Arabia.

Myrrh: “This was also a production of Arabia, and was obtained from a tree in the same manner as frankincense. The name denotes bitterness, and was given to it on account of its great bitterness. It was used chiefly in embalming the dead, because it had the property of preserving dead bodies from putrefaction. Compare John 19:39, it was much used in Egypt and in Judea. It was obtained from a thorny tree, which grows 8 or 9 feet high. It was at an early period an article of commerce Genesis 37:25, and was an ingredient of the holy ointment, Exodus 30:23. It was also used as an agreeable perfume, Esther 2:12; Psalm 45:8; Proverbs 7:17. It was also sometimes mingled with wine to form an article of drink. Such a drink was given to our Saviour, when about to be crucified, as a stupefying potion, Mark 15:23; compare Matthew 27:34.

“The offerings here referred to were made because they were the most valuable which the country of the Magi or wise men produced. They were tokens of respect and homage which they paid to the new-born King of the Jews. They evinced their high regard for him, and their belief that he was to be an illustrious prince; and the fact that their deed is recorded with approbation shows us that we should offer our most valuable possessions, our all, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Wise men came from far to do him homage, and bowed down, and presented their best gifts and offerings. It is right that we give to him also our hearts, our property, our all.” [©1834, *Notes on the Bible* by Albert Barnes. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/2-11.htm>]

¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Q17. (Speculation) After following the star and finally visiting the baby, the Magi undoubtedly reflected on their just concluded homage to the baby, born “king of the Jews”. Were they awestruck, or did they consider their journey a waste of time? Thoughts?

Awestruck? A waste of time? Thoughts?

Q18. **Warned in a dream:** (Speculation) What were the results of the dream? Did only one of the Magi receive the dream? How did they know the dream was divinely inspired?


Dream results?

Did only one dream? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Was the dream divinely inspired? Thoughts?

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

Day 5


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The Messiah's Family Flee to Egypt

¹³ When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

Q19. Did the Magi change the financial circumstances of Joseph and Mary?

Yes? }
No? } Why did you circle that answer?

 Matthew severely abridged his narration of the early years of our Savior. There are details, fascinating details I'm sure, of the life of Jesus, from infant to manhood, of which we know nothing.

That said, according to Luke's account, Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day. Then, when Mary completed her purification, she and Joseph presumably walked the relatively short distance from Bethlehem to Jerusalem — a walk of roughly 5-6 miles (8-9 km) from Bethlehem to the Temple in Jerusalem. We must remember that walking was the primary mode of transportation at the time, although Joseph could have placed his wife and baby on the back of a donkey.

So, as Luke reported (Luke 2:21-23) "²¹ On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. ²² [Then,] When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord')".

God gave Moses a number of laws. Leviticus 12:1-8 specifies God's expectations regarding a new mother and her baby, including the timing of circumcision (on the 8th day); the mother's purification of forty-days for boys, longer for the birth of a girl, (which serves in part to protect the new mother from an ardent husband); and the presentation of the baby, along with an offering, to a temple priest.

The point is this: we today are so interested by the life and times of Jesus that we believe it is critically important to know the details of Jesus' pre-ministry life. The Apostle John wrote in the last verse (John 21:25 ESV) of his letter: "Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written". God knows what we need for us to understand His plan of salvation through His Son Christ Jesus of Nazareth. God knows where our focus should be. While we have a desire to know the life and times of Jesus in excruciating detail, God knows what we truly need. We must be content with His choice.

If we attempt to place these early events into a sequence, it would be similar to this imprecise list. We know from Scripture that these events occurred, we just do not know the precise sequence. Some events are recorded here in Matthew, while others were recorded in Luke:

- † Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem to be counted in the Roman census.
- † Mary gives birth to a baby boy in a stable, because there is no room for them in the inn.
- † Shepherds are called by angels, who say: Come to the stable, and worship your newborn Messiah.
- † Magi arrive in Jerusalem and inquire as to where the Messiah ("King of the Jews") is to be born.
- † The Roman King Herod secretly asks the Magi to return to him and identify the baby.
- † The baby boy is circumcised and given the name Jesus.
- † Magi arrive in Bethlehem, worship the baby boy, and bestow prestigious gifts of wealth.
- † Magi receive a vision and depart for their homeland.
- † Magi bypass Jerusalem, thereby ignoring King Herod's request to identify the baby.

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

- † King Herod waits for the Magi to return.
- † Purification ends and Jesus is presented to a priest at the temple in Jerusalem along with a sacrifice.
- † At the temple, the devout Simeon thanks God for Jesus the Messiah; as did Anna the prophetess.
- † Joseph receives a vision of imminent harm to baby Jesus and that they must escape to Egypt.
- † Joseph immediately obeys, and they begin their hurried journey to Egypt.
- † Paranoid King Herod commands that all baby boys in Bethlehem, two-years old or younger, be killed.
- † After King Herod dies, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus return from Egypt, settling in Nazareth.

¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."


Q20. Did Joseph obey the Lord? Did Joseph delay in his obedience?

Did Joseph obey? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Did Joseph delay? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Q21. ***Took the child and his mother during the night:*** Is there any significance in the sequence?

Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

 Usually, we would read, "mother and her child", with the adult being more significant in the narrative. However, in this case it is "the child and his mother". Matthew reveres the baby Jesus and, therefore, the baby is the central character in this story.


Q22. ***Fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet:*** Is it important that prophecy is fulfilled? Why?

Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Hosea 11:1 [NIV-1984]

[Scholars believe Hosea was written between 760 and 720 B.C.]

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

 The Jewish religious leaders were "book smart". They knew the Scriptures, which we today call the Old Testament.

It is hard for this commentator to understand how they can know all of these Old Testament prophecies and ignore Jesus the Messiah, who came almost to the day as prophesied in Daniel, speaking truth and full of grace (He bestowed "grace upon grace" - ESV). The veil over their hearts (2 Corinthians 3:14 ↓) must be completely opaque; it is not even translucent; it does not have the tiniest of pinpricks. Had the Jewish religious leaders performed any kind of investigation regarding the claims of Jesus, they would have seen so many prophecies fulfilled by Him, by His life. Matthew incorporates many such Old Testament prophecies into his narrative. So far, we have discussed several — there are more to come in later StudySheets.

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

Psalms 43:3 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!

John 1:16-17 [International Children's Bible (ICB)]

¹⁶ The Word was full of grace and truth. From him we all received more and more blessings. ¹⁷ The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:14 [NIV-1984]

But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.

¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ¹⁸ "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

Q23. What caused Herod to issue such a terrible command?

Q24. What one word would you use to describe Herod's command?

Q25. Jesus promised persecution. Could this be the first recorded persecution against the Messiah?

Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Q26. Why did God allow persecution to occur against babies — presumably, hundreds of babies?



The commentator Matthew Henry opined:

"Herod killed all the male children, not only in Bethlehem, but in all the villages of that city. Unbridled wrath,


Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

armed with an unlawful power, often carries men to absurd cruelties. It was no unrighteous thing with God to permit this; every life is forfeited to his justice as soon as it begins. The diseases and deaths of little children are proofs of original sin. But the murder of these infants was their martyrdom. How early did persecution against Christ and his kingdom begin! Herod now thought that he had baffled the Old Testament prophecies, and the efforts of the wise men [Magi] in finding Christ; but whatever crafty, cruel devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord shall stand.” [©1706, Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible by Matthew Henry; <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/2-15.htm>]

Psalm 139:16^b [NIV-1984]

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Day 6

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

The Messiah's Family Returns To Nazareth


¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰ and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."


²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.

^{22a} But when he heard that Archelaus [R-kăy-lūs] was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.

Q27. *He was afraid to go there:* Was Joseph justified in his suspicion and fear?

Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

 ***But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod:*** “Archelaus succeeded to [rule] Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; but [Caesar] Augustus refused him the title of king till it should be seen how he conducted himself; giving him only the title of ethnarch [Josephus, Antiquities, 17.11,4]. Above this, however, he never rose. The people, indeed, recognized him as his father's successor; and so, it is here said that he ‘reigned in the room of his father Herod.’ But, after ten years' defiance of the Jewish law and cruel tyranny, the people lodged heavy complaints against him, and the emperor banished him to Vienne in Gaul, reducing Judea again to a Roman province.” [©1882, *A Commentary, Critical, Practical, and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments* by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/2-22.htm>]

 Archelaus: “Strictly speaking, this prince, who, under his father's will (made just before his death), governed Judæa, Samaria, and Idumæa, was never recognised as a king by the Roman Emperor, but received the inferior title of Ethnarch.

“Antipas had Galilee and Peræa, Philip the region of Trachonitis. Popularly, however, the higher title was still used of him as we find it in [Matthew] 14:9 of the Tetrarch Antipas. The character of Archelaus was as cruel and treacherous as that of his father, and within a few months after his accession, he sent in his horsemen to disperse a

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

multitude, and slew not less than 3,000 men.

“The temper of Antipas on the other hand was as yet looked on as milder. This, and possibly his absence from Galilee on a visit to Rome, may well have led Joseph to turn to that region as offering a prospect of greater safety.... Nine years later the oppression of Archelaus became so intolerable that both Jews and Samaritans complained of him to the Emperor, and he was deposed and banished to Gaul.” [©about 1880, Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, edited by Charles J. Ellicott. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/2-22.htm>]

^{22b} Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee,
²³ and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth [Nă-ză-rěth] [see map (↓)].

So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene [Nă-ză-rēen]."

Q28. Was there any significance to Nazareth? Why would Joseph and Mary decide to settle there?

Luke 1:26-27 [NIV-1984]

²⁶ In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

Luke 2:1-5 [NIV-1984]

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to his own town to register.


⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Luke 2:39 [NIV-1984]

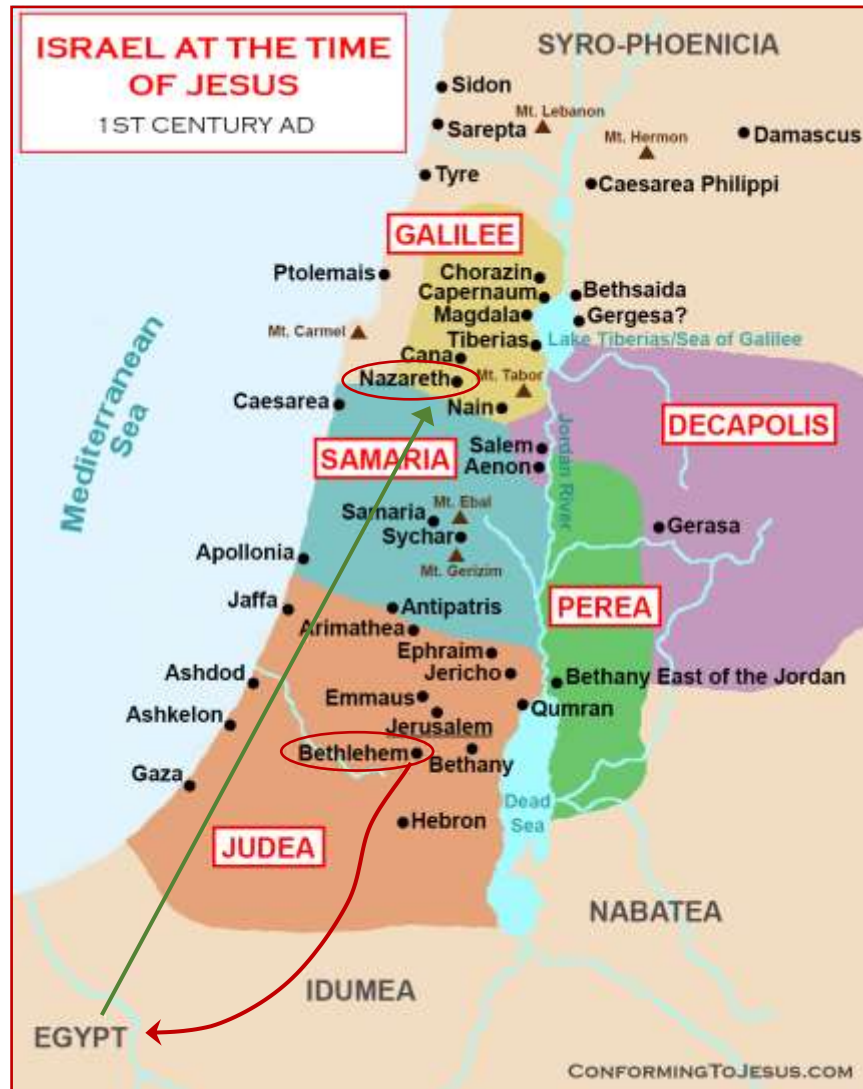
When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

Luke 4:14-16 [NIV-1984]

¹⁴ Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵ He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. ¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.

 **He withdrew to the district of Galilee:** “Galilee being the northern, Judea the southern, and Samaria the central province. The province of Galilee was under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, the brother of Archelaus, his father having left him that and Perea, on the east side of the Jordan, as his share of the kingdom, with the title of tetrarch, which [Caesar] Augustus confirmed. Though crafty and licentious, according to Josephus — precisely what the Gospel history shows him to be . . . he was of a less cruel disposition than Archelaus; and Nazareth being a good way off from the seat of government, and considerably secluded, it was safer to settle there.” [Jamieson-Fausset-Brown: ibid.]

Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23




Nazareth of Galilee; Bethlehem of Judea.

Arrows depict general direction to Egypt, and from Egypt, not the route of travel.


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 **So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets:** A student may wonder which Old Testament prophet spoke this prophecy. It is easy to miss — the word ‘prophets’ is plural, not singular. This indicates that Matthew was speaking in generalities when he penned (quilled) this narrative.

This commentator was born in Wisconsin. When he was ten-years old, his parents moved to Minnesota and he has since spent sixty-plus years as a full-time Minnesota resident; he considers himself a Minnesotan.

While the book-smart Jewish religious leaders could have easily determined (via the Roman census) Jesus’ birthplace, which would have unequivocally shown that Jesus fulfilled Scripture — Micah 5:2, 4 on page 1, they ignored this fact, along with many other signs that demonstrated fulfillment of Messianic-related prophecies.

 The commentator Adam Clark wrote extensively on this verse. A partial transcript of his essay is reproduced:

“It is difficult to ascertain by what ‘prophets’ this was spoken. The margin usually refers to Judges 13:5, where the angel, foretelling the birth of Samson, says, ‘No razor shall come upon his head; for the child shall be a Nazarite (נזיר nezir) unto God from the womb.’ The second passage usually referred to is Isaiah 11:1: ‘There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch (נצר netser) shall grow out of his roots.’ That this refers to Christ, there is no doubt. Jeremiah, Jeremiah 23:5, is supposed to speak in the same language: ‘I will raise unto David a righteous Branch’: but here the word is צמח tsemach, not נצר netser; and it is the same in the parallel place, Zechariah 3:8; Zechariah 6:12; therefore, these two prophets cannot be referred to; but the passages in Judges and Isaiah may


Lesson 2: Matthew 2:1-23

have been in the eye of the evangelist [Matthew], as well as the whole institution relative to the Nazarite (נזיר nezir) delivered at large, Num. 6 [↓] . . .

“[Per Numbers 6] As the Nazarite was the most pure and perfect institution under the law, it is possible that God intended to point out by it, not only the perfection of our Lord, but also the purity of his followers. And it is likely that, before St. Matthew wrote this Gospel, those afterwards called Christians bore the appellation of Nazarites, or Nazoreans, for so the Greek word, Ναζωραῖος , should be written. Leaving the spiritual reference out of the question, the Nazarene or Nazorean here may mean simply an inhabitant or person of Nazareth; as Galilean does a person or inhabitant of Galilee. The evangelist evidently designed to state, that neither the sojourning at Nazareth, nor our Lord being called a Nazarene, were fortuitous events, but were wisely determined and provided for in the providence of God; and therefore, foretold by inspired men, or fore-represented by significant institutions.” [©Public Domain, Commentary on the Bible by Adam Clarke (b. 1760 or 1762, d. 1832). Published in 6 volumes during the period 1810-1826 in Liverpool. <https://bibleportal.com/commentary/section/adam-clark/557745>]

Numbers 6:1-4 [NIV-1984]

¹ The Lord said to Moses, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of separation to the Lord as a Nazirite, ³ he must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or from other fermented drink. He must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. ⁴ As long as he is a Nazirite, he must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins.

 This commentator finds it interesting that even two-millennia ago that, which had been defined as good, became detestable to some groups of people. We see the change between the meaning inherent in 'Nazareth' as used in the Old Testament versus 'Nazareth' in Jesus' time. See Nathanael's comment to his friend Philip in John 1:46:

John 1:46 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, "**Can anything good come out of Nazareth?**"

Philip said to him, "Come and see."

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