

SEARCHING FOR A CHILD Sunday School- December 27, 2009

Unifying Topic: Magi Confirm Messiah's Birth

Lesson Text

I. Wise Men Search for Jesus (Matthew 2:7-9)

II. Innocent Children Suffer (Matthew 2:16-18)

III. Returning to Galilee (Matthew 2:19-23)

The Main Thought: When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. (Matthew 2:10, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People search for something meaningful in their lives. What is worth searching for? The Magi searched for, found, and confirmed the truth of the Messiah.

Lesson Aim: To help students appreciate how God protected His Son Jesus and how He still protects His children today.

Life aim: To teach how God wants us to have faith in his son Jesus and to follow His will and not be misled by those who do not truly love Christ, even though they may pretend to believe in Him.

2:7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

2:8 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.

2:9 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.

2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

2:17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying,

2:18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

2:19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

2:20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

2:21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

2:22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

HISTORY:

Matthew 2:1-6

12:1-2 Magi From The East

The Magi arrived in Jerusalem after Jesus was born. What are Magi? They are not "kings of Orient who traversed afar." The Greek word is "MAG-os," which was the name given by many of the eastern cultures like the Babylonians, Chaldeans, Medes, and Persians, to their wise men. It included such varied job descriptions as teachers, priests, physicians, astrologers, and sorcerers.

We Saw His Star

The Magi were asking around Jerusalem, *Matt. 2:2 "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east..."* No doubt they were familiar with Balaam's prophecy. *Num. 24:17 "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel..."* "Shall come forth" is the Hebrew word, "daw-RAK," which means "to tread, walk, go out, make linear movement. In the Magi's history, it seems they'd been taught to look for a star rising out of Jacob in linear movement over an exact position on the horizon - towards Jerusalem.

They saw this star appear and believed it announced the birth of the King of Jews - the first one since

¹ <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/40-Matthew/Matthew0201.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

the Babylonian Captivity in the days of Daniel about 600 years earlier.

2:3 Herod Heard

Many of us have the idea that the Magi went straight to Herod and said, "Where is the newborn king?" In fact, the Magi were asking around town where he was, and word of this came to Herod. As we read the next few verses, we see that it was only after Herod had a meeting with the Scribes and Chief Priests did he talk with the Magi. Why was Herod troubled at what the Magi were asking? Because he himself had been given the title "King of the Jews" from Augustus Caesar. The Magi were asking, *Matt. 2:2* "Where is He who has been Born King of the Jews...?" Herod took this as a personal attack, and knew that one born with the right to be King of the Jews would mean political upheaval.

2:4-6 Messiah To Be Born In Bethlehem

Herod had known that the Jews believed the Messiah was coming. Now that he's heard the Messiah may have been born, he has a plan. Being in Jerusalem, he had access to the most biblically knowledgeable people on the earth. And so he gathered the scribes and chief priests together, asking them where this competitor was supposed to be born. They quoted Micah's prophecy to him: *Mic. 5:2* "But as for you, Bethlehem Ef-RAW-thaw, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." The ruler in Israel was to come from Bethlehem in Judah.

LESSON:

Matthew 2:7-9: Wise Men Search for Jesus

2:7-8 Secretly Calling The Magi

Having already formulated his plan of action, Herod secretly called the Magi. "Secretly" is "LATH-rah," meaning that it was done in a way that was hidden, to keep others ignorant of what he was doing. Herod knew that nothing positive could be accomplished having all of Jerusalem knowing that he was meeting with the Magi! He determined from them exactly when the star had appeared. "Ak-ree-BO-o" means to be "strictly exact, precisely and rigorously careful." Herod wanted to know as precisely as possible when that star appeared. He told them that his intention was to worship the Child, but his plan was murder. It was Herod who sent the Magi to Bethlehem - they didn't know where else but Jerusalem to look. God used an evil man, Herod (without his knowing it), to help the wise men in their search*.

NOTE:

*God will meet the need of any man who faithfully searches and does all he can, the man who continues on and refuses to quit.

2:9 The Star

Now, the star which they had seen in their home country appears again—the wise men's unexpected sign. And it stood over the location they were looking for. It was in a fixed position above the house where the young child was.

Matthew 2:16-18: Innocent Children Suffer

2:16-18 Herod Slew The Male Children

The time Herod had determined from the Magi was two years. When he realized he'd been tricked and would not know which child was believed to be the Messiah, he simply had them all killed. This was also a partial fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, with Matthew telling us that Jeremiah 31:15 came true on that day.

Matthew 2:19-23: Returning to Galilee

2:19-23 Jesus Is A Nazarene

The angel had told Joseph, *Matt. 2:13* "...flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you..." Now Joseph is told: it's time to go back to Israel. But the angel doesn't tell him where in Israel to go. Herod's sons Archelaus** was <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

ruling in Judea, and Joseph decided that it might be dangerous to live there. He moved the family up north into Galilee instead, settling in the city of Nazareth. Again, this was a fulfillment of prophecy. But I want you to notice Joseph's predicament in this situation. His life had to follow a certain path:

- He had to go to Bethlehem, for Jesus must be born there.
- He had to go to Egypt, for Jesus had to be called out of Egypt***.
- He had to go to Nazareth, for Jesus had to be called a Nazarene.

NOTE:

* Believers should wait upon God before acting. Waiting upon God is part of obedience, and God directs the obedient person time and again.

**Archeiaus, son of Herod the Great, followed in the steps of his father. And right after assuming his throne he had three thousand of the most influential Jewish people murdered.

***Throughout scripture, Egypt is a type of the world and it symbolizes enslavement and bondage. Believer's are in Egypt, yet not of Egypt. As Jesus Christ was sent into Egypt (the world) so believers are sent into the world. As Jesus was "called out of Egypt" so believers are called out of the world.

How did all this happen, especially considering that Joseph had no idea? After all, he was simply living his life. He had no choice about the trip to Bethlehem. It was a governmental mandate that he return to his hometown for the census. He was supernaturally told to go to Egypt and later to return to Israel by the angel in the dreams. His journey to Nazareth was simply one of common sense, avoiding possible trouble.

SUMMARY:

The Magi themselves faced a decision: Were they going to pursue the star? At what cost and for how long? Were they going to move out of their comfort zone in order to search for something small yet priceless? The Magi might have taken months, even over a year, to make the trip to see Jesus. We might conclude that Jesus was almost two years old at this time because we may be sure that King Herod did not wait two years before he began his mission to destroy the child. He was searching also for the child for the wrong reason. Actually, the ancient Greek Scriptures indicate Herod slew the boys of Bethlehem and its surrounding areas. He determines the birth date by the time the Magi perceived the star. The Magi met Herod, we do not read that they worshipped him. But, when they found the child (two years old), with his mother in their house, these great men fell on their faces before him. To this child they gave the honor due, to a King. What Herod craved, the baby received. Somehow they knew it was "His" star—a special light from God sent to direct the Magi to Jesus; a single star; a star hidden among many others, but so different; a star that would lead them to the Light of the World. And they were overjoyed when they saw it. It led them to the very home where Mary and Joseph were taking care of the child, JESUS.

APPLICATION:

God's hand was in every turn, in every decision. Sometimes we find ourselves with no choice. The Air Force gives you orders to the Middle East - now you know God's will. Sometimes God will intervene supernaturally to tell you which way to go, which decision to make - now you know God's will. And sometimes, in the course of your Christian walk, you make your best guess at doing what is right - and now you know God's will.

If you're facing decisions today, at a fork in the road, at a possible turning point, simply pray and seek the Lord. If He knows you're going to make the right decision, He'll let you make it. If He needs to intervene supernaturally, He will. And if He needs to give you no choice in the matter, He'll do that as well. Will we pursue Jesus? Will we recognize the amazing signs God places around you that point to the reality of the God-Man, Jesus Christ? Will you journey to get to know Him?