



"The Early Years of Jesus"
Matthew 2:1-23
Sermon Date: September 26th, 2010

Prayer:

For many of us, Matthew chapter 2 is a very familiar passage. May it never be that any passage of Scripture would become "old news" to us. Ask the Lord to help you see this section of Scripture with fresh eyes and a softened heart.

Review:

Last week we looked at Matthew 1:18-25 where we read about Joseph's character displayed in his obedience. We also learned of Christ's divinity and humanity, and the importance of the literal virgin birth in affirming those truths. Read the account of the virgin birth (1:18-25) again prior to reading chapter 2.

Scripture:

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

*⁶" 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.' "*

⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

¹³Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸“A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

¹⁹ But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” ²¹ And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³ And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Handling the Word:

1. Based on what you just read in Matthew 2, circle the correct answer to the questions below. Place an X through the answer that you have heard or seen in a story about the birth of Christ but does not actually match the story conveyed in Scripture.

Where was Jesus born?

- A. Bethlehem
- B. Nazareth
- C. Galilee
- D. Egypt

Before whom did a multitude of Angels appear praising God? (Refer to Luke 2 as well)

- A. The wise men
- B. King Herod
- C. The shepherds
- D. Both A and B

How many wise men brought gifts to Jesus?

- A. 2
- B. 3
- C. 4
- D. Unknown

Where did the wise men visit Jesus?

- A. In a stable
- B. In a home
- C. In the Inn
- D. Somewhere in Egypt

2. Is it important that we understand and accurately recount the story of the birth of Jesus as it appears in Scripture? What are some of the potential consequences of adding pieces to the story that are “traditions” rather than accurate reflections of the Biblical account?

3. Read Matthew 2 slowly and deliberately two additional times. Read Luke’s account of the birth of Christ slowly and deliberately (Luke 2:1-40). Note anything significant that is recorded in Luke that is not recorded in Matthew.

4. Look up the following passages in the Old Testament and note where they are found in chapter 2.

Numbers 24:17 -

Isaiah 60:1-6 -

Jeremiah 31:15 -

Hosea 11:1 -

5. What is the main theme of Matthew 2?

Understanding and Applying:

1. The wise men recognized the star as a sign pointing to the coming of the “king of the Jews” (v.2). As a result of their intellectual understanding, what was their physical response? The chief priests and scribes, on the other hand, knew what the sign of the star meant intellectually (v. 4-5), but their physical response was very different. What was their physical response?

2. Are you responding to Christ’s coming to this earth with mere intellectual assent, as the chief priests and scribes did? Or are you responding as the wise men did, with not merely an intellectual acknowledgment, but also with physical action (2 Cor. 5:14-15, James 1:22-25)? In what ways are you allowing your knowledge of Christ to result in obedience to Him?

3. What is the significance of Matthew pointing out that the wise men, who were gentiles, were amongst the first to come and worship Jesus - the King of the Jews? (Matt. 28:19)

4. List some possible reasons and/or justifications as to why the chief priests and scribes may not have wanted to seek out the one that was born in Bethlehem. What are some of the reasons and/or justifications for people who refuse to seek out Jesus Christ today?

5. Matthew 2:3 tells us that “When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him”. Why would Herod have been troubled by the announcement that the king of the Jews had been born? To what lengths did Herod go to ensure that he maintained control over his kingdom?

6. In what ways are you, like Herod, trying to protect what you see as control over your life, instead of unreservedly handing your life over to the true King, Jesus Christ? Read Psalm 2 and write down the ways in which this Psalm warns and admonishes against this resistance toward the Lord.

7. Verse 10 tells us that when the wise men saw the star coming to rest over the place where Christ was “they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.” Why would they have responded in that way? What was the response of the wise men when they finally saw Jesus?

8. What was your response when you finally understood who Christ was and what He had done for you? Do you now worship Him for who He is, a gift of divine grace to you a sinner (Isaiah 9:6, Matt.20:26-28)?

9. Several different events occur in verses 13 through 23, each one ending with Matthew pointing out that it happened in order to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet[s]. Describe the ways in which we see God’s Sovereignty clearly displayed in the events surrounding Christ’s birth and the fulfillment of prophecy.