

Born King of the Jews Matthews 2:1-12

We are eager to learn as much as we can about the character of this king and the nature of His rule. Matthew includes this remarkable incident surrounding the birth of our Lord to answer these questions. He emphasizes **three things**:

1. **Christ is the true Messiah. Vv. 1-2.** He begins with **“after the birth.”** He is continuing the thought in a way that exhibits the *external* markers that corresponds to the *private* revelation given to Joseph and Mary. **He offers three prophetic markers:**

a. **Geographic.** The mention of **“Bethlehem of Judea”** is not due to a mere interest in the area.

i. **It is a geographic marker.** It is where the Messiah must be born. **Cf. Vv. 4-6; Mic. 5:2; 2Sa. 5:2.** Though He came to be especially associated with Nazareth He was in fact born in Bethlehem as Luke records.

ii. **It is a dynastic marker.** It is more than a geographic marker. It is significant because it is **“the city of David.”** A **“son of David”** born there is born rightful **“king of the Jews”** a title that will re-emerge again. **Cf. Matt. 27:11.**

b. **Political.** There are **two prophetic political markers:**

i. It was **“in the days of Herod the king.”** Herod alone of His descendants could be said to be king. The title was sometime given the tetrarch but they were not kings, Herod was. He was made king of Judea in 40BC. He was not a Jew, his father was an Idumian, his mother Arabian. He was a hated, irreligious tyrant, great and building and murder. Prophecy said the Messiah would come in the midst of an illegitimate reign. **Cf. Ezek. 21:26-27.**

ii. **The Magi.** The visit of these foreign dignitaries to the **“son of David”** (we aren’t specifically told they are kings) obviously calls to mind the queen of Sheba’s visit to Solomon. **Cf. Ps. 72:10-11; Isa. 60:1-7.**

c. **Cosmic.** The birth of kings being heralded by stars was a common thought in the ANE. This more likely fulfills **Num. 24:17-19.** **“A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel”** referred to a ruler who would come and destroy Israel’s enemies and take possession of the land of Moab and Edom. It was partially fulfilled under David foreshadowing the victory of **“the son of David.”**

2. **That He is a Messiah for all peoples.** Christ is Lord of all peoples. The coming of the Magi indicates this. The **“his people”** of **1:21** will not only be those among the **“sons of Israel.”** It is

only *introduced* here but it will be **one of the central themes**. **Cf. Matt. 28.**

a. The centurion's son. **Cf. Matt. 8:5-13.**

b. The Canaanite Woman. **Cf. Matt. 15:21-28.**

3. How He is to be received. Matthew sets before us a variety of responses to Christ that will be **developed through his work**.

a. Hostility. Herod knows the babe is the Christ and therefore rightful ruler, but He blasphemously opposes Him. One man said he was more interested in saving his throne than saving his soul.

b. Cowardice. Jerusalem was troubled with Herod. This is a conflict that will intensify throughout the narrative. They feared the anger of Herod. Later it would be Rome. They dreaded His coming because it would disturb the peace they enjoyed.

c. Dead Orthodoxy. The chief priest and scribes were able to tell where Christ would be born but didn't care enough to go investigate. They wouldn't even travel the six miles to see if it was so.

d. Worship. Guided by the star the magi search and find the Christ. We can imagine how surprised they were to find Him in so low an estate. Yet, they prostrate themselves before him in lowly worship and proceed to offer Him gifts.

Three are singled out: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Christians have seen symbolic meanings in them: gold for royalty, frankincense for deity and myrrh pointing to suffering.

Matthew doesn't say. Clearly all three were valuable and together they comprised a gift worthy of a king. What is clear is that we are meant to come to Him as these gentile magi did. Let's go to Him.... We cannot offer Him gold etc. We can give Him our hearts.