

## Being Warned of God

### Matthew 2:1 – 11

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~ There are myriad misconceptions that have been taught about Christmas. One of those is the account of the wise men. In this report, these wise men that we have heard so much about just happen to roll through where we are in our Spiritual Safari. These wise men bring us a spiritual truth that, even for the non-regular-safari adventurer, you're not going to want to miss this. As we previously reported, each of the Gospels is unique in that each speaks to a specific group of people. This Gospel of Matthew is written to the nation Israel. It is for religious people. Matthew records the fulfillment of four epic prophecies. The entire purpose of God writing chapter two is for no other reason than revealing those prophecies. We have several Old Testament Scriptures that are fulfilled at the birth of Jesus. We're going to gather each one up individually and examine how they were fulfilled at the birth of Christ. There were many sincere people back in this day who asked themselves: how could all of this possibly be fulfilled? It just seemed impossible to them – because it was impossible without supernatural, divine intervention....

*Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. 3 Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travailed hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel? 4 And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth ~*

*Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt ~*

*Jeremiah 31:15 Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not ~*

*Isaiah 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots ~*

Now, to put a lid on chapter two, we find Jesus went to Nazareth. All of that fulfilled the prophecy we have before us today. Jesus is to be called a Nazarene; but there is still a legitimate question lurking, though – because most people won't find what I have said satisfactory: how can all of this eschatology be fulfilled by one little baby? Matthew lays out quite easily and accurately how these were all literally fulfilled without putting any strain on other prophecy or secular history. It just seems to all happen naturally; exactly how God said it would come about. Today, we have several prophecies that relate to the Second Advent of Christ. There seems to be utter confusion caused by criss-crossing connections concerning correlating the First Advent and the Second Advent in Scriptural eschatological accounts today. It's almost never presented correctly. It is difficult to look at future prophecy and contemplate the way in which it could possibly be fulfilled. Even for those of us sincerely studying the Bible it all looks like a huge jigsaw puzzle right now. But the day will come when we look back and wonder why we didn't see it at the time – as it was always so clear and meaningful. Well, that's why Matthew recorded these things for us....

***1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,***

***2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.***

***3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.***

~ So, here come the wise men and they want to know where Jesus is. Herod has but one concern – eliminating the competition. Rebellion is the one thing Herod had no intentions of tolerating. Herod goes on high alert when these wise men arrive in town asking this crazy question about “....where another king is.” Now, does verse one say, behold, there came “three”

wise men from the east? I have seen hundreds of different Christmas cards and have heard dozens of accounts and seen reenactments of this and they all have three wise men coming to town. I am absolutely sure more people know more about Christmas from the cards than they ever bothered to learn from the Bible. Our modern-day American Christmas account is just nothing BUT inaccuracies, actually!

Three wise men wouldn't have disturbed Herod's day, to be sure. I have no idea how many there really were, but if I had to guess, I would say more like three thousand. Even 300 would have made a disturbance but three would never have been noticed. These wise men, evidently, had been studying the stars and came from all sections of the known world. Of course, this group of however many wise men there were, are looking for the same thing – a King. So, Herod is troubled by that. Let's continue from the east with the wise men and my next statement may be unsettling to some of you dear readers. The wise men say they have the star IN the east and IN poetry we're talking about the Eastern Star – the problem is: if this had been an "eastern star" instead of a "star in the east" the wise men would have ended up in India or China. The wise men were in the east and the star was in the west, according to Scripture. They SAW the star in the east. My question is: how in the world did they associate a star with a King and how did they identify that with Israel?

The answer to that question is, of course, answered in a prophecy Balaam gave in chapter twenty-four of Numbers at verse seventeen; "...I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." The star and the sceptre go together. This is the only place I can locate the Star and the Sceptre together in the entire Old Testament eschatological discourse. People who lived in the east had that prophecy at that time. The entire city of Jerusalem was disturbed by this. Of course, Herod, who is an extremely superstitious man – Herod the Great – of whom a quick internet search on would reveal an entire ilk of slime balls in his lineage – a real first century Mafioso; very much like the Cosa Notra – had bought his position from the Roman government. Herod was an Idumean and was not a native of Israel; and he thought he knew what was going on. Well, when Herod had to know

he demanded – he didn't ask. He knew these men had Scriptures that some sort of Messiah was coming, and he is demanding where this Scripture says He is to be born. The truly amazing thing is that the wise men were able to tell them....

***4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.***

***5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,***

***6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, which shall rule my people Israel.***

~ When Herod asks this question the priests and scribes didn't get out their Bibles and start looking through the concordance for the answer; they knew what it said, and they knew where they were going. Obviously, they probably had that verse in Micah memorized. These priests were ONLY priests because they knew all about the coming of their Messiah. The unfortunate problem is that the knowledge they had was purely academic; it wasn't life itself to them – and, frankly, it wasn't meaningful to them in a way that changed their hearts and minds.

It would stand to reason that these priests - who knew the Scriptures, who could recite them, and knew the way to the lands that were spoken of and promised by God - would have found profound meaning in what they had learned. Tragically, this is an example of how it is possible to know the Scripture, learn certain factual elements thereof and, perhaps, even grasp some truth, but yet, it have absolutely no meaning and no effect whatsoever on the life of the one carrying the information! I would think the priests would have hopped on camels and made a beeline for Bethlehem. It wasn't very far away; I would have thought they would have packed up with the wise men and been gone. That makes me wonder how many people today are really looking for the Lord Jesus Christ to appear in their lives. Even amongst people who talk about it incessantly and seem to know a great deal of facts and figures about prophecy; would you REALLY

like to see Christ appear right NOW? Are you ready to give an account for your life this moment? Are you ready to leave all material possessions behind to reside in a glorified spiritual body?

My personal answer to those three questions regarding my own life is: no. Let's suppose Christ Jesus broke through today right where we are working and living – what plans of yours for the future would He be interrupting? I think most people will say, "...well, I sure wasn't expecting You! – Can You give me thirty minutes to get cleaned up and get dressed?" The priests and scribes were neither prepared for nor did they desire the coming of Christ – all while professing that they were and that they did - without question....

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

~ I am going to make a statement here that I am almost certain someone is going to challenge me on. Well, I'm not going to prove it until later and I'll not debate it in the meantime: but the star appeared many years – likely decades - before they arrived. Remember, this trip is by camel – not by jet. It isn't a brief walk across the desert. I am convinced it was at least one year after the appearance of the star before these men show up at Herod's place – but that's just a starting hypothesis. This isn't a one day a year Christmas celebration we're talking about, either. These men had been hanging on to this hope for dear life as they came across that desert seeking Christ with gifts – let's not kid ourselves about exactly what that trip entailed....

***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.***

~ We have to give Herod credit for being the subtle serpent that he is. He's very clever at deception and murder. Herod was a man in control of his emotions, to be sure. If Herod had sprung into military action and marched on Bethlehem he would have never located the baby Jesus – and he knew that. Herod also knew that the best way to handle this was to let these wise men do his bidding and recon for him. Herod says he wants to worship this

new king – except, I don't think – in fact, I know – the wise men didn't buy it for a minute. That's why we will find them going back home another route. What Herod really wants to do is find a low-key way to eliminate Jesus and squash any potential threat....

***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.***

***10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.***

~ Apparently, the star had not been in plain view all the time; and it now appears before them again. I think they traveled a very long time without the star in sight. I want to add that every Christmas I see some magazine or newspaper feature an article about some astrologer who has the answer as to what these men saw; and how the confluence of stars at that particular time in history is the explanation for all of this, and nothing more. Well, interestingly, Matthew makes it clear that this star is an unusual star! Let me just say it so you might quote me someday, "....this was a supernatural star that is unexplainable by modern astrology." I am, further, ruling out anything less than miraculous here and we will deal with it on that basis. I wouldn't waste my time trying to find any other answer. It may be interesting, and many astronomers do agree the movement in the Heavens in this period was full of activity; and I can believe that because when Jesus arrived in Bethlehem, both Heaven and earth responded to it - and I have no problem believing any and all of those normal and natural things that science asserts - but it's not what these wise men were led by....

***11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.***

~ Notice the wise men came into the house. Jesus isn't out there in the stable anymore. Bethlehem has cleared out and the only reason Mary and Joseph are still hanging around is because a trip across the desert would have threatened the life of an infant and mother. Verse eleven is simply a

remarkable passage of Scripture. The only pictures I have ever seen show the wise men come into Jesus at the stable. There's always a donkey in that scene for some reason, too. Well, unless Joseph took them on a city tour I doubt the wise men ever even knew where it was! The wise men come into the house and see Mary with Jesus; and, friends, if ever there was a time that Mary should have been worshipped – THIS is it! But when they fall down to worship, they worship HIM – NOT THEM - you simply have to see that, or you are spiritually as blind as the dead!

When we get to Isaiah he's going to tell us something about Jesus Second Advent to establish His kingdom on earth after the rapture of the church – in chapter sixty at verse six we read, "....the multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD." Do you notice what's missing from Isaiah's account? Myrrh is missing – why? – Because myrrh speaks of His death. Christ isn't going to die again - there is nothing in any prophecy concerning the Second Advent that speaks of His death. Gold speaks to His birth, frankincense speaks of the sweet fragrance of His life - myrrh speaks of His death here in our account from Matthew. There will be no more death when Christ returns and His Kingdom is established ~

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