

Where is He That is Born King?

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Matthew 4:1-12

“Matthew 2:1–12 is another reminder that our traditional picture of the Christmas story is in need of some tweaking. Two well-known Christmas carols have already been debunked in Matthew 1: the night of Jesus’ birth was not a silent one, and with all due respect to those who sing “Away in a Manger,” it is highly unlikely that a baby would not cry while cattle are lowing. In Matthew 2:1–12 we’re going to debunk another favorite Christmas carol as we consider the magi who came from the east to visit Jesus (vv. 1–2). If you’ve ever sung “We Three Kings,” this passage may cause you to rethink these familiar lyrics.”¹

I. The Arrival of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-2)

- A. Who are the Magi?
 - 1. Men from the east (**2:1**) who have come as kingmakers (High-ranking officials with power and influence. Associated with a “tribe” of people for 100s of years.)
 - 2. They are part of a tribe responsible for confirming the king in power.
 - 3. They are highly educated, versed in astronomy, astrology, and royal counsel.
 - a) In a world of polytheists, they are monotheistic.
 - b) Long exposed to Old Testament Scripture (since the Babylonian captivity).
- B. How many Magi? We don’t know. Doubtful, there were only three (Security, Wealth, Servants)
- C. What were their names? We don’t know that either (Tradition says: Gaspar, Balthasar, and Melchior)
- D. The Timing of the Arrival of the Magi?
 - 1. Not on the day of the Lord’s birth.
 - 2. **Matthew 2:11** tells us they came into a house, not a stable

II. The Magi’s Connection to Old Testament Prophecies of a King

- A. Balaam’s prophecy of the Messiah (**Numbers 24:17-19**)
 - 1. **Numbers 24:17**, *I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.*
- B. Isaiah’s prophecy of the Messiah (**Isaiah 60:1-6**)
 - 1. **Isaiah 60:1**, *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.*
- C. Daniel’s prophecy of the Messiah
 - 1. Daniel was in exile in Babylon for the overwhelming majority of his life.
 - 2. He rose to position among the Magi (wise men) of Babylon (Dan 5:11-12)
 - 3. **Daniel 2:44–45**, *And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, 45 just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”* (Quite possibly the timing as well in **Dan 9:25-27**)

III. The Star and the Magi (Matthew 2:1-2, 7-8, 9-10)

- A. Almost as much speculation swirls about the star as about the men who saw it.
 - 1. Alignment of Jupiter & Saturn; a low-hanging comet or meteor; or, simply, a vision of the star of destiny in the hearts of men.
 - 2. We simply can’t be dogmatic about the explanation of the star
- B. But another plausible explanation comes up in **Luke 2:9**, *And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.* Throughout the Old Testament, we are told of God’s glory being manifested as light (the radiating Shekinah glory of God)
 - 1. **Exodus 13:21**, *And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.*

¹ Platt, David. 2013. *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*. Edited by Daniel L. Akin, David Platt, and Tony Merida. Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary. Nashville, TN: Holman Reference.

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2. **Matthew 17:2**, *And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.*
 3. **Acts 26:13**, *At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.*
 4. **Revelation 1:16**, *In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.*

IV. Bethlehem and the Magi (Matthew 2:3-6)

- A. Bethlehem's long Biblical importance
 1. Birthplace of Benjamin and the burial place of Jacob's wife, Rachel (**Genesis 35:16-19**)
 2. The place of Ruth and Boaz's meeting and marriage (**Ruth 1:22; 2:4**)
 3. The birthplace of Ruth's grandson, David, the future King of Israel (**1 Samuel 17:12, 15**)
 4. It is known as the "City of David." (**Luke 2:4, 11**)
- B. Micah, the prophet, specifically promised the Messiah would come from this small village, some 6 miles south of Jerusalem. (**Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:5-6**)

V. The Magi's Worship (Matthew 2:11)

- A. In Herod and in the Magi, we see only two reactions to the newborn King
 1. In Herod, troubled – as if in danger; threatened (**Matthew 2:3**).
 2. In the Magi, joy (**Matthew 2:10**), humility (**2:11**), worship (**2:11**).
- B. The worship of the Magi was directed at the child and not His mother.
- C. The worship of the Magi was inclusive of their giving of gifts to Him.

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Romans 10:17, *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*