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**Study of the Gospel of Matthew**

**Chapter 2**

In the last study we saw that the Gospel (good news that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus all humanity can be a part of God’s Kingdom) according to Matthew has a strong emphasis upon Jesus being the hoped for Messiah of the Jews; that Jesus came from the line of King David, he was a new teacher like Moses, as well as being God with us.

 In the opening chapter, Matthew presents us with Jesus’ genealogy, tracing Jesus back to Abraham, going through the line of David. Matthew constantly uses the words “Messiah” and “David” to further emphasise Jesus as the hoped for Messiah of the Jews.

 In chapter 2, Matthew jumps straight to the visit of the Magi (wise men) after Jesus’ birth. He doesn’t spend any time recounting the events that led up to Jesus’ birth. In this study we are going to look at what Matthew is trying to achieve in doing this, as well as looking at the important of the escape into Egypt and return into Nazareth after Jesus’ birth.

The Magi Visit the Messiah

**2**After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi[a] from the east came to Jerusalem **2**and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

**3**When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.**4**When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. **5**“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

**6**“‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
    are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
    who will shepherd my people Israel.’[b]”

**7**Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8**He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

**9**After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. **10**When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. **11**On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. **12**And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

The Escape to Egypt

**13**When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

**14**So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt,**15**where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”[c]

**16**When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.**17**Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

**18**“A voice is heard in Ramah,
    weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
    and refusing to be comforted,
    because they are no more.”[d]

The Return to Nazareth

**19**After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt**20**and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.”

**21**So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. **22**But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, **23**and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

**Footnotes:**

1. Matthew 2:1 Traditionally *wise men*
2. Matthew 2:6 Micah 5:2,4
3. Matthew 2:15 Hosea 11:1
4. Matthew 2:18 Jer. 31:15

**Tasks**

1. Matthew jumps straight in to the visit of the Magi, quoting them saying, “Where is the one that has been born King of the Jews?” – Why do you think Matthew has emphasised this visit and quoted what they said? (Matthew has omitted the story of there being no room in Bethlehem, Mary having to give birth in a stable and the visit of the Shepherds)
2. With a highlighter, highlight every time Matthew writes about what a prophet had said being fulfilled. How many times does Matthew mention this?
3. Why does he write about the prophets words being fulfilled? (Remember, the prophets were very important people to the Jews; their writings, found in our Old Testament, were considered holy by the Jewish leaders of the day too. They believed that what the prophets wrote would one day come to pass)
4. We read that King Herod wanted to kill Jesus (although he claimed he wanted to worship Him). Why do you think King Herod wanted to do this?
5. How many times did Joseph have to take his family (himself, Mary and Jesus) and move?
6. Joseph and Mary had already travelled to Bethlehem from Nazareth, which is where Jesus was then born. Then then had to move several times after Jesus was born. Have there been times when you have felt like life is constantly on the move, or unstable? Describe them below.
7. Each time the movement of Jesus’ family to a new place accomplished a different prophecy and therefore a promise of God was fulfilled. Can you look back at those times in your life that were unstable and see where God was at work? Describe what happened below.
8. If you are in a time of difficulty at the moment, use this space to write a prayer of help, asking God to fulfil His promise of always bringing good from a situation (Romans 8:28) (Remember, the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets took around 300 years to be fulfilled! If you haven’t seen God’s promises fulfilled yet, don’t despair, He will come through!). If you are currently in a stable/good place, write a prayer of thanks for God’s provision and goodness.