

Matthew Chapters 1 and 2 Notes

1:18-25 The Birth of Jesus
2:1-12 The Visit of the Wise Men
2:13-15 The escape to Egypt
2:16-18 The massacre of the infants
2:19-23 The return from Egypt

- 1:18-25
 - The covenant relationship of God and Israel
 - God brings about Jesus' conception
 - The passage focuses on origin (genesis) not the actual birth
- 1:18-19
 - Imperial figures like Alexander the Great and Augustus were said to have been conceived by a divine being
 - Sexual intercourse by a betrothed virgin with another man betrayed the commitment of future marriage and so was adultery
 - Result was usually execution after a public trial
- 1:20-21
 - The narrative focuses on Joseph because the male has the responsibility to act
 - The angel declares
 - God's will
 - Confirms Mary's pregnancy
 - Attributes the pregnancy to God's action
 - Requires Joseph to do the socially unconventional and SHAMEFUL thing in marrying Mary
 - The angel reveals God's plans by naming the child Jesus (Yeshua)
 - Jesus will save his people from their sins
- 1:22
 - The Gospel commonly emphasizes God's purposes by quoting scripture
 - Matthew quotes a lot of old testament scripture because it is demonstrating all the prophecies Jesus fulfilled
 - Often referred to as "fulfillment" language
- 1:23
 - The hebrew text in reference to this passage refers to a young woman while the Greek translation chooses a word that highlights her status as a virgin (intentional act of God)
 - A number of scholars debate as to the reasoning behind the different interpretations
 - Jesus manifests God's saving presence until the completion of God's purposes (this is a reference to Matthew 28:20)
- 1:24-25
 - Joseph obeys God
 - Josephs lack of intercourse with marry demonstrates the reverence for God's action
- 2:1-23
 - The birth of Jesus brings 2 responses
 - The power centers of Israel rejects him
 - Herod tries to have him murdered

- Insignificant people welcome and worship him
 - The gentile Magi
- 2:1
 - Jesus is born
 - David was anointed King in Bethlehem
 - Jesus us the line of David and his birth in Bethlehem is significant to fulfillment
 - Herod rules Israel (area) as Rome's ally
 - Magi are gentiles from the East (now Iraq or Iran)
 - They were categorized as priests with access to centers of power
 - Traditions record them as destabilizing power with threatening predictions
 - Astrological signs were valued by these people when other areas of people dismissed these signs
 - Magi travel to Jerusalem which is a city that was especially important to God's purposes
- 2:2-3
 - The Magi's question about the king of the jews and their intent to bow before Jesus are threatening actions to the ruling establishment
 - Jerusalem's elite are frightened
- 2:4-6
 - These elite leaders are part of the governing elite and are allies of the Roman Empire
 - Herod uses these allies of Rome to gain information about the Messiah's birthplace
- 2:7-12
 - The leaders know scripture, but not in the context in regards to Jesus
- 22:13-15
 - Egypt, which was once a place of slavery, is now a safehaven for the messiah
- 2:16-17
 - Herod's murderous violence is standard response to a perceived threat
- 2:18
 - God does not will these deaths but until God's empire is established in full, rulers of this world will do such things
 - The verse pulled from Jeremiah 31:15 is in reference to the defeat of Israel by Assyria and the exile to Babylon
 - Neither of these events overthrew God's purpose and neither will Herod and ROME
- 2:19-23
 - God thwarts Herod
 - Archelaus is removed from power shortly after he took over from his father (about 6 CE)
 - Jesus and his family settle in Nazareth
- 2:23
 - No Old Testament passage directly corresponds to this citation
 - Could be from a text that was lost or not canonized
 - Could be a reference to Nazarites who serve God

Things to Note:

- Jesus is compared to Israel
 - Finding safely in Israel (Joseph)

- Return from Egypt (Exodus)

Conjunction Theory

- Lots of theories regarding the “star”
- In 7 BC Jupiter and Saturn line up in the Pisces constellation three times
 - Jupiter represents Kings
 - Saturn represents Jews
 - Pisces represents the land of Israel
- The wise men could have followed the directions the stars gave instead of the physical star
 - Would explain why they first stopped in Jerusalem to see Herod
- Could have been in conjunction with a spirit or light such as the one that led the Israelites out of Egypt
- Ancient Israelite text says the messiah would be born in Bethlehem

Lets learn about Herod:

- Herod had killed two of his sons and his wife for fear that they were trying to take his “crown”
- Herod died in 4 BC
- Was the father of the Herod that executed John the Baptist
- He died about age 70
- He died with these symptoms:
 - Intense itching
 - Painful intestinal problems
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Convulsion
 - Gangrene of the genitals
 - Today doctors say, based on the symptoms, Herod may have suffered chronic kidney disease and a sexually transmitted disease

Questions:

What is learned about Jesus from the narrative of Matthew 1:18-25?

What is the significance of the titles given to Jesus in Matthew 1:1,21,23?

What does it mean to you personally that Jesus is “God with us”?

Note the reactions to Jesus from the various people and groups.

What is the significance of Jesus being called “King of the Jews” and “Ruler and Shepard of Israel” and yet his first worshipers (according to Matthew) are from a different part of the world?