

## GOSPEL OF THE MESSIAH

### Message 8

Text: Matthew 2

Date: 3/16/2014

INTRO: We are in the process of looking at the greatest story ever told. If I keep my introduction short this morning we can cover a lot of ground because I have preached through this material in the last number of Christmas days. We have looked at the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. But Luke will now give some more information. Since I have preached through this on Christmas days I want to cover this section in an overview style. It will give us an interesting picture we seldom get in Christmas messages. So let me back-track a little to give us the drift here. The conceptions of both John the Baptist and Jesus have been given to us. Then we have seen John's birth. Then we saw what life was like for Joseph when he found out his betrothed was expecting and we read of the angel's message to Joseph not to fear to take Mary to wife, and he did. Last Sunday we were given the account of the birth of Christ, which I said I believed took place in the lambing barn at Migdal Edar.

This morning we will see what happened in the next months. Then we will be missing material from Jesus' first year or so of life until He is 12 years old. When He is 12 we will get just a wee peek into His life with Joseph and Mary. Then the Gospel writers will all fall silent for the next 18 years, until both John and Christ are about 30 years old. So we have a huge task before us this morning.

#### 4. Presentation of Christ at the temple (Luke 2:21-38)

We begin then with Luke 2:21 (read). We saw some of what happens at the time of the naming of a child in Jewish culture when we discussed naming of John the Baptist. The name of this Child, of course, is *Jesus* as this verse says that was determined before conception.

In verses 22-23 we come to another rite that took place after giving birth (read). Between verse 21 and 22 some 32 days pass according to the

requirements set out in the Mosaic law. After bearing a son, a woman was classed as unclean for 40 days and so this rite would take place as soon as those 40 days were fulfilled. Mary would have been ceremonially cleansed first. Then Mary and Joseph would have prepared the sacrifice they will bring for the birth of their son. Leviticus 12:6-8 allowed that if a couple was too poor to bring a lamb, they could bring a pair of turtledoves. Since Joseph and Mary are quite poor, this is what they brought.

-Simeon (2:25-35)

Verses 25-35 now give us a wonderful piece of information (read). Our text says that Simeon was both just and devout. Here was a righteous man who did not play church, for he was also devout. He was a reverent man. And our text says he was waiting for the consolation of Israel. The word 'consolation' comes from the word 'parakleet.' This is one of the names of the Holy Spirit, and speaks of comfort. The Holy Spirit is called 'the Comforter' (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; and 16:7).

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit was upon this man. Well, I think it would be fair to say the Holy Spirit would be on any man who is like this. And the Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die before the Messiah came, and so here is the fulfillment of that prophecy. So Simeon came to Mary and Joseph, took the Child in his arms and blessed God and said the words of verses 29-32 (read). Simeon is saying, "It is OK for me to die now. My eyes have seen Your salvation." But in Simeon's words once more we have a reference to the fact that this salvation will be for the Gentiles as well.

So let us read verse 33 (read). The experience this young couple has gone through is amazing. And Simeon has a word for Mary in verses 34-35 (read). No doubt, many a time Mary will have called these words to mind after this.

-Anna (2:36-38)

But there was another person at the temple at this time that Luke tells us about in verses 36-38 (read). Her father was likely a well known man as he is mentioned as being her father. His name was Phanuel. This name means 'the face of God.' Jacob first gave this name after he had fought with the angel of the Lord in Genesis 32. But Anna was of the tribe of Asher. The word asher means blessed. It speaks of one who is in an enviable situation, a blessed situation.

Our text says she was of great age. Let me quote from another message I did, "John Gill's commentary says regarding the 84 years, 'Which is not the date of her whole age, as some have thought, but of her widowhood state, as distinct from her marriage state, and the time of her virginity. And this sense all the versions favour.' So, if that is correct, let us say she married at 14, then she would have been 21 when her husband died and 21 and 84 is 103. That is why it says she was of great age" end quote.

It must have been a great consolation to Joseph and Mary to hear what these two old saints had to say about their Child. And it is interesting that both Simeon and Anna should both be here just at the time Joseph and Mary came for this service.

Now Luke 2:39 tells us that Mary and Joseph and Jesus now return to Nazareth (read). But between verses 38 and 39 a lot takes place that Luke does not tell us and we have to go to Matthew 2 to find what happened here.

##### 5. Visit of the Magi (Matt. 2:1-12)

When one reads the Gospel of Matthew it would seem that this part of the Christmas story takes place in Bethlehem immediately after Jesus is born. However, I suspect this is possibly even some months after the birth of Christ and possibly even a year. I suppose that Joseph and Mary have temporarily moved to Bethlehem, waiting until the child is a little stronger to travel back to Nazareth. And so, maybe they stay with relatives or rent a house and maybe Joseph works

in his occupation to support them, since they are quite poor.

And while they are still in Bethlehem, the Magi from the East come to worship the Christ (read 2:1-2). The word translated 'wise men' is the word magio, plural of magos, or what we would call magicians. Now I do not know if they were called magicians because they were associated with studying the stars known as astronomy; or whether they were astrologers who foretell future things based on the stars. John MacArthur says the two fields were closely associated in early times. We find the word magia used in Acts 8 and Acts 13 and they refer to magicians as we know them.

However that was, they were students of stars and had seen, what we know as the star of Bethlehem. How did they know that this special star had anything to do with the birth of a king of the Jews? Well, in verse 2 the magi say, "We have seen His star in the East" or from the sun rising. They meaning, I think is, that when they were in the east they saw the star. The magi originated in Mesopotamia and became very influential later in Media Persia. It seems likely to me that Daniel would have had great influence on the magi and that most likely they learned about the prophetic Scriptures from Daniel. It is highly likely that they accumulated great knowledge of the Hebrew prophets through their connection with Daniel who lived among them for a long time.

If that is so, they would then have been familiar with Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24:17. When Israel traveled from Egypt to Canaan they came to Moab. Balaak, king of Moab was deathly afraid of Israel because he had heard what they had done to the Amorites (Num. 22:2). The Moabites, it says, were sick with dread. Well, there was a well known prophet in that day by name of Balaam. And Balak tried to get Balak to curse Israel. This would be practicing magic. Well, Balaam and Balak tried again and again, but Balaam could not curse Israel. But his efforts at cursing turned into

blessings instead. So, go to Numbers 24 (read 10-19).

Well, many years later when Daniel was in Babylon, he likely familiarized the magi there with the Hebrew prophecies. I expect this became standard teaching in their universities. And then, over 500 years after Daniel's time, the magi, as was usual, were studying the stars. And then something very exciting happened among the magis. They found a new star. And this star hovered over Israel. And no doubt, the magis scrambled through their books to find the meaning of this star and they concluded it was the star of Numbers 24:17. If that was so, it meant a new king had been born in Israel.

And so, there in Babylon, the magi decided to send several delegates to worship this king and bring back news of him. And so over the next while they prepared some gifts and most likely some camels, and they traveled to Israel. Now if a king was born, you know where they would have gone to look for Him. Not in Bethlehem, of course, but in Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. So the Magi went to Jerusalem to enquire about where the King of the Jews had been born.

Well, when Jesus was born some months before the Magi arrive, the accounts of the shepherds and their angelic visitors had been noised abroad around Jerusalem. If Herod heard about that, no doubt he just shrugged it off as some Jewish fantasy. But when some rich Magi from Babylon arrive enquiring about where the new king is that has been born, now he is concerned. On [sermonaudio.com/lhec](http://sermonaudio.com/lhec) you can get the message I did recently on Herod. Herod was a mad butcherer who guarded his throne with the sword. He was no doubt a demon possessed man. So look at verse 3 (read). Herod was troubled. But not only he, but all Jerusalem with him.

The very first thing Herod wants to know is where this king of the Jews had been born. Herod's Jewishness now comes to the fore and he knows how to find out where this should be. So look at

verses 4-6 (read). As soon as Herod found out about this, he sent for the Magi and he wisely enquired of them when the star appeared. Note verse 7 (read). From this he would know how old this child would be by now. It is now at least several months since Christ had been born. So look at verse 8 (read). Herod is all pious about his desire to see this newborn king. But if you listen, you will hear the hiss in his voice, and if you look, you will see his bared demonic fangs.

Now look at verses 9-10 (read). Today, with our abilities to program computers we can backtrack in astronomy and see what formation the stars would have been in Jesus' day. And some claim special formations in the stars at the time of Christ's birth. But I do not think any of that backtracking helps us with this star. I have called this star a Scriptural star. That is, it was prophesied. Second, I have called it a supernatural star. If you consider the biblical data in this chapter, it seems that they saw the star when they were in the east, but the star disappeared, because the Magi went to Jerusalem, not Bethlehem. If they had been following the star, they would have gone to Bethlehem. They drew their conclusions in the East and acted on those conclusions and ended up in Jerusalem.

But now, when they arrived at Jerusalem they found out that their conclusions were wrong. This new king had not been born in Jerusalem. So they had to enquire. If the star had still been visible, they would have known where to go without enquiring. No doubt God was in all of this. Now I want you to notice why I call it a supernatural star. Note it says in verse 9 that it went before them. How does a star many light years above in the heavens go before you? The star moved. It was very close. It is only a few miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. But then notice that it stood over the place where the young Child was. The star stopped. It stood. This is, no doubt to me, a supernatural star. And when they saw the star again, they rejoiced with exceeding joy. For the first time in a long time,

they knew they were on the right track.

So let us look at verse 11 (read). Let me quote from an Epiphany message I did years ago on this passage. "When the magi came to Bethlehem they brought gold, frankincense and myrr. Gold in Scripture often speaks symbolically of deity indicating that this Child and King was divine. The early church said the frankincense spoke of His purity. It was one of the materials used in the incense in the OT tabernacle and other parts of the tabernacle service. If the frankincense is somewhat difficult to interpret there is no trouble interpreting the myrrh. This was used in embalming and would speak of the death of Christ" end quote.

So, at Christ's first coming, three gifts were brought to Him. But I want you to turn to Isaiah 60, to a passage that speaks of Christ in the millennium (read 1-6). In the millennium, once more gifts are brought to Christ. But now there are only two gifts pointed out, gold and frankincense; but the myrrh is left out. Some years ago in my wife's Sunday School material it was pointed out that the myrrh is left out because His death is past. But the gold and frankincense still has valid significance.

When the Magi have completed what they set out to do, or what they may have been sent for, they prepare to go back. But the Lord has a message for them before they leave. Look at Matthew 2:12 (read).

#### 6. Flight to Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15)

So we now enter another phase of the life of Christ. We begin this with verse 13 (read). Once more Joseph has a heavenly visitor. And the angel instructs Joseph to take both Jesus and His mother Mary and to flee to Egypt. And the angel said, "Make sure you stay there until I bring you word that it is safe to come back." The angel also informs Joseph about the reason. Herod will try to kill Jesus.

So look at verses 14-15 (read). It has been suggested that the gifts of the Magi probably provided Joseph and Mary with finances for this trip, since they were quite poor.

Notice also that Matthew points out to his Jewish readers that all of this was done to fulfill OT prophecies. If you will study Hosea 11:1, you will find it is a reference to when God brought Israel out of Egypt. However, this is a prophecy that I have called historical prophecy. That is where a historical event speaks of a similar event in the future, which is what we have here.

#### 7. Slaying of the Innocents (Matt. 2:15-20)

The old western movies used to use a line like this, "Meanwhile back at the ranch..." Look at it in verses 16-18 (read). When Joseph and Mary have left for Egypt, and Herod realizes the Magi have left without reporting to him, in a blind rage he kills all the male babies 2 years old and under. You see, he had enquired of the Magi when the star first appeared. From that he knew when Christ would have been born. It could have been as much as 2 years before this event but likely Herod killed them from 2 years old and down to make sure he got the right child. Here is Herod the butcherer. You may wish to listen to the message I did on Herod for I give there the account of how Herod died just shortly after this. It is a horrendously horrible death. Herod began to pay for his sins before he died.

#### 8. From Egypt to Nazareth (Matt. 2:21-23; Luke 2:39)

Well, the story of the life of Christ continues, so look at verses 19-21 (read). Now there is some indication that Joseph and Mary would have gone back to Bethlehem, where they had lived for a time after Jesus was born. But God has other things in mind. So look at verses 22-25 (read). When Herod died the Romans divided his kingdom among his sons. Antipas reigned in Galilee and Perea; Philip in the north east and Archelaus in Judah and Samaria. So Archelaus was in control



over Bethlehem, and he was a cruel man; but Antipas, who was a milder character ruled over Nazareth, Joseph and Mary's former home. So that is where Joseph now decides they will live. Once more we have an area that has many Gentile people.

Now go back with me to Luke 2. In verses 21-38 Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple for a number of Jewish rites such as circumcision and naming. And in verse 39 it says that after this they returned to Nazareth. What Luke has left out between these two verses we have found in Matthew 2.

#### 9. Trip to Jerusalem (Luke 2:40-52).

So, with that we fast forward about 10 years to where Jesus is 12 years old. Here we have 13 verses that give us the only information from when Joseph and Mary moved to Nazareth until he was 12 years old (read 40-52). First we are told that He became strong in spirit. We were told this about John the Baptist as well in Luke 1:80. But of Jesus it says He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him. Here was a Child blessed by God even in His early years.

Now you might say, "How could parents be so negligent and leave their child behind and not miss him for an entire day?" When the Jews traveled to and from Jerusalem during the three major festivals of the year, they would travel in groups. Let us say about 15 families traveled together from Nazareth to Jerusalem and back in the same way. No doubt they would have all met at a certain place and from there, as they traveled, maybe the children went together. And so they may have left as a group and then when they started off, Jesus meets a rabbi and he begins to talk to him. The rabbi is so impressed He takes Him to the meeting he is going to. Jesus is so absorbed that as He reasons with them time fairly flies.

Well, at the end of the day, the rabbis ask Him where He lives and they find out His parents have left for Nazareth and He has been left behind.

They reason that the parents will come looking for Him soon enough, and if they do not come, He can travel back with a group of Rabbis who are also from that area and who are staying a few days extra for meetings.

Meanwhile, Mary and Joseph have traveled most of a day when they discover He is missing. So they return and that takes another day and on the third day they find Him, still questioning and discussing things with the rabbis. And when the parents asked Him why He had done this to them; why He has caused this sorrow for them and caused such anxiety, He said, "Why is it that you sought Me. Did you not know I must be about My Father's business?" But Scripture says they did not understand, but Mary kept all these things in her heart. I would like to know what these rabbis said to Joseph and Mary.

Now one could certainly ponder this passage a long time. Notice in verse 51 (read). Jesus was subject to His parents. Here is God, the second Person of the Triune God, in human form and growing as a boy and subject to His parents. Turn briefly to Hebrews 5 (read 6-9). Now that is worth pondering!

CONCL: So, let us conclude. I have tried to zoom over this material, most of which I have covered in Christmas messages. We started this morning when Christ was 8 days old and He was brought to the temple for circumcision and naming. Then we see Him taken to Jerusalem a second time some 32 days after that, when Joseph and Mary come to give the proper sacrifice for such an occasion. Here we met Simeon and Anna.

Joseph and Mary then take Jesus back to Bethlehem and they live there for some time, possibly as much as a year and a half. During that time the magi come and bring their gifts and they return. After this Joseph is told to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt and they start their journey at night and escape Herod's terror.

Then in Egypt, the Lord lets them know it is safe to return. But because Archeleous is ruling the area in which Bethlehem is, they went back to Nazareth, where his milder

brother Antipas is in charge. Here we are told of one trip that Jesus made with His parents to Jerusalem when He was 12 years old, and then we do not hear about Him again in the Gospels until He is about 30 years of age. And so, when we get back to the Gospels, we will begin with the ministry of John the Baptist when he is about 30 years of age. I will introduce all that in the next message.