

Ministry of Grace

Matthew 2

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."

⁹After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

¹³Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." ²¹And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Notes

Matthew 2:1, 2

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

“**Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea**” – This literally reads, “And Jesus having been born in Bethlehem of Judah.”

“**Bethlehem of Judea**” – Bethlehem means “house of bread.” According to the historian Josephus there is another Bethlehem in Galilee seven miles northwest of Nazareth. Bethlehem of Judah is about five miles south-southeast of Jerusalem. It is the scene of the life of Ruth (**Ruth 1:1**) and her husband Boaz, who were the great-grandparents of King David. David was also born in Bethlehem (**1Samuel 17:12**) and the town came to be called the City of David.

“**in the days of Herod the king**” – Herod the Great (74 BC to 1BC) died in January of the year 1 BC according to Avi Ben Mordechai in *Signs in the Heavens*. However, according to Josephus, Herod the Great died in 4 BC. Also, according to Josephus, Herod died shortly after a lunar eclipse. Two are known to have happened in 5 BC and another in 1 BC. There was only a partial lunar eclipse in 4 BC. Hence, the date of 1 BC seems to make the most sense. In approximately 40 BC, Herod was elected “King of the Jews” by the Roman Senate.

For further dating evidence we need to look at Luke’s gospel:

This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. (**Luke 2:2-3**)

Quirinius was twice Governor of Syria. During his first “governorship” of Syria he performed special command duties in the name of Caesar Augustus. Specifically he oversaw a “registration” of the people for Augustus in approximately 3 BC. At this time there was also an officially recognized political governor of Syria by the name of Saturninus. Both men were technically acting as governors but in different capacities. Quirinius was later appointed as political governor, replacing Saturninus, around the year AD 7. After Quirinius was appointed political governor he issued an order for another “registration” of the people. This second registration of Quirinius was not the one decreed by Augustus. Given these facts, the first registration of Quirinius must be the one referred to by Luke. This also supports the fact that Herod the Great died in 1BC, not 4 BC.

“**wise men**” - from the Greek *magos*, which refers to a priest or wise man among the Medes, Persians and Babylonians. In **Daniel 2:48** we find that Daniel was made the leader of the magi. It is believed by some that the magi spoken of by Matthew were following a prophecy of Daniel which predicted the birth of the King of the Jews.

Alfred Edersheim in *The Life And Times of Jesus the Messiah*, wrote:

The term Magi is used in the Septuagint by Philo, Josephus, and other writers, alike in an evil and so to speak in a good sense. In the former case as implying the practice of magical arts; in the latter, as referring to those Eastern (especially Chaldee) priest-sages, whose researches, in great measure as yet mysterious and unknown to us, seem to have embraced much deep knowledge, though not untainted with superstition. It is to these latter, that the Magi spoken of by Matthew must have belonged.

What is particularly important for us to recognize is two-fold: first, that these were **not kings** and secondly, that **we are not told how many there were**. It is commonly assumed that there were three of them because there were three gifts offered (gold, frankincense, and myrrh).

“**we saw his star when it rose**” or “**we have seen His star in the East**” – This does not mean that they saw the star in the eastern part of the sky. It means that they were in the East when they saw the star.

“**star**” – Greek word *astera*, which refers to a star, a planet, or any other heavenly body. *Aster* may be derived from *strōnnumi*, meaning “to strew” or “to spread” in the sense of strewing stars throughout the night sky.

There are many interpretations as to what this particular *astera* was. Some believe it to be a comet while others believe it to be a supernova. Still others believe it to be a conjunction of planets, as there were several significant conjunctions occurring between the years of 3 and 1 BC. We do not know specifically what the magi were referring to, except that it was some kind of heavenly body.

Matthew 2:3-6

³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

“**he was troubled**” – The word “troubled” is from the Greek word *tarassō*, meaning “to stir” or “to agitate.” In order to fully understand this, we have to understand a little about Herod’s method of solving problems. Herod was extremely paranoid that someone would take his kingdom from him. Not only did he attain his position of power by political intrigue and murder. He was known to have anyone who got in his way killed. This even applied to those whom he believed might get in his way or try to usurp his throne. According to Josephus, due to Herod’s jealousies and fears of usurpation from other family members, he had his wife Mariamne and three of her four children (Aristobulus, Alexander, and Antipater) put to death. He also had Mariamne’s brother, mother, and grandfather killed. In fact, Caesar Augustus is said to have proclaimed “It is better to be Herod’s sow (*huos*) than his son (*huios*).

Add to this paranoia and Herod’s murderous tendency, the fact that the prophecy of Daniel and others predicted the Messiah was soon to arrive, and we see why Herod was troubled that someone else called “the King of the Jews” might have just been born.

“**all Jerusalem with him**” – The Jews generally hated and distrusted Herod who was a descendant of Esau, not Jacob. Also, given Herod’s jealousy and tendency to solve any problem with violence, the people of Jerusalem were justifiably troubled.

“**all the chief priests**” – One would normally expect there to be only one high priest at that time, for this is what the Greek word *archiereus* means. However, under Roman rule in Jerusalem the high priest position was a political one which was repeatedly bought or acquired. It is said of the first temple, which stood for about 410 years, that there were only 18 high priests from first to last. The second temple, which stood for about 420 years, is said to have had more than 300 high priests.

“**scribes**” – these are the learned “lawyers” or “doctors” of the Law who were the most knowledgeable in the content of prophecies.

“**written by the prophet**” – The passage quoted here is **Micah 5:2**. It is apparent that the assembled group of scriptural scholars did not hesitate in identifying Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah. It was a seemingly well known fact.

Matthew 2:7, 8

⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."

“**summoned the wise men secretly**” – We see here the craftiness of Herod. He apparently had not told the chief priests and scribes why he wanted to know where the Messiah was to be born. Then he covertly met with the magi, ostensibly to tell them where to look but in reality to find out when the star first appeared.

“**bring me word**” – Herod’s explanation as to why he wanted the magi to bring back word to Herod is that he wants to worship Him as well. However, we know from his subsequent actions that in reality Herod wanted to know who this child was so that he could have Him executed.

Matthew 2:9, 10

⁹After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

“**the star ... went before them**” – The magi already knew that they were to go to Bethlehem and it is reasonable to expect that they were given directions as to where the town was and how to get there. The real puzzle here is what is meant by “went before.” The Greek word is *proagō*, which is composed of *pro*, meaning “in front of” or “before, in time or location” and *agō*, meaning “to lead, bring, or drive.” Hence, we see that this word means “to lead before.”

Today there is a road out of Jerusalem which leads south-southwest directly to the town of Bethlehem five miles away. It is likely the modern version of the same road that the magi travelled. Had the star been a conjunction of planets, they would have appeared high in the night sky or low in the east or west because the planets appear to travel in the same plane that the sun appears to travel during the day. So, unless they were travelling east or west, the planets could never appear close to the ground as a guiding indicator. Hence, it is not likely that this is a reference to a conjunction.

Had the star been a comet, as some have conjectured, then it apparently disappeared while it travelled around the sun and reappeared immediately after the magi met with Herod. Having just reappeared, it would still be close to the sun and would, therefore, be in the west in the evening sky or east in the early morning sky. It could not have appeared in the southern sky until weeks after it reappeared. Therefore, it is just as likely that the star was not a comet.

“**they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.**” - This expression loses its effect in English, because we tend to read it as “they were glad.” However, it is much more than that. It is translated from the Greek *echarēsan charan megalēn sphodra*. *Echarēsan* is the verb form of *charis*, which means “delight or joy.” The verb form means to express that joy, hence, “rejoice.” The next word, *charan* is a form of the noun *charis*. When Greek repeats a word in both verb and noun form it implies intensity. In English we would say, they rejoiced joyfully. The next word, *megalēn* is a form of *me-gas*, meaning “large” or “great.” Here it is describing *charis*, so it is saying “they rejoiced with great joy.” Finally, the word *sphodra*, means “to a high degree.” Putting this all together we see that

the text says, “they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.” It expresses the utmost in joyful exuberance!

“**it came to rest over the place where the child was.**” – Here again, we have a situation that is not easily explainable with a normal heavenly body (supernova, planetary conjunction, comet, etc.). The star did not simply stand over the town of Bethlehem because it is said that it led them until it stood over where the young Child was, and they already knew that it was in Bethlehem where they would find Him. This star somehow indicated the exact location where Joseph and Mary were staying. Though there are many who want to explain this star with a normal astronomical event, it appears to me that this was a supernatural shining light of some kind which led the magi to the exact dwelling place where Jesus was. This should be no more difficult to believe than the fact that the Israelites were guided through the desert by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, for forty years! Was it, in fact, the same pillar of fire that settled on the tabernacle in the wilderness?

Matthew 2:11, 12

¹¹And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

When the magi came to see the King of the Jews, they did not see Him in a manger as the shepherds did. Let’s see why.

“**house**” – From the Greek word *oikia*, meaning “a family’s dwelling place,” that is “a residence.” If we compare this to **Luke 2:7**, we see that Jesus was laid in a “manger” when He was born, because there was no room for them in the “inn.” The word “inn” is *kataluma*, which is made up of *kata*, meaning “down” and a form of *luō*, meaning “to let loose.” Hence a *kataluma* is a place where one would “loosen down,” that is, a place where travelers would unload their animals and retire for the night. This is why it is commonly translated as “inn.” This same word, however, could be referring to a guest room, but it is unlikely that Luke would refer to a specific guest room (the Greek says “the” *kataluma*.) Staying with Luke’s description, we see that Jesus was laid in a “manger.” This is the word *phatnay*, derived from the word *pateomai*, meaning “to eat.” It is most often used to describe the crib in which food for animals was placed, but it is sometimes also used to describe a “stall” in which an animal is kept. According to Justin Martyr, the place where Jesus was born was a cave that was used to keep animals. Whatever the place where Jesus was born, Luke’s description is entirely different than a residence (*oikia*). It is clear from this that the magi came to a house, not a stable.

“**child**” – The next clue that the magi did not come to the stable, as we see in many nativity scenes, is the fact that the magi saw a “young child.” This is translated from the Greek word *paidion*, literally meaning “a young child.” In Luke’s account, however, he says that the shepherds found Mary and Joseph and a baby. “Baby” is from the Greek word *brephos*, which technically refers to an unborn infant, though it is also applied to a newborn infant as well. Hence, it appears that some amount of time has transpired between the birth of Jesus and the arrival of the magi.

“**treasures**” – This is from the Greek word *thēsauros*, which is derived from *tithēmi*, meaning “to put, to place, or to deposit.” The noun *thēsauros* refers to the container in which riches or treasures are placed. This word is often translated “treasure” although it should probably be translated as “treasure chest.”

“gold, frankincense, and myrrh” – These are all items of great value. This, along with the inquiry of the whereabouts of the “King of the Jews” when the magi first arrived in Jerusalem and the fact that they had travelled for months to find Him, indicates that the magi believed this child to be extremely important and of high ranking stature.

“being warned in a dream” – The word “divinely” does not appear in the Greek text. After presenting the gifts to the King of the Jews, the magi would have returned to tell Herod of the location of Jesus. However, they were warned in a dream not to do so. The implication is that either God or one of His angels spoke to the magi while they were sleeping.

Matthew 2:13-15

¹³Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Once the magi had departed, an angel of the Lord (perhaps Gabriel) warned Joseph to flee to Egypt. It is very likely that this message was given to him the same night that the magi were warned not to return to Herod. As a result, Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt. It is quite possible that the magi visited Mary and Jesus in the evening and spent the night nearby. It is reasonable to believe that Herod would have expected the magi to return to him within a couple of days, since they only had to travel five miles to Bethlehem. Thus we can assume that it was only a day or two from the time that the magi presented their gifts to Jesus to the time of the order from Herod to kill the children of Bethlehem.

It is interesting to note that Joseph would need some money to sustain himself and his young family while living in Egypt. Thus we see the presents of gold, Frankencense, and Myrrh were God’s provision for them.

Also, this immediate flight into Egypt is further indirect evidence that the magi did not visit Jesus and Mary at the manger. In Luke’s gospel we are told:

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." (**Luke 2:21-24**)

According to the Mosaic Law, the period of purification for a woman giving birth to a male child was forty days, so we know that Joseph and Mary remained in Bethlehem for at least that length of time. Since Joseph, Mary, and Jesus fled to Egypt immediately after the visit by the magi, these events in Luke must have happened before the Magi arrived. Within this forty day period, it is reasonable to assume that Joseph and Mary would have found a more suitable place to live.

“remained there until the death of Herod” – As we pointed out in the notes for verse one, Jesus’ birth was most likely in the year 3 BC and Herod died in 1 BC. Thus, we see that they were in Egypt for a period of about a year.

Matthew 2:16-18

¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

“**Herod ... became furious**” – This was not an uncommon emotion for Herod and it was usually accompanied by someone’s death. As we see here, the result of his anger was the killing of all the children of Bethlehem and the surrounding area.

“**two years old or under**” – We see from the remainder of this verse that male children aged two years old and younger were all killed based on the time given to Herod by the magi. In verse seven we saw that Herod inquired of the wise men regarding when they first saw the star appear. Herod’s assumption, likely based on information given to him by the magi, was that the initial appearance of the star coincided with the birth of the child. Thus we see the final piece of evidence that not only did the magi not appear at the manger along with the shepherds on the night that Jesus was born, but it may have been a year or more afterward before the magi visit took place.

It should also be noted here that by Jewish reckoning of the time, a child was considered to be a year old as soon as he or she was born. On the first anniversary of their birth they were considered to be two years old. Also note that the travel time by camel from Persia to Jerusalem could have been anywhere from three months to a year. If one includes the time of preparation and packing for such an undertaking it is not unreasonable to conclude that Jesus was between his first “birthday” and his second. As we would reckon it He would have been a year old, but as the Jews reckoned it He would have been two years old. Thus, Herod’s order to have the young boys from two years old and under all killed.

It may seem curious that there is no record of this slaughter by any secular historian of the time, including Josephus. However, when you consider, based on the assumed size of the small town of Bethlehem at that time, it is reasonable to conclude that there were only fifteen or twenty young boys murdered by Herod’s men. Such an event would scarcely cause any notice when compared to the other heinous acts of this bloodthirsty monarch.

Matthew 2:19-23

¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." ²¹And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: "He shall be called a Nazarene."

“**when Herod died**” – We have already shown that this was probably in the year 1 BC. Regarding Herod’s sickness and death, the historian Josephus said:

that he was seized with a disease which burned him inwardly with an inexpressible torture; that he was insatiably greedy of meat; had the colic, and gout, and dropsy; such an intolerable stench attended his disease, that none could come near him: and so passionate and impatient was he, that he was a torment to himself, and a terror to all that attended him: his innate

cruelty, being thus exasperated, made him more barbarous than ever; having ordered his own son to be put to death, he imprisoned many of the nobility and gentry, and ordered that as soon as he was dead they should be killed; but that execution was prevented.

And Eusebius said of his deadly sickness and death that:

a burning fever seized him, with an intolerable itching all over his body, and continual pains of the colic; his feet swelled with a dropsy; he had an inflammation in the lower part of his belly: a putrefaction in his privy parts, which bred worms; a frequency and difficulty of breathing, and convulsions in all his members; he had a voracious appetite, a stinking breath, and his intestines abounded with ulcers; when he found that all means made use of were ineffectual, and that he must die, he attempted to lay violent hands upon himself, but was prevented, and soon after expired in a very miserable manner.

“an angel of the Lord appeared ... to Joseph” – This is the third time that an angel of the Lord gave a message directly to Joseph in a dream. The first was to take Mary as his wife, the second was to flee to Egypt after the magi visit. There will be yet one more time that an angel will give him a direct message (verse 22).

“those who sought the child's life are dead.” – This is probably a literary use of the plural when actually referring to the singular. However, it could be a reference to Herod and his son Antipater who shared in his father's cruelty. And, although he had been identified by Herod as his successor, was killed by his father's orders only five days before Herod himself died.

“being warned in a dream” – It is noteworthy that the angel of the Lord who told Joseph to return from Egypt, at that time did not warn him about returning to Judea. Only after he had undertaken the trip with his family and had returned part way did the angel give him further travel instructions.

“he withdrew to the district of Galilee.” – Although Herod the Great had previously ruled over both Judea, Idumea, Samaria, Galilee, and Peraea as well as areas east of the Jordan, after his death, his kingdom was divided among three of his sons. Archilaus became king of Judaea, Idumea, and Samaria, Herod Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea, and Philip became tetrarch of territories east of the Jordan.

“Nazarene” - Nazareth was the town which housed the Roman garrison for the northern regions of Galilee. Therefore most Jews would not have any associations with that city. In fact those who lived in Nazareth were thought of as compromisers who consorted with the enemy, the Romans. Therefore to call one “a Nazarene” was to use a term of contempt. So because Joseph and his family settled in Nazareth, the Messiah was later despised and considered contemptible in the eyes of many in Israel. This was Nathanael's reaction when he heard Jesus was from Nazareth (**John 1:46**): **“Can anything good come from there?”**

So What?

Why didn't anyone else go with the magi?

When the magi finally arrived in Jerusalem after a long arduous trip from Persia, they began to inquire regarding the whereabouts of the recently born King of the Jews. Now, first we should realize that the mere appearance of magi from Persia would have caused quite a stir, because these learned ones typically did not travel outside their own country. And, they most likely travelled by camel whereas most of the inhabitants of Israel either walked or travelled by donkey. Their style of

dress would certainly have distinguished them from all the other inhabitants of Jerusalem, and their language (or accent if they did speak Greek or Aramaic) would have distinguished them as foreigners and not of the Roman Empire.

These pagan strangers were asking about the King of the Jews and although the Jews of that day were anticipating the soon coming of their Messiah, they would not have expected foreigners who worshipped other pagan deities to be inquiring about Him. According to Matthew's account, the search by these magi caused all of Jerusalem to become troubled. This concern of the people was no doubt exacerbated by their fear of how Herod would react when he heard about this birth. But, when Herod heard about the arrival of these distinguished visitors and the questions they were asking, he immediately called together the most learned scholars of the Hebrew Scriptures to find out if they knew where the Messiah would be born. Then, putting his scheming mind into high gear, Herod developed a plan to get rid of this upstart who others were calling by his own rightfully conferred title, King of the Jews.

Upon asking for a clandestine audience with the magi, Herod asked them a question of his own. He wanted to know when the magi began to notice the signs of this birth and upon getting the information that he wanted, Herod shared with the magi that Bethlehem was the town they were seeking. But before allowing them to depart, Herod insisted that they return to him, after they found the child, to let him know his exact location of the newborn King. And, though he claimed to want to worship this new King himself, Herod only had murder on his mind.

After meeting with Herod, the magi headed straight to Bethlehem. But it appears that they went alone. Herod did not send any of his soldiers to accompany the magi and none of the residents of Jerusalem joined them either. Why not? Herod may not have thought it necessary. After all, he had demanded that they return to him to inform him of the location of the child, and who would act against the wishes of the king, especially Herod!

But, what about the people? Were they too afraid of Herod to be seen with these alien visitors? They knew that the Messiah would come soon; didn't they want to see Him as a baby? Perhaps no one really believed that these pagans would have more knowledge of their Messiah than they would. Or, perhaps no one really believed that their Messiah was about to come. Maybe they just hoped that He would. The magi saw the star reappear after they left Herod, so it was probably early in the evening when they left Jerusalem for the five mile journey. Was there no one in Jerusalem who was willing to leave the comfort of their own home to join in the search for the child? Think of the hardship! They would have to travel at night and it was at least a two hour trip to get there and back. It wasn't safe to travel at night and it was cold outside.

Let's compare the faith of these heathen Magi with the faith of God's people. The magi were so convinced of the existence of the new born King of the Jews that they were willing to travel for months just to see him. They were willing to put up with the dangers of a thousand mile journey and sleep in tents along the way. But those to whom the promised Messiah was about to come weren't even willing to give up a couple of hours for a five mile walk because of fear or discomfort. Did the people of Jerusalem really believe their Messiah was about to come? Apparently not, because the magi went alone.

What about you? Do you believe that Christ could come back at any moment? Are you expecting his return at any hour? Do you realize that there are people searching for Him today? Will you help them find Him or are you too comfortable? Will you show them the way or are you afraid of what some government official might say. Will you join them on the trek, or is it too dangerous for you?

Will you join those seeking the Christ, or will you simply send them on the way with a blessing?

