

## Bible Study for December 30, 2020

[Adapted from The Serendipity Study Bible]

By Major Brian Coles

### Read Matthew 2.1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, in the time<sup>[a]</sup> of King Herod,<sup>[b]</sup> wise men<sup>[c]</sup> from the East came to Jerusalem<sup>2</sup> saying, “Where is the one who is born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose<sup>[d]</sup> and have come to worship him.”<sup>3</sup> When King Herod<sup>[e]</sup> heard this he was alarmed, and all Jerusalem<sup>[f]</sup> with him.<sup>4</sup> After assembling all the chief priests and experts in the law,<sup>[g]</sup> he asked them where the Christ<sup>[h]</sup> was to be born.<sup>5</sup> “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they said, “for it is written this way by the prophet:

***6 ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are in no way least among the rulers of Judah,  
for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’”<sup>[i]</sup>***

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod<sup>[j]</sup> privately summoned the wise men and determined from them when the star had appeared.<sup>8</sup> He<sup>[k]</sup> sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and look carefully for the child. When you find him, inform me so that I can go and worship him as well.”<sup>9</sup> After listening to the king they left, and once again<sup>[l]</sup> the star they saw when it rose<sup>[m]</sup> led them until it stopped above the place where the child was.<sup>10</sup> When they saw the star they shouted joyfully.<sup>[n]</sup><sup>11</sup> As they came into the house and saw the child with Mary his mother, they bowed down<sup>[o]</sup> and worshiped him. They opened their treasure boxes and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense,<sup>[p]</sup> and myrrh.<sup>[q]</sup><sup>12</sup> After being warned in a dream not to return to Herod,<sup>[r]</sup> they went back by another route to their own country.

### Footnotes

- a. [Matthew 2:1](#) **tn** *Grk* “in the days.”
- b. [Matthew 2:1](#) **sn** *King Herod* was Herod the Great, who ruled Judea (with the support of Rome) from 37 B.C. until he died in 4 B.C. He was known for his extensive building projects (including the temple in Jerusalem) and for his cruelty.

- c. [Matthew 2:1](#) **sn** The Greek term here, sometimes transliterated into English as *magi*, describes a class of wise men and priests who were astrologers (L&N 32.40).
- d. [Matthew 2:2](#) **tn** Or “in its rising,” referring to the astrological significance of a star in a particular portion of the sky. The term used for the “East” in [v. 1](#) is ἀνατολαί (*anatolai*, a plural form that is used typically of the rising of the sun), while in [vv. 2](#) and [9](#) the singular ἀνατολή (*anatolē*) is used. The singular is typically used of the rising of a star and as such should not normally be translated “in the east” (cf. BDAG 74 s.v. 1: “because of the sg. and the article in contrast to ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν, vs. [1](#), [it is] prob. not a geograph. expr. like the latter, but rather astronomical...likew. vs. [9](#)”).
- e. [Matthew 2:3](#) **sn** See the note on *King Herod* in [2:1](#).
- f. [Matthew 2:3](#) **tn** Here the city (Jerusalem) is put by metonymy for its inhabitants (see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 579).
- g. [Matthew 2:4](#) **tn** Or “and scribes of the people.” The traditional rendering of γραμματεὺς (*grammateus*) as “scribe” does not communicate much to the modern English reader, for whom the term might mean “professional copyist,” if it means anything at all. The people referred to here were recognized experts in the law of Moses and in traditional laws and regulations. Thus “expert in the law” comes closer to the meaning for the modern reader.
- h. [Matthew 2:4](#) **tn** Or “Messiah”; both “Christ” (Greek) and “Messiah” (Hebrew and Aramaic) mean “one who has been anointed.” **sn** See the note on *Christ* in [1:16](#).
- i. [Matthew 2:6](#) **sn** A quotation from [Mic 5:2](#).
- j. [Matthew 2:7](#) **sn** See the note on *King Herod* in [2:1](#).
- k. [Matthew 2:8](#) **tn** Here καί (*kai*) has not been translated.
- l. [Matthew 2:9](#) **tn** *Grk* “and behold the star.”
- m. [Matthew 2:9](#) **tn** See the note on the word “rose” in [2:2](#).
- n. [Matthew 2:10](#) **tn** *Grk* “they rejoiced with very great joy.”
- o. [Matthew 2:11](#) **tn** *Grk* “they fell down.” BDAG 815 s.v. πίπτω 1.b.α.1 has “fall down, throw oneself to the ground as a sign of devotion, before high-ranking persons or divine beings.”
- p. [Matthew 2:11](#) **sn** *Frankincense* refers to the aromatic resin of certain trees, used as a sweet-smelling incense (L&N 6.212).
- q. [Matthew 2:11](#) **sn** *Myrrh* consisted of the aromatic resin of certain shrubs (L&N 6.208). It was widely used in the ancient Near East by the Egyptians,

Greeks, and Romans as perfume, as incense, and for medicinal purposes (W. Michaelis, *TDNT* 7:457). It was also used in preparing a corpse for burial (cf. [John 19:39](#)).

- r. [Matthew 2:12](#) **sn** See the note on *King Herod* in [2:1](#).

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Why was it important that Jesus be born in Bethlehem?
2. Since the Magi were pagan astrologers, why would they leave everything in order to follow the star?
3. In light of the prophecy [v.6], why was Herod so concerned that the baby be found?
4. Trace the responses of the Magi upon seeing Jesus. How is that similar to the responses Christians make to Jesus? How is it different?
5. What does this story teach us about the nature and significance of Jesus?

**Points to Ponder:**

1. In your “journey” toward God, how are you like the Magi? Unlike them? Have you had to leave anything to follow Jesus?
2. What can you offer to Jesus?