

## After Jesus' Birth, What Next?

### Introduction:

When one of the royal babies is born in the UK, the world media makes a huge fuss. Later we are told of the child's Baptism and from time to time we hear more of this royal baby.

The same could be said about the birth of another royal baby 2000 years ago. Over recent days, we've thought about Jesus' birth. In our Gospel reading for today we're looking at what happened after Jesus' birth, possibly a couple of years later.

#### 1. THE MAGI: (2:1-12)

How many Magi or possibly, 'wise men' were there? We're not told. Three gifts are described and so many have assumed that there were three Magi. But the Bible is silent and it doesn't really matter.

When did they appear? Matthew records that it was *about that time*. It was not at Jesus' birth because they visited a 'house' as we see in verse 11 & Jesus is described as a 'child' not a baby three times in this chapter.

These un-named 'wise men' were students of astrology. They possibly saw unusual movements in the stars & recognised that a person of great importance had been born.

They made their way to Jerusalem to seek further information about *the newborn King*. (2:2) Did they want to look at him, take his photo or worship Him?! What sort of King does one 'worship'?

## After Jesus' Birth, What Next?

Herod was a jealous, cruel & evil Regional King who was afraid of another King being born in his territory. He wanted to destroy him & tried to trick the wise men, making out that he too wanted to worship Him whereas he had other plans! (8)

The wise men found Jesus, gave Him gifts & worshipped Him. (11)  
There's no mention in Matthew of the Shepherds & no mention in Luke of the wise men! Mark & John don't report either visit. But as with a jig-saw puzzle, when we put the bits together we have the whole picture.

God intervened by warning the Magi in a dream not to report back to King Herod & they returned home by another way. (12)

### 2. THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT. (2:13-18)

God had spoken through Angels in the lead-up to Jesus' birth & now we read of Joseph being warned to escape King Herod's clutches. (13)

Joseph obeyed the Lord & stayed in Egypt until Herod died. (14).  
This fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy found in Hosea 11:1 given around 700 years earlier: *When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.* (14-15)

## After Jesus' Birth, What Next?

Meanwhile King Herod thought that he could still kill Jesus so he ordered that all of the boys under two years of age in & around Bethlehem be murdered. This fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy found in Jeremiah 31:15 written some 550 yrs earlier: *This is what the Lord says: "A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more.* (Matt 2:16-18)

### 3. THE MOVE BACK TO NAZARETH. (2:19-23)

Luke tells us that Joseph's home was in Nazareth: *So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee.* (2:4) Mary probably lived in Nazareth as well.

With two more visits from an Angel, Joseph took his little family back to his home town & to safety. (21-22) This move also fulfilled prophecy.

### CONCLUSION:

If you were writing a play or making a film based on Matthew Chapter 2, who would you depict as the main actor or the supporting actors? The wise men? Joseph? King Herod? The Angels?

If you chose any of them you'd be wrong! It is Jesus who is central to the whole plot. He's mentioned eighteen times & all the other 'actors' are responding to His birth.

## **After Jesus' Birth, What Next?**

In many celebrations at this time of the year, the wise men mistakenly make a re-appearance every Christmas but we've noted that Jesus may have been two years old when they came. King Herod died without achieving his goal of seeing Jesus dead. Joseph probably died in Jesus' youth.

The Christmas celebrations will soon be over but Jesus' significance will never be over. The question we need to ask is this: of what significance is Jesus to you? Are you sure that He's your Saviour & Lord? If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?!

We're on the eve of a new year. What will you do this year to grow in your knowledge & love of God? What will you do to be better equipped to tell others about Jesus? How will you be involved in Jesus' great commission of making his Gospel known in the entire world?