

Gospel Study – Matthew 2/Luke 2:39-52

Introduction: Matthew was written to the nation of Israel. It is for religious people. Recorded here is the fulfillment of four prophecies. To show how these Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled at the birth of Jesus is the purpose, I believe, of this chapter. I am sure there were many sincere students of the Scriptures living in Christ's day who wondered how all of these prophecies could be fulfilled. It seemed difficult, if not impossible. Let me list several here, then we will see how they were fulfilled at the time of Christ's birth: (1) He was to be born in Bethlehem (see Mic_5:2); (2) He was to be called out of Egypt (see Hos_11:1); (3) There was to be weeping in Ramah (see Jer_31:15); and (4) He was a root from the stem of Jesse and therefore to be called a Nazarene (see Isa_11:1).

Mat 2:1-2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

Herod the Great was a descendant of Esau and, therefore, a traditional enemy of the Jews. He was a convert to Judaism, but his conversion was perhaps politically motivated. It was toward the close of his reign that wise men from the East came in search of the King of the Jews. - BBC

My question is this: How in the world did they associate a star with a king, and how did they identify it with Israel? All I know is that in that section of the East, the people had a prophecy given by Balaam, which is recorded in Num_24:17. (Remember that old Balaam gave this prophecy concerning the nation Israel.) "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." - McGee

Notice that the prophecy says a Star shall come out of Jacob—that is, the nation Israel. And a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel. The star and the sceptre go together. That is the only place I know where they are put together in prophecy in the Old Testament. The wise men in the East had that prophecy, and so they came out of the mysterious East seeking a king.

Mat 2:3-6 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'BUT YOU, BETHLEHEM, IN THE LAND OF JUDAH, ARE NOT THE LEAST AMONG THE RULERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.' "

This did disturb the city of Jerusalem and old King Herod. – **How many wise men and camels do you think there were?** Scripture is silent and only speaks of the number of gifts.

Mat 2:7-8 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

I am going to make a statement now and will try to prove it later: The star had appeared in the night sky sometime before the wise men appeared in Jerusalem. Remember that they made the trip by camel—not by jet plane. It is a long, hard trip by camel! I am of the opinion that they didn't arrive in Jerusalem until at least a year after the appearance of the star. This wasn't just a little Christmas celebration for

them. As they traveled the long, weary miles, they had been hanging on to the hope of seeing Him and presenting their gifts to Him. Notice that Herod “inquired diligently” the time of the star's appearance in the sky. Keep that in mind. It will be an important fact later in the story.

So Herod sends the wise men on to Bethlehem—

Mat 2:9-10 When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

Now the star appears again. I think they must have traveled a long time without seeing the star. That ought to answer the nonsense one hears today about there being a confluence of certain stars that happened at one particular time. Matthew makes it clear that this star was a very unusual star; in fact, it was a supernatural star. It was miraculous, and we needn't try to find an explanation for it. Now, it may be, as many astronomers think, that there was quite a movement in the heavens at that time. When He came, heaven and earth both responded to His coming into this world. I think such things did take place, but the wise men saw a supernatural star. – McGee

Mat 2:11-12 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

When they arrived, Jesus was not in the stable behind an inn. The great movement of people in the city of Bethlehem had now all ceased. They had gone back to their homes because the enrollment was over. But this little Baby was newly born, and they couldn't move Him for a while. Probably such a trip for the Little One would have jeopardized His life. So they had stayed in Bethlehem and had moved into a house. The wise men found them in a house.

Notice: They are wise men. They worshiped Jesus not Mary. The scripture is clear.

It is very interesting to study the facts concerning His second coming as they are related to us in ***Isa_60:6 : “The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD.”*** What gift is left out at His second coming? Myrrh! They do not bring myrrh because that speaks of His death. When He comes the second time, nothing will speak of His death. Gold speaks of His birth. He is born a King. Frankincense speaks of the fragrance of His life. Myrrh speaks of His death. All of this is indicated in the gifts that were brought to Him at His first coming. But at His next coming, myrrh will not be brought to Him. The next time He comes, He won't come to die upon a cross for the sins of the world. He will come as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Mat 2:13-15 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a

dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."

Notice: The Angel of the Lord appears to Joseph, and he obeys immediately. **Do we do that?**

Does the text say, Mary argued because she did see the angel and did not want to go to Egypt? Does it say, they stayed two days to get their deposit back on the house they rented and put in their notice on his carpenter job? Notice God respects Joseph's role as head of the household, and they both respect God's role and trusted each other. No arguing if the prophet talks to Mary and not Joseph or if the angel speaks to Joseph and not Mary.

This is a quotation from **Hos_11:1**. This is a marvelous prophecy because it has a historical basis. Out of Egypt the son was called, which was the nation; and out of Egypt the Son was called, who was a Person, this Child. So Joseph took the young Child and the mother to Egypt and stayed there until God called Him out.

Mat 2:16-18 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, LAMENTATION, WEEPING, AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEeping FOR HER CHILDREN, REFUSING TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY ARE NO MORE."

As I mentioned before, the wise men did not arrive at the time the shepherds arrived at the stable. The wise men came later, and, according to verse [Mat 2:11](#), the family had moved into a house by then. When Herod had had his private session with the wise men, he "inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared." I suppose that the wise men said, "Well, it was about a year ago." If we are accurate in thinking that these wise men came from all quarters of the East and had met in a certain place from which they began their trek to Jerusalem, that would consume a great deal of time in a day when travel was by camel instead of by jet. It may have been a year, it may have been longer, but Herod was so infuriated that the wise men did not come back and report concerning the Child, that he probably said, "Well, if they said it was a year ago when they saw the star, I'll just double it and make it two years and kill all the children two years old and younger!" Herod was actually a madman.

This is an unusual prophecy also. Jeremiah didn't say that the weeping would be heard in Bethlehem. I'm sure there was great mourning in Bethlehem too. But Jeremiah mentions Rama (spelled Ramah in the Old Testament), and Rama was about as far north of Jerusalem as Bethlehem was south of Jerusalem. And Rama was Jeremiah's country, by the way. I imagine that when the soldiers had been given their orders to slay the children, the captain said to Herod, "Where do you want me to begin?" And I think that old Herod said, "Well, just draw a circle around Jerusalem with the radius as far south as Bethlehem and as far north as Rama"—yet Rama was not in any way involved in it. So, you see, Herod slew a great many children. You can imagine the weeping all the way from Bethlehem to Rama, a radius of about ten to twelve miles, or twenty to twenty-five miles across the area. It must have been a heartbreaking time

in the lives of these people when they lost their little ones. The prophecy given through Jeremiah was literally fulfilled.

Mat 2:19-21 Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

It's essential to get Jesus out of the land of Egypt and back up into Israel. The most important reason is that He has been born under the Law, and He is to live under the Mosaic Law. He is the only One who really ever kept it.

Mat 2:22-23 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

"He shall be called a Nazarene." The Hebrew word for Nazareth was Netzer, meaning a branch or shoot. The city of Nazareth was so called because of its insignificance. The prophecies of Isa_11:1; Isa_53:2-3; and Psa_22:6 are involved in the term Nazarene. But the Lord Jesus was given that term not only because He was a root out of the stem of Jesse, but because He grew up in the city of Nazareth, and He was called a Nazarene, which fulfilled the prophecies.

Now we have seen all four of the prophecies dealing with locations in the birth of Christ: born in Bethlehem, called out of Egypt, weeping in Rama, and called a Nazarene were fulfilled in a very normal way. He touched base in all of these places, and what seemed rather strange prophecies became very sane realities.

Luke 2:39-52

The Return to Nazareth

Luk 2:39-40 So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

After Joseph and Mary had performed the rites of purification and dedication, they returned to Galilee, to their home town, Nazareth. Luke omits any mention of the visit of the wise men or of the flight into Egypt. – BBC

Luke is presenting the perfect Man. Dr. Luke looks at the Boy not only through the eyes of an obstetrician but through the watchful eye of a pediatrician. The Lord Jesus grew (physically), waxed strong in spirit (spiritually), and was filled with wisdom (mentally). The grace of God was upon this Boy and He grew physically, spiritually, and mentally.- McGee

Luke 2:41-52

VISIT OF JOSEPH, MARY, AND JESUS TO JERUSALEM WHEN JESUS WAS TWELVE

Next is recorded an incident that only Dr. Luke relates. Luke does this because he is a pediatrician and is interested in the Lord as a boy as well as a man. Luke lifts one scene out of the boyhood of Jesus when He was twelve years old. Luke's account is a detailed, isolated incident that took place when Jesus was twelve years old.

Luk 2:41 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

Luk 2:42-45 And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.

Mary and Joseph were raising a normal, healthy child. He did not run around wearing a halo, friend.

A Jewish boy becomes a son of the law at the age of twelve. When our Lord was twelve years old, His family made their annual pilgrimage up to Jerusalem for the Passover. But when they left to return to Galilee, they didn't notice that Jesus was not in the entourage. This may seem strange to us unless we realize that the family probably traveled with a fairly large caravan. They no doubt assumed that Jesus was walking with others of His own age.

Before condemning Joseph and Mary, we should remember how easy it is for us to travel a day's journey, supposing Jesus to be in the company, when actually we have lost contact with Him through unconfessed sin in our lives. In order to re-establish contact with Him, we must go back to the place where fellowship was broken, then confess and forsake our sin. – BBC

When you lose touch with Jesus, do you go back to the last place you had fellowship with Him?

Luk 2:46-50 Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

When Mary and Joseph finally found Jesus in the temple, He was standing in the midst of the learned doctors of that day, both hearing them and asking them questions. Apparently He was asking them questions they could not answer. And they were astonished at His answers—remember, He was only twelve! I think it is clear that Mary and Joseph were a little provoked with Him.

The answer of Jesus revealed His surprise that they did not realize He should be about His Father's business. Now, if Joseph were the father, he could have stepped up and said, "Well, what are you trying

to do—get some carpenter work here in Jerusalem?” No—His Father was not Joseph. He was speaking of the business of His heavenly Father. Mary, at this point, did not exactly appreciate who He was and what His work entailed, but she pondered these things in her heart.

Luk 2:51-52 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

At any rate, they were reunited, so they could return to Nazareth. The moral excellence of Jesus is seen in the words “He ... was subject to them.” Though Creator of the universe, yet He took His place as an obedient Child in this humble Jewish family. But all the time, His mother kept all these things in her heart.

2:52 Again we have the true humanity and normal growth of our Lord depicted:

1. His mental growth—increased in wisdom.
2. His physical growth—and stature.
3. His spiritual growth—in favor with God.
4. His social growth—in favor with men.

He was absolutely perfect in every aspect of His growth. Here Luke's narrative skips silently over eighteen years which the Lord Jesus spent in Nazareth as the Son of a carpenter. These years teach us the importance of preparation and training, the need for patience, and the value of common work. They warn against the temptation to jump from spiritual birth to public ministry. Those who do not have a normal spiritual childhood and adolescence court disaster in their later life and testimony. – BBC

Counter perspective: Since nothing is recorded in the Gospels about the early life of Jesus, some people call this segment of His life the “silent years.” I do not consider them silent years; I believe that the Old Testament Scriptures fill in these years if you look closely. -McGee