

What was seen at Bethlehem?

Luke 2:8-23

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Luke 2:1-23 (King James) Version

¹ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

² (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

³ And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

⁵ To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

⁹ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

¹² And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

¹⁵ And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

¹⁶ And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

¹⁷ And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

¹⁸ And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

²¹ And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

²² And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

²³ (As it is written in the law of the LORD, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

 **Consider this for a moment.**

I wonder what we would have heard had we been there that night. It is a question that lingers with us every time we read this account of the Saviors birth.

Would we have heard the choirs of angels singing or simply the sounds of barnyard animals shifting around?

Would we have understood the hushed silence of the divine presence, or simply the chill of a cold east wind?

Would we have understood the message of Emmanuel, God with us, or would the message of the angels of that evening have passed us by?

If two people had been there that night in Bethlehem it is quite possible that they could have heard and seen two entirely different scenes before them.

1. God never presents himself in revelation in a manner in which we are forced to believe.
2. The situation is presented to us, and we are left to respond.
3. We are always left with an option, for that is God's way.
4. Thus, one person can say "It's a miracle, whilst another says "It's a coincidence."

Certainly, very few people in Palestine saw and heard and understood what took place that night.

The choirs of angels singing "Glory to God in the highest" as they witnessed to the shepherds in the field about the birth of a Saviour born this day in the city of David, whilst the haggling and trading was going on in the Jerusalem bazaar.

Luke 2: ¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

- Nobody had stirred from their own desires to see what was going on. Many people had come to town to be there for the Tax census.
- If anyone did see Mary and Joseph on that most Holy night, they were too preoccupied with their own problems to offer any assistance.
- ✓ The prophet Micah had long since before been told of the one that would come forth from Ephratah. Yet how short were the minds of the people that they did not even look up.

Micah 5:2

But thou, **Bethlehem** Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

As the prophet said: Jesus is Born in Bethlehem (the city of David)

Luke 2: ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

The Book of Luke Chapter 2 describes for all of us an understanding and a confirmation of our dear Saviour's birth. The one of salvation by whom the whole world will be redeemed if they come to him.

- The Book of Galatians tells the same story.

Galatians 4:4-5 (King James) Version ⁴ but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ⁵ to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

- A saviour presented to the world. Gods only begotten Son.
 - ✓ In the book of Luke we are told that after his birth, within 8 days they travelled to Jerusalem.
1. Jesus' departure 8 days later from Bethlehem, to a small town five or six miles from Jerusalem, to be presented to the Lord.

Luke 2:22 ²² And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord; ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

2. Bethlehem was once called Ephrathah, and is referred several times by that name in the OT. (Micah 5:2)
3. The town came to be called Bethlehem after the conquest under Joshua, its new name meaning "house of bread".

Luke 2: ²¹And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²²And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

- ✓ **So we know that Jesus was not kept in the same place for long. Therefore we see the Magi looking for him a little later.**

Matthew 2: ¹Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, ²Saying, **Where is he that is born King of the Jews?** for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

⁶And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

⁷Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

⁹When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

The Wise Men – who were they?

- ✓ Have you ever asked yourself who were these wise men from the east?
 - ✓ The wise men are in fact Magi, known for their astrology, and astronomy, they were also possibly kings of their own country from Persia, coming to see who.... “**He who has been born king of the Jews**”.
1. According to the [Gospel of Matthew](#), the only one of the four [Canonical gospels](#) to mention the Magi, they were the first religious figures to worship Jesus. It states that "they" came "from the east" to worship the [Christ](#), "born [King of the Jews](#)."
 - ✓ Although the account does not mention the number of people "they" or "the Magi" referring to, the three gifts offered have led to the widespread assumption that there were three men.
 - ✓ Their identification as kings in later Christian writings is probably linked to Psalms 72:11, "*May all kings fall down before him*".
 1. They were possibly kingmakers in their own right, very religious and educated people, devout worshippers in their own religion (Zoroastrianism). (a belief in the battle between good and evil)
 2. They worshipped a monotheistic god, and had a very similar understandings of the OT prophecies, no doubt entrenched in them during Israel's captivity in the inter testament period during Israel's captivity in Persia, and Babylon.
 3. This being possibly as a result of Daniel the prophet's testimony and reading and interpreting of the strange dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar at the king's request. Only Daniel was able to do.

Here in the book of Daniel we read the association of the east, and Daniels effect left on them. So perhaps it is no surprise that these Medes and Persians learned of the true God, and so the wise men, the Magi came in earnest and in sincerity to worship the “God” of the OT.

Daniel 2:2

Then the king commanded to call the **magicians**, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

Daniel 2:10

The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any **magician**, or astrologer, or Chaldean.

Daniel 2:24

Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the **wise** men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the **wise** men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation.

Daniel 2:27

Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the **wise** men, the astrologers, the **magicians**, the soothsayers, shew unto the king;

Daniel 2:48

Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the **wise** men of Babylon.

- ✓ The powerful oriental kingmakers from Persia travelled a great distance from the east from Persia, to recognize and honour a King in whose coronation they had no part, a King far greater than any they had ever, or would ever, set on a throne.
- ❖ The events here described by The Book of Matthew probably occurred several months after Jesus was born.

We see from Luke 2:11 that Jesus' family was now staying in a house rather than the stable where Jesus was born (Luke 2:7).

- ❖ Jesus had been born into a poor family, and it is likely that the gifts given by the Magi (wise men), were used to pay their way at Jerusalem.
- ✓ We can see from Luke 2:21-27, prior to the wise men coming they had offered merely the basic of all offerings to the Lord, "a pair of turtle doves" or "two young pigeons". They did not have enough to offer a lamb.

As we turn from looking at the Wise Men for a moment we look at Herod.

1. Herod was an "Edomite" not a Jew by birth, although he married a Jewish woman to try to appear to blend in with the Jews. But he ruled by military force upon them to sustain his position.
 2. The thought of a "Jewish" king being born seriously threatened his kingdom and his rule.
 3. Herod was cruel and merciless. He was incredibly jealous, suspicious, and afraid for his position and power.
 4. Fearing his potential threat, he had the high priest Aristobulus, who was his wife Miriamne's brother, drowned, - he then had Miriamne herself killed, and then her mother and two of his own sons.
 5. Five days before his death he had a third son executed.
- ✓ One of the greatest evidences of his bloodthirstiness and insane cruelty was having the most distinguished citizens of Jerusalem arrested and imprisoned shortly before his death.
 - ❖ Because he knew nobody would mourn his own death, he gave orders for certain prisoners to be executed the moment he died – in order to guarantee that there would be mourning in Jerusalem.
 - 🚩 That barbaric act was exceeded in cruelty only by his slaughtering of "all the 2 year old and under male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its surrounding areas, from two year old and under" (Matt. 2:16) in hope of killing any threats to his throne.
 - 🚩 The news had come of Jesus' birth from one of the Magi (wise men) who had said that Jesus had been born King of the Jews.

- ❖ It is without doubt as we look at these scriptures as the Wise men travelled from afar to come and praise and worship Christ the King, others like Herod sought only to defend their kingdoms.
- The effect continues today as Christ is forsaken for other kingdoms.
 1. As the star was made visible to those who sought Christ, and as the light of the Lord was revealed to the shepherds, so the light of the Lord continues to shine, and make itself known today.
 2. The glory of the Lord is all around us, all we need to do is open our eyes and see it.
- 🌈 The star seen at the birth of Jesus is a witness as to who Jesus is.

And Jesus testifies of Himself in the scriptures.

Revelation 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. **I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.**

- 🌈 The birth of Jesus was seen at Bethlehem just as the bible declared it would be so and the heavens continue to declare His glory. Night after night and day after day the stars remind everyone of the true God.

Don't deny the Holy Jesus, the God and Saviour.

CLOSE in PRAYER.....