

Life Group Devotion

FEAR NOT - Week of December 28

As we step into the pages of Scripture – into Matthew 2:1-12 – allow me to share some thoughts from my heart to yours ... (Scripture is in bold print. My thoughts in italics):

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea

we recall this was due to the census decreed by Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1)

During the reign of King Herod

Herod the Great reigned in Judea from 37 BC to 4 BC

About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn King of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him"

The wise men from eastern lands – 'magi' priestly caste of Media/Persia (likely Zoroastrian priests, an eastern religion involving astrology, dream interpretation, magical arts). Also likely that the interest in 'a coming King of the Jews' was sparked among Persian wise men many years prior when a Judean exile served faithfully in the courts of Babylon and Media-Persian: i.e. Daniel, known for his wisdom, served in the royal courts until the first year of the reign of Cyrus, circa 539 BC (see Daniel 1:21; also Daniel 5:10-12)

King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem

Though a great builder and visionary, he was mentally disturbed and all people feared Herod. We recall another time 'all Jerusalem was in an uproar': Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem – a day also predicted (Zechariah 9:9) directly preceding Christ's suffering – betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion (see Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-40).

He (Herod) called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"

Herod did not know the promise of a coming Ruler, as foretold by the prophet of old

In Bethlehem of Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote:

'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel'

From Micah 5:2 – "... a Ruler of Israel will come from you, One whose origins are from the distant past". This Ruler will fulfill a dual role; He will serve forever as King and Priest, as in the order of Melchizedek whose origins were unknown (see Genesis 14:18; Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:15-28).

Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him too!"

Instead of rejoicing in a promised Deliverer, Herod resorts to deception and calculated wickedness. A dark heart will always seek ways to thwart the word of God. Territorialism and fear had driven Herod to kill members of his family ... How much more would he not risk losing his throne to some infant born in Bethlehem. His plan to eliminate the baby is masked in spiritual rhetoric.

After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!

The same star the wise men had seen guides them to Jesus! Heaven's radiant glory is where Christ is! All heaven and earth will one day bow in reverence to this King of kings. The wise men's resolve to find Christ and worship Him is an example for us today. Notice, they are filled with joy not sadness. True worship brings joy not misery.

They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

*Worship involves an offering. The wise men's gifts are prophetic and speak to three key events: The **gold** – the eternal reign of Christ. This Child (Emmanuel 'God With Us') is the promised King (Isaiah 9:6-7); the **frankincense** – the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:14-16). This Child serves as High Priest for all time in a priestly order that spans time and space as we know it (1 Peter 3:22); the **myrrh** – the death, burial, and glorious resurrection of Christ. This Child would grow up to be a man whose suffering and death would bring salvation to the world (Isaiah 53:4-10; Hebrews 5:8; Revelation 1:18).*

When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

The Lord warns the wise men to return home via another route, giving them time to leave before Herod can kill them; also gives time for the Christ Child to be spared. Thus, the angel also warns Joseph to take the Child and Mary, his mother, to Egypt. When Herod realizes he is outwitted, his response is utterly unspeakable (Matthew 2:13-18; also Revelation 12:5-6).

Close in a time of reflection, prayer, praise and worship.

Thank you for allowing me to share thoughts on Matthew, chapter two. May we press forward as the Wise Men did and offer our worship each new day of this coming year.

Pastor Julie Kyker

Fear Not

for a Savior is born

Text: Matthew 2:1-12

Plain Truth

_____ to our _____ increases our
_____, while _____ and
_____ God increases our _____.

1. Herod was _____ tightly to his _____
to maintain his _____ and _____.

2. The wise men _____ and followed a light in
_____.

3. Are you a _____?

4. We exercise increase our _____ with
_____ not _____.

One Year Bible Reading For This Week:

December 28: Zechariah 12:1-13:9, Revelation 19:1-21, Psalm 147:1-20, Proverbs 31:1-7

December 29: Zechariah 14:1-21, Revelation 20:1-15, Psalm 148:1-14, Proverbs 31:8-9

December 30: Malachi 1:1-2:17, Revelation 21:1-27, Psalm 149:1-9, Proverbs 31:10-24

December 31: Malachi 3:1-4:6, Revelation 22:1-21, Psalm 150:1-6, Proverbs 31:25-31

January 1: Genesis 1:1-2:25, Matthew 1:1-2:12, Psalm 1:1-6, Proverbs 1:1-6

January 2: Genesis 3:1-4:26, Matthew 2:13-3:6, Psalm 2:1-12, Proverbs 1:7-9

January 3: Genesis 5:1-7:24, Matthew 3:7-4:11, Psalm 3:1-8, Proverbs 1:10-19

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