

10.

The Wise Men's Arrival

After two years of preparation and a saga of over 1,000 miles in the year 5 B.C., the wise men's from Mesopotamia journey were about to reach their destination. From ascending 2,300 feet in the 24 miles from the wilderness of Judea and Jericho, the caravan bypassed the small village of Bethany and rounded the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. To their amazement, the wise men saw, among the surrounding hills, *Jerusalem* — one of the beautiful cities of the ancient world.



[*Author's Reflection:* Parthian officials believed to be represented by kings according to the prophecy of Isaiah from the lands of modern day Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaidzhan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan in the Near East,⁴⁹ arrived in Jerusalem to a very disturbed King Herod. This immense and armed caravan of Parthians that accompanied the Wise Men's visit almost led to a major Roman war with the Parthian. Surely, the Roman authority in Judea was well aware of the Parthia's interest in anyone claiming to be the Messiah.]

Presenting themselves before the king, the leader of the wise men boldly asked, "Where is the One who has been born King of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." (**Matthew 2:2**) When Herod the Great heard these words, he was very troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

⁴⁹ Isaiah 60:3.

Herod then privately gathered all the chief priests and scribes in another room of the royal palace and demanded to know the site of the Christ's birthplace. They responded, "In Bethlehem of Judea," just six miles from Jerusalem. For this is what the prophet Micah wrote:

'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'⁵⁰ (**Matthew 2:6**)

Then Herod privately called the wise men into his counsel and found out the exact time the star had appeared. (It had been nearly two years.) The worried king now sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, return to me with the news so that I too may go and worship him." (**Matthew 2:8**)

So the wise men departed from Jerusalem in a caravan and headed south. Suddenly, the star seen in the east appeared and went before them. Upon seeing it, the wise men rejoiced with exceeding joy. The glowing star led the wise men over the six miles through the hill country of Judea. At Bethlehem, the angelic star stood over the house, where the Christ toddler was staying.

Entering the house, these well-dressed foreigners from the east saw the chosen child with his guardian and mother and fell down to worship him. Then, opening their treasures, the wise men presented the Christ child with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, all symbols of Persian royalty.

Later as the wise men slept, the LORD God personally warned them in a dream not to return to Herod the Great, but depart for their own country by another route. The huge Parthian caravan shortly headed southward out of Judea another way under the cover of night. Rounding the southern end of the Dead Sea, the wise men's large caravan headed east towards away from the shoreline using the Kings' Highway and turned north through Decapolis. It lay outside Herod's eastern territory of Perea. The wise men then safely traveled to Damascus and back to their homeland in Parthia. (Armed with Jehovah's blessed knowledge that the Messiah of Israel was indeed here on earth, these wise men upon reaching their homeland would begin preparing their countrymen for the day when the Messiah would establish His divine kingdom.)

⁵⁰ Micah 5:2.

Likewise, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, “Get up, take the young child and his mother and escape into Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” (**Matthew 2:13**) Joseph rose at night and took the young toddler and Mary southeast into Egypt, some 140 miles away.

The family from Bethlehem with the Christ child resided in this foreign land until the death of Herod the Great. Therefore, it was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”⁵¹ (**Matthew 2:15**)

In recanting, Joseph quickly gathered his family and the things needed for a fast get away. They would have quietly mounted camels and headed south. Under the cover of night, both parties had left Bethlehem in a fast pace. Only 14 miles away, Joseph soon came upon Hebron before sunrise. (Mary would have surely tried to warn Elisabeth, who refused to leave because Zacharias was at the temple.) Briefly staying, the Joseph continued 28 more miles to Beer-sheba before morning. The city marked Herod’s most southern boundaries. Called the place of peace, it was at Beer-sheba that Abraham dig a well and made a peace treaty with Abimelech, king of Gerar in the land of the Philistines, with seven ewe lambs to secure the patriarch’s well. (see Genesis 21:22-34)

Not resting, Joseph pushed on into the night to continue his escape. The coastal road to Egypt still lay some 40 miles to the west. After Joseph and Mary quickly purchased provisions, they rushed westward, and by noon passed through Gerar and by evening they lodged safely along the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea along the Gaza strip. They had left the kingdom of Herod the Great. Yet, nearly 140 miles still lay ahead through the ancient desert wilderness of Shur. The background scene of the ocean must have been comforting.

A week later, Joseph and Mary witnessed the previous parched lands suddenly blooming. They had reached the very fertile Nile Delta of Egypt. Whether or not the couple journeyed across the flourishing landscapes another 160 miles to the city of Alexandria, where over 1,000,000 Jews had migrated, is not recorded in the gospel. But Joseph and Mary would have found safe lodging within the foreign land in which their forefather had escaped during the Exodus of Moses. Here, they waited until the LORD God of Israel called them home.

⁵¹ Hosea 11:1.

