

The Messiah's Birth – Discussion Notes¹

(Updated 1/2020; Dr. Baines, Jr.)

Read: Matthew 2:7-10, 16-23

Summary Highlights: The king sent the astronomers (i.e., wise men) to find the Child (i.e., Jesus). They were instructed to send word back to the king. They found the Child, as they were led by a star. Herod is very angry about being mocked. He has many children under the age of two killed (i.e., genocide). There is great mourning, as prophesied. Herod died. Joseph was informed in a dream to go back to Israel. He ended up in Nazareth, as prophesied.

Introduction: A key idea in today's lesson is that God took care of His Son and our Savior, in spite of the wickedness of the day. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to trust and obey God, in spite of the wickedness of our day.

Key Ideas:

1. Sinful agendas. Notice in vss. 7-8 that King Herod had a wicked agenda and plan. We should not be surprised by people, especially those who make no claim to being a Christian, having wicked agendas and plans. The reason it is so important for Christians to be involved in the election process is to help put people of godly character in such positions. It is bad enough for a person to have a wicked agenda, but it is worst when a wicked person of power has one. Every believer should be striving to live by God's agenda, instead of the sinful agenda of the world. *Let's work on living by God's agenda, which includes trying to put people with godly character in positions of influence.*

2. God's provision of a star. Notice in vs. 9 that God provided a star, as a means of helping the astronomers/wise men meet Jesus. God is still working in mysterious ways to help people get right with Him through Christ. The "star" may be our witnessing to those who are lost. It may be Christian literature that is read at the right time. It may be hard times accompanied by the right sermon. *Let's be open to God's using whatever method He wants to use to help humanity get right with Him.*

3. God's trustworthy word. Notice in vss. 17-18 that the word of the Lord sent through Jeremiah came true. Not only did the prophecy that God sent through Jeremiah come true, but we can count on all that God said would happen actually happening. God's word is trustworthy. Therefore, *let's live according to God's word.* His word says that if we obey, we will be blessed. If we don't obey, we will be punished. At the core of God's will are the issues of loving Him, ourselves, and others with the blessed assurance of

¹ Prepare to discuss the following: What is the point, what scripture supports the point, what is the application sentence, and what is an example of living by the material? After the material is covered, be prepared to answer the following: Which point do you want to spend extra time on, why do you think this point is so important, and what tips do you have for living by this material, in spite of the challenges? **What is one thing you will take from this session and work on, in regard to your discipleship goals?**

being saved by faith in Jesus. Living in disobedience is **not** the behavior of those who believe that God's word is trustworthy.

4. Trusting God in wicked times. Notice in vss. 16-18 that there were some very wicked times in our text. Just as it was a time of great wickedness then, we are subject to have more times of wickedness. There is so much violence, exploitation, and abuse going on today. However, we must learn to trust God, even when we don't understand why He allows so much wickedness to persist. *Let's work on our faith in God's taking care of His own, even when our days look mighty dark.* Prayerful study and obedience with the support of other believers can help us make it through wicked times.

5. Troubles don't last always. Notice in vs. 19 that Herod is dead. A marvelous thing about this world is that troubles don't last always. Either the cause of the trouble will pass away. Or the effect of the trouble will pass away. Our enemies will leave us alone, we will move beyond their influence, or God will simply give us peace in the midst of their mischief. But it is certain that troubles don't last always. *Let's develop the faith to endure our current troubles, with the hope of them being temporary.* Prayerful study and obedience with the support of other believers can help us develop this kind of faith.

6. Obedience. Notice in vss. 21, 23 that Joseph obeyed God. It is one thing to hear God but another to obey Him. Thank God, we don't have to wait for a dream and then try to interpret the dream. We have the Bible. However, our studying and understanding the Bible is not enough to please God. We must obey God. *Let's work on understanding and obeying God's will for our lives.* No matter how strange it may look (e.g., running from trouble, living in a ghetto, etc.), God's way is best for us.