

Twenty-Eight Days With Matthew

Day 2 – John 2

Prayer:

Father in heaven, we often do not understand Your marvelous plan for us. As we read Matthew's Gospel, help us to see that everything that happens is under Your control. As You fulfilled Your promise of grace to us in Jesus, the Messiah, comfort and reassure us of Your plan working in us today. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Meditation:

Having made the point in Matthew one that Jesus' birth was the fulfillment of Scripture (1:22) Matthew, true to his purpose, makes the *same* point in Matthew 2. This pattern will continue throughout Matthew's Gospel.

The "Visit of the Magi" in chapter two is not merely a nice little story of "Three Kings" coming to see the "baby" Jesus. Matthew helps debunk much of the false mythology of Christmas.

First of all, Matthew noted, they were not "kings." They were royal advisors to the King specializing in interpreting astrological (and perhaps any other) signs that might impact the King and the kingdom.

Second, we don't know how many Magi came. If they were bearing such priceless gifts, it would be hard to imagine there wasn't also some sort of royal entourage guarding "the goods."

Third, Jesus was not an infant at the time of their visit (cf. Matthew 2:11). "On coming to the house, they saw the *child*..." Matthew wrote. Jesus was no longer "lying in a manger." He was not in a cave, barn or crèche as on the night of His birth. Caesar's imperial census apparently completed (cf. Luke 2:1ff), Bethlehem's overcrowded conditions subsided. Many of crowds had left to go back to their own lands.

Mary and Joseph, able to find room in a suitable home somewhere in the immediate vicinity of Bethlehem, decided to stay in their familial hometown instead of going back to Nazareth. (Note that like any under-two-little boy, Jesus probably was still doing His share of crying in their simple home [cf. "no crying He makes"]).

In Bethlehem, the holy family couldn't stay long. Why not? The obvious reason was that Herod was going to try to kill the infant King. However, Matthew noted there was a much more overwhelming and compelling reason why they couldn't stay: *Scripture had to be fulfilled*.

Matthew, could have simply shared the events surrounding Herod's Slaughter of the Innocents and stopped at that. Instead, Matthew went out of his way to make

Twenty-Eight Days With Matthew

Day 2 – John 2

a special, dramatic thematic point. “Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah *was fulfilled*” (2:17 [NIV]).

Why did Matthew add “*was fulfilled*?” *First*, He wanted to his readers to know Herod’s actions were no accidental happenstance. The sinister sovereign Herod and the evil world were not in control. *God was*.

Second, Matthew wanted his readers to know that, in a greater way, these unfolding events were *specific* evidence pointing to the unfolding of God’s Messianic plan. The four-hundred year “Silent Period” between the writing of the last book of the Old Testament and the writing of the first book of the New Testament was over. Finally, the longing for the Messiah is over. The waiting completed. The words of the prophets were being fulfilled, the Kingdom of Heaven was being revealed right before their very own eyes...in the Bethlehem-born Messiah born.

As tragic as it was, the appearing of the mourning voice “heard in Ramah...” (Matthew 2:17) was also *no* accident. Matthew would have every Jew—and every Gentile—know that *all* these events were the fulfillment of God’s eternal plan from the beginning of the world.

Even before Jesus’ ministry began—even before Jesus actually did *any* miracles, any teaching, before His first sermon or speaking to His first audience—the Scriptures unmistakably identify Jesus as Messiah. The prophets— Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and Hosea—prove it.

Matthew 2 “runneth over” in Old Testament covenantal Messianism. Matthew’s intricately detailed account unmistakably describe the *widely-accepted* criteria for the prophesied Messiah.

- ?? The Messiah was to be a *King*, of the Davidic dynasty, ruling over all earthly kings including Herod (Cf. II Samuel 7 et al).
- ?? He was to be born of the Jews, born exactly where the Scriptures prophesied the “Christ” (i.e. “Messiah”) was to be born. “In Bethlehem of Judea” (2:5).
- ?? He had to be a *Prophet*, like Moses. This is indicated in Hosea’s prophecy, “Out of Egypt I have called my son,” (in Matthew 2:15 [NIV]).

This “runneth over” Messianism also recalls prophecies not specifically mentioned in Matthew. Isaiah’s “Epiphany Prophecy,” which found fulfillment in the coming of the Magi, is one such example.

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you...And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.” Isaiah 60:1,6 (NIV)

Twenty-Eight Days With Matthew

Day 2 – John 2

Prophecy *is* fulfilled. Jesus of Nazareth *is* the predicted Messiah. For those who doubt, Matthew's Gospel will continue to provide Scriptural certainty that Jesus is the Messiah.

Most important for any reader of Matthew to realize is this: the remarkable fulfillment of Scripture has just begun. As it unfolds, the ancient messianic hope will finally be realized. When all is said and done, can anyone reasonably deny that Jesus truly is the Christ, the Messiah of God? For Matthew, that answer is a firm, unequivocal "No!"

Prayer:

Lord, with St. Paul we are amazed at how marvelous Your ways are and Your paths beyond tracing out! Continue to open my heart, mind and soul to Your Word. Enable me by Your Spirit to see how all Scriptures—Old and New Testament—were written for my salvation. Keep me faithful to You and to Your Word as I continue to walk with You each day. Amen.

Thomas F. Fischer

Copyright 2008 Thomas F. Fischer
All Rights Reserved. Unauthorized duplication is strictly prohibited.
www.DailyBibleHabit.com

tff1108