

WISE MEN STILL SEEK HIM

INTRODUCTION

We have been looking at the major wealth of information found in what is known as the “Christmas” story. Many of our group have come from a specific background where there is a tradition of rejecting anything to do with “Christmas” because of the pagan overtones. Their perception is accurate but I fear they have substituted one set of traditions for another and in the process have thrown the baby out with the bathwater.

While the worldly “crap” that now surrounds the birth of Christ is totally worth discarding, there is a wonderful wealth of substance, joy, wonder and love and law to be found in this part of Scripture that has been avoided.

Christmas was originally the “mass” that celebrated the birth of Christ. His birth was arguably the most important event in the history of the world. It is the starting point for our measurement of time in terms of history; it produced a culture that dominated and shaped the world for 2000 years and was the beginning of our salvation and the rite of passage to God’s Kingdom.

If Jesus had not been born, He could not have died for our sins.

PREPARATION

In the first talk we looked at the preparation God went through to bring this amazingly special baby to earth, He prepared for it before creation and prepared His people with prophesy for 3000 years. He prepared by providing a messenger to a priest and a simple young village lass who was prepared to accept the commission. He prepared a wonderful obedient man to succour her.

SIMPLE FOLK

In the second talk we looked at how God used simple folk to carry out His amazing plan. A simple village girl, a lowly carpenter, shepherds on a hill. Not educated. Not important. Not wealthy. Not powerful.

The beautifully simple story of a simple birth in the lowliest conditions reveals the aspect of Jesus that is totally man.

This part of the story helps us to understand that God loves, cares about and uses simple folk.

Like us.

WISE MEN

Today we are looking at the wise, the clever, the powerful, the wealthy, the educated and the knowledgeable.

God provides this wealth and intelligence and opportunities for some men but He expects them to use it to His glory. More is expected of these people. Jesus makes this quite clear in several of His parables.

Luk 12:47 And that servant who knew his lord's will and did not prepare, nor did according to His will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.

Luk 12:48 But he not knowing, and doing *things* worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. **For to whomever much is given, of him much shall be required.** And to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

We saw how savagely Gabriel dealt with Zechariah and how gently with Mary. Zachariah should have known better with his heritage, education and experience

TEMPLE FOLK

Back to our story. We left The Holy Family after Jesus' circumcision and naming at the Temple.

MARY'S SANCTIFICATION

Then

Luk 2:22 And when the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were fulfilled, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present *Him* to the Lord

Luk 2:23 (as it is written in *the* Law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord)

We find this instruction in

Lev 12:4 And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled

Lev 12:6 When the time of her purification is completed, whether for a son or daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the Tent of the LORD's presence a one-year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon or a dove for a sin offering.

Lev 12:7 The priest shall present her offering to the LORD and perform the ritual to take away her impurity, and she will be ritually clean. This, then, is what a woman must do after giving birth.

Lev 12:8 If the woman cannot afford a lamb, she shall bring two doves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering, and the priest shall perform the ritual to take away her impurity, and she will be ritually clean.

And Mary and Joseph

Luk 2:24 and to offer a sacrifice according to that said in the Law of *the* Lord, A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

This probably took place in the Women's section of the Temple as women were not permitted in the Men's section.

The fact that they offered the pigeons rather than doves showed that they were poor . Just simple folk.

DEDICATION OF THE BABY

One can mount an argument that this was also the time when Jesus was dedicated to the Lord, as we do with our children on the Last Great Day but this was not just an ordinary dedication.

Exo 13:2 Sanctify all the first-born to Me, whatever opens the womb among the sons of Israel, of man and of beast. It *is* Mine.

Jesus was not only Mary and Joseph's first born son, He was the first born of a whole new race of humans who could claim the privilege of being called Sons of God.

Mat 5:9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers! For they shall be called the sons of God.

Rom 9:25 As He also says in Hosea, "I will call those not My people, My people; and those not beloved, Beloved."

Rom 9:26 And it shall be, in the place where it was said to them. "You *are* not My people; **there they shall be called sons of the living God.**"

SIMEON

Luke 2:25 At that time there was a man named Simeon living in Jerusalem. He was a good, God-fearing man and was waiting for Israel to be saved. The Holy Spirit was with him

Luke 2:26 and had assured him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's promised Messiah.

A modern tradition is that the Holy Spirit didn't operate until the New Testament Pentecost. Here, we are told that Simeon was filled with the Spirit, as was John. In Simeon, we see the Gifts of Faith, Prophecy and a Word of Knowledge.

Luke 2:27 Led by the Spirit, Simeon went into the Temple. When the parents brought the child Jesus into the Temple to do for him what the Law required,

Luke 2:28 Simeon took the child in his arms and gave thanks to God:

Can you imagine how Mary must have felt when a weird old man, who had been hanging around the Temple for a hundred years or so came up and started praying over the baby. He even took the child from her arms. I would have panicked.

But wait, the traditional picture says that Simeon was an old man who was probably a priest who died the day after this incident. There may be a clue to this in his prayer in Luke 2:29

Luke 2:29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

But Scripture only says he was a man living in Jerusalem who was filled by the Spirit and that he wouldn't die till he saw the Saviour. He could have lived for a long time after this.

Not that it matters, but it is another example of just how strong the traditions we grow up with, are and how easy it is to just accept what we are told without verifying them. But there can be an amazing wealth and comfort in traditions as well.

Who cares how old Simeon was? Who cares when he died? The important thing is that he lived, was righteous, had faith, was filled with the Spirit, had the courage to follow that leading and speak out in some of the most beautiful words in English Literature.... Um I know he spoke in Hebrew but the translation has gone into the classics of the English language as the *Nunc dimittis*. Like the Magnificat of Mary, the *Nunc dimittis* has been set to music by many notable composers, such as Rachmaninof

Again we HAVE to use the King James version

Luke 2:29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

Luke 2:30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

Luke 2:31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

Luke 2:32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

What a wonderful summary of God's plan and the acknowledgement of the enormous preparation that had gone into getting to this point.

Here is the first time we see a mention of Jesus' role in reaching out to the Gentiles. All the previous messages had focused on his relationship to and role within the Israelite community.

We remember the promise to Mary was

Luke 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

Luke 1:33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

God, rule, David, House of Jacob and forever and now the Gentiles... us.

PERSONAL ASPECT

And so

Luke 2:33 The child's father and mother were amazed at the things Simeon said about him.

Wouldn't you be? Think about it. You are told that your kid is going to fill this amazing role. It must have been pretty scary and totally unbelievable. Simeon picked up on this "fear" ... maybe awe is a better word... and manifested another Gift of the Spirit, a Word of Wisdom or Knowledge.

He spoke to Mary specifically.

Luke 2:34 Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, "This child is chosen by God for the destruction and the salvation of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against

Luke 2:35 and so reveal their secret thoughts. And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart."

He knew what was ahead of her. Nothing is closer to a mother's heart than her children and the bond between Miriam and Jesus would have been something that none of us mothers can imagine.

What a lovely man to consider the feelings of a mere woman. How obvious the spirit must have been in him.

ANNA

But God always send two witnesses

Deu 19:15 "The testimony of one person alone is not to suffice to convict anyone of any iniquity, sin, or guilt. But the matter will stand on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Mat 18:16 But if he doesn't listen, take one or two others with you so that 'every word may be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

2Co 13:1 This will be the third time I am coming to you. "Every accusation must be verified by two or three witnesses."

1Ti 5:19 Do not accept an accusation against an elder unless it is supported "by two or three witnesses."

Heb 10:28 Anyone who violates the Law of Moses dies without mercy "on the testimony of two or three witnesses."

Rev 11:3 I will give my two witnesses who wear sackcloth the authority to prophesy for 1,260 days."

So the second witness is Anna, again a mere woman.

Luk 2:36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of *the* tribe of Asher. She was advanced in many days, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity.

The Jews would simply not accept the word of a woman. But here God is using a woman as a witness, revealing the new and better way He is introducing for ALL His people.

She was of the tribe of Asher, part of the Northern Kingdom, which was "lost". Obviously some families survived within Judah.

Luk 2:37 And she *was* a widow *of* eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, serving God with fastings and prayers night and day.

"She was a widow of eighty four years". This could mean that she was 84 years old, or that she had been a widow for 84 years, making her over 100.

Again Luke, as a Doctor, would have been fascinated by the age of this lady. We, today, make a big fuss of those who turn 100, so Anna would have been one remarkable lady.

PROPHET

The fact that she was recognised as prophet points to her unique position as it took quite a strict process to have these powers recognised. AND she still had her marbles. AND she was totally devout, obeying all the precepts of the Law with prayer and fasting.

And she was filled with, and obedient to, the Spirit because,

Luke 2:38 That very same hour she arrived

How often does God co-ordinate things like this? Simeon turned up and so did Anna. Both at the same time. How this must have reassured Mary. I wonder if they had a long talk.

Some say she was part of the Zealot movement which had been trying to set Israel free from the Roman rule but we know that God had a bigger plan..

and spoke of Him to all those in Jerusalem eagerly expecting redemption.

Hebrews 9:12 tells us

(ISV) Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood he went into the Most Holy Place once for all and secured our eternal redemption.

Redemption here means “ a *ransoming* “, the ransoming of all. The death of this tiny adorable baby, applies to me as if I was, you were, the only person in the world who had sinned. This tiny bit of protoplasm became my Saviour and was born simply for my redemption.

TEMPLE SHEPHERDS

There is an argument that the shepherds actually were not simple folk but were specialised, educated men specifically trained in rearing the sheep that were to be sacrificed. It was their job to make sure that none of the animals were hurt, damaged, or blemished.

So after all that excitement

Luke 2:39 When Joseph and Mary had finished doing all that was required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to their hometown of Nazareth in Galilee.

Luke 2:40 The child grew and became strong; he was full of wisdom, and God's blessings were upon him.

WISE MEN

So Luke has finished his story and we return to Matthew.

Matthew wrote primarily to the Jews and from a masculine view point. He had started his story by establishing Jesus rights to the claim of the line of David, and so the kingship. Remember you need at least two witnesses in a Jewish court to substantiate any claim so Luke's story is the first.

Matthew emphasises the link to the prophecies telling of the Messiah's coming with the focus on the kingship of Jesus.

SET IN TIME

Mat 2:1 Now Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod

Again. Our simple but deeply significant few words. Matthew sets the time in history.. His Story.

WHY NOT IN LUKE

It seems strange to me that Luke did not, at least, mention the visit of the Magi if he was interviewing Miriam and others, as it was such an important event. Miriam would have remembered it so clearly.

Those determined to discredit the Bible, claim this as another "mistake" but if you consider that Matthew set out to write the Gospel intended for the Jews and Luke the Gospel for the Gentiles, Luke may have felt that this section had already been covered

Whatever the reason, God has made sure that we hear both stories and the fact that they are told by two witnesses coming from different points of view, adds another dimension of authenticity to it.

MAGI

Matt 2:1 wise men from the east

Such an understatement!!

The actual Greek word is “magos” translated “wise men”, “men” “kings” astrologers. The word magi is the plural of Latin magus, borrowed from Greek magos, which, in turn, is derived from Old Persian magus, which refers to the priestly caste of Zoroastrianism

The same word is given as sorcerer and sorcery when describing "Elymas the sorcerer" in Acts 13:6–11,

Act 13:6 And when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain conjurer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name *was* Bar-jesus;

Act 13:7 who was with the proconsul of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man. He called for Barnabas and Saul and asked to hear the Word of God.

Act 13:8 But Elymas the conjurer (for so his name is, if translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

Act 13:9 Then Saul (who *is* also Paul), filled with *the* Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him

Act 13:10 and said, O son of the Devil, full of all deceit and all craftiness, enemy of all righteousness, will you not stop perverting the right ways of *the* Lord?

Act 13:11 And now, behold, *the* hand of the Lord *is* on you. And you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a while. And immediately a mist and a darkness fell on him, and he went about seeking *some* to lead him by the hand.

and Simon Magus, considered a heretic by the early Church, in Acts 8:9–13.

Act 8:9 But a certain man called Simon had long been conjuring in the city, and amazing the nation of Samaria, claiming himself to be some great one.

Act 8:10 All gave heed to *him*, from the least to the greatest, saying, This one is the great power of God.

Act 8:11 And they were paying attention to him, because for a long time he had amazed them *with* conjuring.

Later, derivatives of the term Magi came to be applied to the occult in general and led to the English term magic and magician.

So the term applies to people who use perceived supernatural powers, to have knowledge and so influence. Obviously this power can come from the dark side, but it can also come from esoteric knowledge gained from study and hard work over many years.

ZOROASTRIANS.

Tradition has it that these men were Zoroastrians. Zoroastrianism is one of the most ancient of religions in the world. It was based in Persia. Greek sources place Zoroaster at 6000 years before the death of Plato, that is, about 6350 B.C.

PERSIA

Persia is not Iran. . Persians are Persian with a very long and proud history. Even though they have lived within many conquering kingdoms, like Babylon and Iran, Persians are Persians. They were, and still are, most definitely not Muslim and most hold the Zoroastrian religion.

TEACHINGS

The Zoroastrians believe that

- There is one God,
- His name is Ahura Mazda, Ahura means "Lord," and Mazda means "Wise," so Zoroastrians call God the "Wise Lord."
- He is the universal and pervasive source and fountain of all life.
- He existed before time
- Complex Godhead of major spirit with two other entities. (Jesus and Holy Spirit?) Trinity?
- Complex dualities of light and dark, spirit and matter, reality and non-reality.
- Concept of Good and Evil, Increaser and Destroyer.
- A king would arise who could raise the dead and transform the world into a kingdom of peace and security and that this King would come from the line of Abraham.

So the similarity with Christianity and Judaism is obvious. Some say that Melchizedek was a Zoroastrian.

It seems that Daniel was one, or at least accepted the practice as valid.

Dan 2:46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and worshiped Daniel, and he commanded to offer an offering and incense to him.

Dan 2:47 The king answered Daniel and said, It is true that your God *is* a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.

Dan 2:48 Then the king made Daniel great, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over all the province of Babylon, and chief of the prefects over all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel had no trouble working with these men as their basic spiritual tenets were similar.

ASTROLOGY

As part of their religion, the study of astrology was a major factor.

Astronomy is the study of the physical nature of the stars and the planets in physical space. Astrology is the study of how the positions of these physical bodies affect the events in our lives. They studied the skies and the physical patterns found there and saw in them a code from God telling of His plans.

Astrology is now held in contempt because of the links to clairvoyants and palm readers and the blatant commercialism in the media but it was held in high regard for a very long time. While it is perfectly logical to dismiss and laugh at the “Horoscopes” in cheap magazines and well respected newspapers, which should be avoided by Christians, when you look into the deeper systematic study, there is some uncannily accurate “stuff”. But that is another story.

At that time it was highly regarded as a science, and, indeed their work was the basis of modern astronomy.

ASTROMOMY

Astronomy, a natural science, is the study of celestial objects (such as stars, galaxies, planets moons, asteroids, comets and nebulae). It includes disciplines

as diverse as astrometry, celestial navigation, observational astronomy and the making of calendars so these patterns are undeniable.

It is one of the oldest sciences with the Babylonians accepted as the earliest to record these observations.

ZODIAC.

Now bear with me here for a while. It took me some time to change my mindset on this issue as I had had a very negative understanding of this concept due to my ignorance of basic astronomy.

The zodiac the convention used to identify different areas of the heavens. It divides the circle of the sky into twelve areas based of the sun's passage during the course of a year.

This is simple physics.

These twelve divisions are identified by 12 patterns of constellations of stars and are called signs which are named Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces. They are named loosely on the shapes of the major constellations in the divisions. The meanings of their names, if not the actual words, have been accepted universally and continuously throughout history in all languages.

The configuration of these constellations or patterns of stars never changes but, because the earth moves, their apparent positions relative to a fixed place on earth, does. These positions change depending on the season, time in history etc and this can, and is, plotted mathematically. It is a totally physical occurrence measurable by man, just like the temperature. There ain't no magic here, except that of God's amazing creation.

Astrometry uses the Zodiac to identify the location of stars in the same way as we use latitude and longitude or a birdwatcher uses a clock face to pinpoint the position of a bird in tree. It is a convention we agree to use.

The Zodiac is fixed. It is us that move.

HISTORICAL.

This convention for the division of the heavens into the zodiacal signs originates in Babylonian ("Chaldean") astronomy during the first half of the 1st millennium BC.

The Ancients saw these patterns every night in their skies, which were so much brighter and seemed so much closer than we see them due to light pollution hiding them. They plotted them and worked out the patterns thousands of years ago. Modern computer modelling allows us to go back in time to whatever year we want and produce an image of the night sky in any latitude, so we can know the position of the zodiac on that day. The amount of change that has occurred in the earth's position in the heavens, amazed me, in that the Southern Cross was visible in Jerusalem at the time of Christ's birth.

WHO SETS THE BOUNDARIES

The Zodiac actually forms an imaginary wall around the universe and all the stars, planets, black holes etc. exist within this framework.

The Bible is full of references that tell us that God set up the programme that controls these movements.

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Gen 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to divide between the day and the night. And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.

Gen 1:15 And let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth. And it was so.

Job 9:6 *He* who shakes the earth out of its place, and the pillars of it tremble;

Job 9:7 the One speaking to the sun, and it does not rise; and seals up the stars;

Job 9:8 who alone stretches out the heavens, and walks on the waves of the sea;

Job 9:9 who made the Bear, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south;

Job 38:4 Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell if you have understanding!

Job 38:5 Who has set its measurements, for you know? Or who has stretched the line on it?

Job 38:6 On what *are* its bases sunk, or who cast its cornerstone,

Job 38:7 when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Job 38:8 Or *who* shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth as it came from the womb?

Job 38:9 When I made the clouds its robe, and darkness its navel-band,

Job 38:10 and set My limit on it, and set bars and doors,

Job 38:11 and I said, You shall come to here, but no further; and here your proud waves shall stop.

Job 38:12 Have you commanded the morning from your days, *and* caused the dawn to know its place,

Job 38:13 that it might take hold of the ends of the earth; that the wicked might be shaken out of it?

Job 38:18 Have you understood the breadth of the earth? Tell, if you know it all!

Job 38:19 Where *is* the way *where* light dwells? And where *is* the place of darkness,

Job 38:20 that you should take it to its boundary, and that you should know the paths *to* its house?

Job 38:33 Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set up their rulership on the earth?

Job 41:10 None *is so* fierce as to dare to stir him up; who then *is* able to stand before Me?

Job 41:11 Who has gone before Me that I should repay? All that *is* the heavens is Mine.

Psa 8:3 When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have established;

Psa 19:1 *To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.* The heavens declare the glory of God; and the expanse proclaims His handiwork.

Psa 19:2 Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

Psa 19:3 *There is* no speech nor *are* there words; their voice is not heard.

Psa 19:4 Their line has gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,

Psa 104:1 Bless Jehovah, O my soul. O Jehovah my God, You are very great; You have put on honor and majesty,

Psa 104:2 covering Yourself *with* light as with a robe; and stretching out the heavens like a curtain;

.....GAME PLAN

Astrology is the study of the code that God has hidden in the movement of these heavenly bodies relative to the Zodiac.

We can see some validity from

Psa 19:2 Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

Job 38:31 Can you bind the bands of the Pleiades, or loosen the cords of Orion?

Job 38:32 Can you bring the constellations in their season? Or can you guide the Bear with its sons?

Job 38:33 Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set up their rulership on the earth?

And it makes sense that God would provide a map or an outline of His game plan. Romans 1:19

Rom 1:19 because the thing which may be known of God is clearly revealed within them, for God revealed *it* to them.

Rom 1:20 For the unseen things of Him from *the* creation of *the* world *are* clearly seen, being realized by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, for them to be without excuse.

He has provided two witnesses to His glory; the Bible and the Stars, the Bible for the learned and the stars for simple folk, though our world has turned this upside down.

Mat 5:18 For truly I say to you, Till the heaven and the earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle shall in any way pass from the Law until all is fulfilled.

This is simply an amazing concept when one looks into it and is a complex study for another time but there is so much “stuff” in the skies that we don’t see.

Maybe we have thrown the baby out with the bathwater here too because of pagan high-jacking God’s wonder and perverting it.

WHAT BASIS

What else can we look at to substantiate this

- God named the stars. Although we use different words in some cases, the bases name of each star and constellation and planet have the same or uncannily similar names in every language.

Psa 147:4 He appoints the number of the stars; He calls them all by *their* names.

Psa 147:4 He keeps track of the number of stars, assigning names to all of them.

Isa 40:26 "Lift your eyes up to heaven and see who created all these—the one who leads out their vast array of stars by number, calling them all by name—because of his great might and his powerful strength—and not one is missing."

- The meaning of the name of the stars and constellations are spookily constant in all languages with few variations.
- These names have been used throughout history
- Some mentioned in the Bible

Job 38:31 Can you bind the bands of the Pleiades, or loosen the cords of Orion?

Job 38:32 Can you bring the constellations in their season? Or can you guide the Bear with its sons?

- We didn't know stars sang until we could measure electromagnetic radiation

Job 38:7 when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

- Pleiades is made up of seven stars held together by forces

Job 38:31 Can you bind the bands of the Pleiades, or loosen the cords of Orion?

I could go on but you get the picture.

STAR OF BETHLEHEM

STAR

So what was this star? Tradition shows it as a single star shining over the stable in the shape of a cross but it was so much more significant and totally fascinating than a simple little star.

ASTRONOMY

What the Magi saw was the revelation of an astronomical event in which they could read an astrological pattern.

Astronomically, there is no doubt that this event took place. That Venus and Jupiter did come into conjunction in 2 BC has been verified by Planetariums all over the world by computer modelling of the position of the stars at that time.

The astronomy is complex but simply, when viewed from earth it appeared that Venus, which is the brightest of the planets to our eye, appeared to merge with Jupiter to form one very bright “star”. Obviously technically they are planets and not stars but let’s not get too picky. This visual effect happens simply because the orbits of the two planets bring them together in a line as viewed from earth called a conjunction. While they are millions of miles apart, in reality, they appear to us to be joining.

We know that the conjunction started on 17th June (Pentecost?) and reached its climax on 12th August, that year. We also know that this all took place against the background of the constellation of Leo in the Zodiac; the pattern of the constellations of stars that is, absolute, unchangeable in space, through which the earth and the other planets move. God’s immovable plan.

Added to all this we know that Regulus, the chief star in the constellation of Leo was also moving in a sort of circular pattern around the conjunction over the period of the alignment. On 17th June 2BC when the junction was at its greatest, it was also an extra-ordinary full moon so the night sky was lit up in a supernatural way.

PASSAGE OF JUPITER

If we then look at the passage of the two major planets in this system we see that after the conjunction, the two planets separate as their orbits take them on different paths. Jupiter continues on his westward, in Persian eyes, path towards Judea. When he reaches the nadir of this orbit he appears to stop in the sky or to stand still for a while, then move again in the opposite direction. Later there is a second convergence with Venus occurs but this time it takes place in the area of the zodiac controlled by Virgo, the maiden. Jupiter then continues on his eastward path back to Persia.

ASTROLOGY

So now please humour me while we look at the Astrology of this event.

The Planets, in our language are named after Roman Gods.

Jupiter:

- The chief ancient Roman god.
- Zeus in Greek but still chief.
- Root word means bright
- Sky God
- Male
- Protector
- Moral values. Justice. Good government.
- He is especially concerned with oaths, treaties, and leagues, marriage ceremonies
- Association with kingship and sovereignty,

Venus:

- Goddess
- Love,
- Beauty, [sex](#), fertility, prosperity and victory.
- The mother Goddess.
- Totally feminine.

So the meaning that this solar event was foretelling was fairly obvious. We have the totally male figure converging with the totally female figure. It is not rocket science to see that this major celestial event was foretelling the birth of a child.

Jupiter is the King of Heaven and is two and a half times more massive than all the other *planets* in the solar system combined. Undoubtedly the King.

Venus, while the second [planet](#) from the [Sun](#), comes closer to earth than any other planet and is the brightest . She is the Morning or evening Star.

LEO

Remember, the Zodiac acts as a graffitied wall around the skies and all these events took place in backdrop of the area of the Zodiac called Leo which obviously is the lion, the King of the Beasts. The primary star in Leo is with a star called Regulus meaning “I am king”.

CHRISTIAN MESSAGE.

So let's look at the Christian overtones found in this codeo .

- Jupiter we can obviously see Father God, King of the Heavens, creator, Law giver, Moral, masculine strength.
- Venus we can see love and comfort, forgiveness and succour.
- Regulus tells of the soon coming King
- Mercury the Messenger is the Holy Spirit.
- All aspects of the Godhead in union.
- Mars the aspect of conflict to come as the old makes way for the new order.
- Moon controller of seasons and calendar.
- Sun giver of Life on earth.
- Leo meaning Lion.
- Regulus, “I am King”

LION OF JUDAH

And this all takes place under the auspices of Leo, the Lion, the emblem of the tribe of Judah.

Gen 49:9 Judah is a lion cub. My son, you have gone up from the prey. Crouching like a lion, he lies down, Like a lioness, who would dare rouse him?

One of the faces of the Godhead in Daniel

Dan 7:4 The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings. I watched until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on its feet like a man. And a man's heart was given to it.

And in Revelation at the end,

Rev 4:6 And a sea of glass *was* in front of the throne, like crystal. And in *the* midst of the throne, and around the throne, *were* four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind.

Rev 4:7 And the first living creature *was* like a lion, and the second living creature like a calf, and the third living creature had the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.

But most importantly,

Rev 5:5 And one of the elders said to me, Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals of it.

ZODIAC CORRECTION

Another spooky aspect of this is that, when one looks at the traditional order of Zodiac, the cycle starts with Aries and ends with Pisces. If this modern system is used none of these wonders can be seen. The message is hidden. But it would seem that the age old secret held in the Sphinx is the true starting place for the Zodiac. If we start with Venus, the head of a woman and end with Leo, the body of a lion, this whole secret is revealed. Venus is the first star seen in the morning and so the beginning of the cycle and Leo represents the end.

Venus, the woman represents Venus, the woman the new age, an age based on love while Jupiter represents the old age which was totally masculine ruled by oaths and law. The new age, within the structure of kingship and order will be more of love and compassion and forgiveness.

OUR TIME

This happened again in October 2015 when Saturn, Jupiter, Mars and Venus, and finally Mercury came into a conjunction but this time they were all in a line and sequence. On the morning of Oct. 17, Jupiter and Mars draw close together, and then Jupiter and Venus on the morning of Oct. 25.

This all took place with Regulus, the brightest star in Leo, the Lion, hovering near Venus. Lastly, Mercury began to appeared.

The Feast of Tabernacles finished on 5th October when this conjunction started.

Does this mean that a King, embodied in love or, with a bride, involved with war and a messenger may be imminent as He was 2000 years ago?

It is happening again as we speak, this month, with Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Mars and Saturn forming a line in the morning sky. Saturn tells of harvest... Interestingly, the symbol used for Saturn contains a cross and a crescent.

WISE MEN AGAIN

So from their unlocking of God's code they knew that something was about to happen involving

- The King of the Universe
- A woman
- Love
- A messenger
- Conflict
- West of them
- Linked to the moon's timing (Festivals)
- An earthly king
- A baby
- Important enough to be in the stars
- Change the world

Could this be the Mahdi, [Isa](#), (Muslim), the Buddhist [Maitreya](#), the Hindu [Kalki](#). To our wise men this could mean [Saoshyant](#).

To us Messiah, Christ.

AND WE HAVE COME TO WORSHIP HIM.

Well. Wouldn't you if you knew all that?

So they set off to their west, not knowing exactly where they were going. I call that faith in the King of the Universe and these men were not part of God's chosen people.

Mat 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in *the* days of Herod the king, behold, wise men came from *the* east to Jerusalem,

Mat 2:2 saying, Where is He *who is* born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him.

East here literally means “rising sun”. East. I hadn’t thought of that.

Obviously, the underling went and told Herod what they were asking for. Well

Mat 2:3 When King Herod heard about this, he was very upset, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem.

KING HEROD

We met this revolting, but capable man, in our study of God’s preparation for Christ’s birth.

He was known as Herod the Great and was known for his colossal building projects throughout Judea. He was a revolting man but managed to establish prosperity and peace (Pax Romana) in Israel during his reign by aligning himself with the Romans. This long period of peace when people were able to move about freely, was a major contributing factor in the spread of Christianity.

PRIESTS

So

Mat 2:4 He called together all the chief priests and the teachers of the Law and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?"

Mat 2:5 "In the town of Bethlehem in Judea," they answered. "For this is what the prophet wrote:

Mat 2:6 'Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least of the leading cities of Judah; for from you will come a leader who will guide my people Israel.' "

We/they knew this from

Mic 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.

Mic 5:3 Therefore will he give them up, until the time *that* she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

Mic 5:4 And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Isa 9:7 Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

So Herod was really shaken but being the wily old fox he was he

Mat 2:7 So Herod called the visitors from the East to a secret meeting and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

Mat 2:8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem with these instructions: "Go and make a careful search for the child; and when you find him, let me know, so that I too may go and worship him."

Mat 2:9 And so they left, and on their way they saw the same star they had seen in the East. When they saw it, how happy they were, what joy was theirs! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

The text seems to imply that they had lost sight of it for a while. When Jupiter separated from Venus, he moved westward, reached his nadir and so appeared to stand still in the sky. Just where they found the child.

Mat 2:10 And seeing the star, they rejoiced *with* exceedingly great joy.

Can you imagine the excitement or was it quiet contentment, or simple acceptance?

GIFTS.

So the Magi

they knelt down and worshiped him.

HOW MANY

Tradition shows three men on camels silhouetted against a bright sky. Wonderful image but Scripture nowhere says that there were three wise men. There were three gifts but not three men. There couldn't have been. They were powerful men in Babylon and would have had and, have needed, quite an entourage. We don't know how many there were and it is not important

NAMES

Traditional also names them

- [Melchior](#) ([/'mɛlki_ɔr/](#);^[13] also Melichior^[14]), a Persian scholar;
- [Caspar](#) ([/'kæspər/](#) or [/'kæspar/](#);^[15] also Gaspar, Jaspas, Jaspas, Gathaspa,^{[14][16]} and other variations), an Indian scholar;
- [Balthazar](#) ([/'bæɪθə_zɑr/](#) or [/bæɪ'θæzər/](#);^[17] also Balthasar, Balthassar, and Bithisarea^[14]), a [Babylonian](#) scholar.

They are also described as kings, though this isn't in Scripture. Interestingly they are described as Kings and scholars of these same regions so they may be some truth in that.

Three gifts, all highly importance in their symbolism.

Did the Magi know these significances or did they just bring what they had in the cupboard and winged it? I think they knew.

They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him.

All the gifts were things were precious and really hard to obtain and all had to go through tough processes to be refined. They didn't come easy. That was what made them precious.

GOLD.

Gold is the only metal that does not deteriorate, oxidise or rust so it is the same yesterday, today and forever. Like God. Gold is the most malleable of all metals; a single gram can be beaten into a sheet of 1 square meter, thin enough to become transparent, as we should be in Christ.

The metal is beautiful to see and to touch and shines with a depth of lustre that no other metal can match. It is also very, very expensive, rare and is difficult and very dirty to extract. In the past, it was used only by kings as they were the only ones who could afford it and so, is the symbol which represents royalty.

There were large amounts of gold used in the Tabernacle and the Temples. But they also made the golden calf .

It will feature in the new Kingdom when the baby returns in His glory, not only in the form of crowns for us but also the whole city will be made of it.

[Rev 21:18](#) And the foundation of its wall was jasper; and the city *was* pure gold, like clear glass.

[Rev 21:21](#) And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls. Respectively, each one of the gates was one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, as transparent glass.

Gold represents royalty, a king. We all know why this gift was given. This baby was to become the King of Kings.

[**1Ti 6:15**](#) For He in His own time will reveal *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

[**Rev 17:14**](#) These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them. For He is Lord of lords and King of kings. And those with Him *are* the called and elect and faithful ones.

[**Rev 19:16**](#) And He has on *His* garment, and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Not the earthly king that these men were seeking and of whom Herod was so afraid, this baby was to be the King of the whole world, the whole Universe.

But not just yet.

FRANKINCENSE

The next gift was frankincense. This is a very valuable and precious spice is an aromatic resin obtained from trees of the genus *Boswellia*.

The trees are considered unusual for their ability to grow in environments so unforgiving that they sometimes grow out of almost solid rock and the resin extracted by slashing the trees as drops which solidify, called tears.

It has a balsamic-spicy, slightly lemon, fragrance and is still used in the perfume. The use of incense in worship is a common practice, even today, especially in Asia because the sweet smoke wafts upward as prayers do.

USE IN THE TEMPLE

It was used extensively in the formulation of the incense used in the Temple as part of the sacrificial system.

Scripture tells us in [Lev1:13](#) that when they offered their burnt offering it was a sweet fragrance to him as the smell of the incense is a sweet fragrance for us.

Lev 1:13 But he shall wash the inward parts and the legs in water; and the priest shall bring near all *of it* and burn it on the altar. It *is* a burnt sacrifice, a fire offering of a sweet fragrance to Jehovah.

But it wasn't just any old incense. There was special formula which had to be used exclusively in the temple

[Exo 30:34](#) The LORD said to Moses, "Take an equal part of each of the following sweet spices---stacte, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense.

[Exo 30:35](#) Use them to make incense, mixed like perfume. Add salt to keep it pure and holy.

[Exo 30:36](#) Beat part of it into a fine powder, take it into the Tent of my presence, and sprinkle it in front of the Covenant Box. Treat this incense as completely holy.

There were a special family of priest who specialised in producing the incense for the Temple.

1Ch 9:29 Some of them also *were* appointed to oversee the vessels and all the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices.

and they were the only ones who could use it and not for their personal pleasure.

Exo 30:37 Do not use the same formula to make any incense like it for yourselves. Treat it as a holy thing dedicated to me.

Exo 30:38 If anyone makes any like it for use as perfume, he will no longer be considered one of my people."

Frankincense was also sprinkled over oil on the food offerings or the first fruit offering

Lev 2:14 And if you bring a food offering of your firstfruits to Jehovah, green ears roasted by fire, grains of a garden, you shall bring near for a food offering your firstfruits,

Lev 2:15 And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it. It *is* a food offering.

And on the shewbread that was baked .

Lev 24:5 And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes of it. Two-tenth parts shall be in one cake.

Lev 24:6 And you shall set them in two rows, six *on* a row, on the pure table before Jehovah.

Lev 24:7 And you shall put pure frankincense on *each* row, so that it may be on the bread for a memorial, a fire offering to Jehovah.

However, it was expressly forbidden to be used in the Sin Offering.

Lev 5:11 But if he is not able to bring two turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, then he that sinned shall bring for his offering the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it, neither shall he put frankincense on it. For it *is* a sin offering.

It was intended solely for the purpose of making the things used in the Tabernacle holy, setting them aside for God. Most importantly, it was used in

the formulation of the ointment that consecrated the priests to God's service. They had to be holy or clean or without sin in order to come into His presence.

But it is vital that the use of this precious spice made in the right spirit of holiness.

Jeremiah 6:20 (GNB) What do I care about the incense they bring me from Sheba, or the spices from a distant land? I will not accept their offerings or be pleased with their sacrifices.

So frankincense was given as a gift to symbolise the sacredness of this baby and the role that He would play as priest, our High Priest.

Heb 4:14 Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.

MYRRH

Myrrh is the aromatic gum from a small, thorny tree species of the genus [*Commiphora*](#), which grows in dry, stony soil. Its name come from a word meaning bitter because of its taste, but also embodies grief and death.

Myrrh mixed with natron was used for the embalming of bodies.

SCRIPTURE

- Along with Joseph, it was part of the cargo the Ishmaelites carried to Egypt

[Gen 37:25](#) And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spices and balm and myrrh, going to carry *it* down to Egypt.

- Later sent as present to Joseph by his father when he sent the brothers back with Benjamin to Egypt.

[Gen 43:11](#) And their father Israel said unto them, If *it must be* so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:

- It is an oil so was part of the ointment that sanctified both the equipment and the priests.

Exo 30:22 The LORD said to Moses,

Exo 30:23 "Take the finest spices---12 pounds of liquid myrrh, 6 pounds of sweet-smelling cinnamon, 6 pounds of sweet-smelling cane,

Exo 30:24 and 12 pounds of cassia (all weighed according to the official standard). Add one gallon of olive oil,

Exo 30:25 and make a sacred anointing oil, mixed like perfume.

Exo 30:26 Use it to anoint the Tent of my presence, the Covenant Box,

Exo 30:27 the table and all its equipment, the lampstand and its equipment, the altar for burning incense,

Exo 30:28 the altar for burning offerings, together with all its equipment, and the washbasin with its base.

Exo 30:29 Dedicate these things in this way, and they will be completely holy, and anyone or anything that touches them will be harmed by the power of its holiness.

Exo 30:30 Then anoint Aaron and his sons, and ordain them as priests in my service.

Exo 30:31 Say to the people of Israel, 'This holy anointing oil is to be used in my service for all time to come.

Exo 30:32 It must not be poured on ordinary men, and you must not use the same formula to make any mixture like it. It is holy, and you must treat it as holy.

Exo 30:33 Whoever makes any like it or uses any of it on anyone who is not a priest will no longer be considered one of my people.' "

- and it was not to be used for personal pleasure

Exo 30:37 Do not use the same formula to make any incense like it for yourselves. Treat it as a holy thing dedicated to me.

[Exo 30:38](#) If anyone makes any like it for use as perfume, he will no longer be considered one of my people."

- Used as a beauty treatment in the harem with Ester. Imagine the cost of that, even today. Tradition has it there were 200 of them and the treatment was for 12 months.

[Est 2:12](#) Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, *to wit*, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with *other* things for the purifying of the women;)

- Involved three times in the life and death of Jesus Christ.
 - The first obviously is at His birth.
 - His death where

[Mar 15:23](#) And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received *it* not.

because it has a sedating effect but also hallucinogenic properties. He refused because He needed all his wits about Him in what was to come.

- Burial

[Joh 19:39](#) And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound *weight*.

WOUNDING

When these precious gums are harvested a tree is scored repeatedly to make it bleed. The wound penetrates through the bark and into the sapwood, the tree bleeds a resin which is collected and dried.

[Isa 53:5](#) But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

[1Pe 2:24](#) Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

REPRESENTATION OF MESSIAH

GOLD

Obviously this represents the Kingly role, our Heavenly King and future ruler of the universe.

FRANKINCENSE

The link with Jesus role as Priest, our High priest and our holiness is obvious.

- Role of elimination of uncleanness and making holy
- Involvement in offerings for sin.
- Sweet fragrance to the Lord

Mat 3:17 And lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

- The Shewbread showing how this baby was to become the Bread of Life

Lev 23:17 "Bring two loaves of bread from home as wave offerings made from two tenths of fine flour, baked with leaven, as first fruits to the LORD.

Lev 23:18 "Along with the loaves of bread, bring seven lambs, a year old without defect, one young bull as an offering, and two rams as offering to the LORD, along with your gift and drink offerings, and present them as an offering made by fire, a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

Joh 6:48 I am the bread of life.

Joh 6:49 Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness and died.

Joh 6:50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a person may eat it and not die.

Joh 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. And the bread I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Joh 6:58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not the kind that your ancestors ate. They died, but the one who eats this bread will live forever."

Joh 6:32 Jesus told them, "Truly, I tell all of you with certainty, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.

Joh 6:33 The bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Joh 6:34 Then they told him, "Sir, give us this bread all the time."

Joh 6:35 Jesus told them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never become hungry, and whoever believes in me will never become thirsty.

Joh 6:36 I told you that you have seen me, yet you don't believe.

- **Passover offering**

Mat 26:26 While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and handed it to the disciples, saying, "Take this and eat it. This is my body."

Mar 14:22 While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and handed it to them, saying, "Take some. This is my body

Luk 22:19 Then he took a loaf of bread, gave thanks, broke it in pieces, and handed it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Keep on doing this in memory of me."

- **It was never included in the sin offering because He was the man without sin.**

Heb 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.

(ISV) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. Instead, we have one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet he never sinned.

- The first fruits,

Act 26:23 that the Messiah would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead and would bring light both to our people and to the gentiles."

Rom 8:23 However, not only the creation, but we who have the first fruits of the Spirit also groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

2Th 2:13 At all times we are obligated to thank God for you, brothers who are loved by the Lord, because God chose you to be the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through faith in the truth.

He is our high priest

MYRRH

There is the obvious link with death in the embalming process and this symbolises His death that was to enable the world to be free from sin, either now on an individual basis or at His return.

JERUSALEM

So the three gifts arrived in Jerusalem. One usually finds a king in a place so that is where they went. Let's not forget these were very important men in their society and were not travelling on second hand camels. They travelled in style. They approached someone in the Palace and

Mat 2:2 and asked, "Where is the one who was born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

Mat 2:3 When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed, as was all of Jerusalem.

Again, a classic Biblical understatement. I bet he panicked.

Mat 2:4 He called together all the high priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

Mat 2:5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, because that is what was written by the prophet:

Mat 2:6 'O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, because from you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'

The crafty old fox had not held power for so long unless he was cunning.

Mat 2:7 Then Herod secretly called together the wise men, found out from them the time the star had appeared,

Mat 2:8 and sent them to Bethlehem. He told them, "As you go, search carefully for the child. When you find him, tell me so that I, too, may go and worship him."

Mat 2:9 After listening to the king, they set out, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.

Remember that Jupiter's (King) orbit reaches the nadir, he appears to stop in the sky or to stand still for a while, then move again in the opposite direction. So he appears to back to the east, to Persia.

Mat 2:10 When they saw the star, they were ecstatic with joy.

NAZARETH OR BETHLEHEM?

There is some confusion as to whether the family was in Nazareth or Bethlehem when the Magi called and this is seized upon by those who try to prove that the Bible is wrong.

And, indeed, there can be confusion here if you are influenced by the Christmas Cards.

Luke 2:39 When Joseph and Mary had finished doing all that was required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to their hometown of Nazareth in Galilee.

Mat 2:1 Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the time when Herod was king.

Soon afterward, some men who studied the stars came from the East to Jerusalem

Luke says they went home to Nazareth but Matthew tells us that they were still in Bethlehem when the Wise Men or Magi visited them.

And indeed this does at first sight seem to be a bit off putting and I guess it comes down to faith, there are reasons to explain this discrepancy.

WHEN WAS THIS

So

Mat 2:11 They went into the house

HOUSE

The Greek word used here is the one used to describe a house or residence. Not a stable as tradition tells us, but a boring old house.

BABY

, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary,

The word used here means a *childling* (of either sex), that is, (properly) an infant, or (by extension) a half grown *boy* or girl.

A child not a baby.

This word is used to describe children, not babies, in all contexts but in Mark 5:41, we are told that the child was a twelve years old girl. The word is never used to describe a baby.

Mar 5:41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

Mar 5:42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was *of the age* of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

Mar 5:43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

The traditional picture has the shepherds and the Magi worshipping the baby at the same time at the stable but it can't be

- Baby had to be born before Magi could seek Him in Bethlehem

- Astrology
- Child versus baby
- House versus stable

So we know that Jesus was child, maybe as old as two years.

PROTECTION

WISE MEN

Then God intervenes again. He is smarter than any cunning human.

[Mat 2:12](#) Having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they left for their own country by a different road.

The interpretation of dreams was also part of their philosophy. Remember Daniel and the Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

I wonder if they intended going back to Herod. It seems that way. I have always found it a bit naïve of them to need to be told to do this. A more cynical person should have been able to anticipate Herod's reaction. Usually "good" and "open" people who are close to God, can be a bit naïve and unsuspecting of bad motives in others.

Still they obeyed.

THE BABY

[Mat 2:13](#) After they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt," he said. "Stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and kill him."

[Mat 2:14](#) So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left at night for Egypt.

That night? I wouldn't be surprised.

EGYPT

Mat 2:15 He stayed there until Herod's death in order to fulfil what was declared by the Lord through the prophet when he said, "Out of Egypt I called my Son."

Again, all prepared thousands of years before

Hos 11:1 "When Israel was a young child I loved him, and from Egypt I called my son.

Egypt has long been a place of refuge for God's people, Abraham, Joseph, all the patriarchs of the twelve tribes.

Jeremiah did too

Jer 43:5 Kareah's son Johanan and all the military leaders took the entire remnant of Judah that had returned from all the nations where they had been scattered to settle in the land of Judah—

Jer 43:6 the young men, the women, the children, the daughters of the king, and everyone whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Ahikam's son Gedaliah, the grandson of Shaphan, along with Jeremiah the prophet and Neriah's son Baruch.

Jer 43:7 So they went into the land of Egypt, because they did not obey the LORD, and they travelled as far as Tahpanhes.

when he rescued the Princesses of Judah, some say, on their way to Ireland

And later God promises that in the end times to bring His people back

Isa 11:11 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

Yet, Egypt was a land whose practices the Israelites had been forbidden to follow.

(ISV) You are not to do what you used to do in the land Egypt where you lived. You are not to do what Canaan does, where I'm about to bring you, so that you live according to their statutes.

Nor was it wise to go there in times of trouble... well unless an angel tells you to.

[Isa 31:1](#) Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because *they are* many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

Some of the minor kings went into Egypt and did not come out.

It is reassuring that when we are in the midst of an evil society, our Egypt, we can survive and come out of it. We can go into the wilderness and come out of it, growing as this baby did, stronger and more trusting of God than before we went in.

SAFETY

EGYPT

So our baby is safe. Thank God for loving us, Godly and obedient parents.

But back in Jerusalem.

[Mat 2:16](#) When Herod realized that the visitors from the East had tricked him, he was furious. He gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood who were two years old and younger

Well, a reaction of this sort was fairly predictable but the level of the savagery was amazing.

It is important that the Bible says he went back for two years.

---this was done in accordance with what he had learned from the visitors about the time when the star had appeared.

Obviously he would go for overkill, ..sorry.. but the fact that he did go back two years tell us that a much longer period of time than the tradition on the Christmas cards tells us.

Can you imagine the anguish of the people of Bethlehem.

[Mat 2:17](#) In this way what the prophet Jeremiah had said came true:

Mat 2:18 "A sound is heard in Ramah, the sound of bitter weeping. Rachel is crying for her children; she refuses to be comforted, for they are dead."

I wonder if they ever knew why they had been so singled out or if it was all just part of daily life in Herod's reign. To us it is appalling but it really is nothing new in the behaviour of evil men and is still happening today, as we speak.

However God can use any circumstance to His glory and as a lesson for us as this event, terrible as it was, had been predicted

This is drawn from

Jer 31:15 This is what the LORD says: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter crying. Rachel is crying, and she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no longer alive."

And people usually stop there when talking about the prophesy but God actually goes on

Jer 31:16 This is what the LORD says: "Restrain your voice from crying, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work," declares the LORD. "They'll return from the enemy's land.

And many did, especially Jesus.

This may also have been a comfort for the parents.

Jer 31:17 There is hope for your future," declares the LORD. "Your children will return to their own territory."

And God repeats the encouragement for added emphasis.

Obviously these kids did not so there is a spiritual meaning here of salvation but also of kids going into spiritual Egypt. Which one of us has not lamented for our children as the powers of this world have spiritually killed them? This gives us a hope to hang onto while we pray with full confidence for their return from Egypt. We can also be assured that when they do return they will be older and stronger and wiser for the experience.

BACK IN JERUSALEM

So back to Jerusalem.

Mat 2:19 After Herod died,

So it was safe to come out of Egypt.

an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt

Mat 2:20 and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go back to the land of Israel, because those who tried to kill the child are dead."

Mat 2:21 So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went back to Israel.

Good reliable, probably boring old Joseph.

But

Mat 2:22 But when Joseph heard that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as king of Judea, he was afraid to go there.

He was given more instructions in a dream, so he went to the province of Galilee

NAZARETH

Mat 2:23 and made his home in a town named Nazareth

He went back home.

Nazareth is a very ancient town still functioning today. It is situated on the most southern of the ranges of lower Galilee, on the edge of the Sea of Gallilea. It is a secluded village lying in a basin, surrounded by limestone hills where Jesus loved to go "to get away from it al. In Jesus' time there was a synagogue located there (Lk 4:16),

Luk 4:16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And, as His custom was, He went in to the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read.

and Jews were living there after the destruction of the second Temple

The reputation attached to Nazareth was not great

Joh 1:46 And Nathanael, (himself a Galilean) said to him, Can there be any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, Come and see.

This has generally been attributed to the Galileans' lack of culture and rude dialect.

Nazareth was important in His life and ministry because

- It gave Him His surname, even though He had been born in Bethlehem which was something many people at the time did not know

Joh 7:40 When they heard these words, some in the crowd were saying, "This really is the Prophet,"

Joh 7:41 while others were saying, "This is the Messiah!" But some were saying, "The Messiah doesn't come from Galilee, does he?"

Joh 7:42 Doesn't the Scripture say that the Messiah is from David's family and from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?"

- It was a good place for Him to grow up in because it was on the major trade routes connecting all the known world so He would have been exposed to world events. All Classes of people lived there for Jesus to observe (home, weddings, funerals, the carpenter shop, synagogue, etc). whereas Bethlehem mainly was made up of priests and people attached to the Temple.
- It was in Nazareth Jesus first taught in the synagogue

Mat 13:54 And when He had come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so much so that they were astonished and said, From where does this *man* have this wisdom and these mighty works?

Luk 4:16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And, as His custom was, He went in to the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read.

- It is near Cana, where He did His first miracle by turning the water into wine

Mar 1:9 And it happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

However, there is a growing body of evidence which indicates that He may have spent a significant amount of time in the south of England with Joseph of Arimathea. But that is for another day.

NAZERENE

And so what the prophets had said came true: "He will be called a Nazarene."

Critics, especially, the Muslims state that there is no such specific prophecy in the Old Testament and seize on it to discredit the Bible. And, indeed this is true.

There are many counterarguments to this problem.

GROWING UP

Luk 2:40 The child grew and became strong; he was full of wisdom, and God's blessings were upon him.

Well, we all know that the baby grew to be a clever young man, who by the age of twelve, was fully conversant with the Scriptures and had the self-confidence to be able to debate with the elders in the synagogue

CONCLUSION

So this little baby changed the course of history; His birth dictates our method of recording time; He divides families and nations, was arguably the most important person who ever walked the earth.

He coming was predicted from the very first interaction that God had with man where man was free to make the choices which would define his life. But the baby preceded that event, in that He was before the beginning.

He oversees the lives of those who will accept Him and He will control the last events of this world when He comes again in the role of the Conquering King they were expecting at His first coming.

His birth also shows the different paths, simple or learned, rich or poor, churched or not, that exist for people to come to know this baby and for God to interact with them.

John 14:1-2 tells us

(LITV) In My Father's house are many dwelling places. But if it were not *so*, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you!

So there are many ways that people can come to relate to Him and they are all valid, despite many people stipulating there is only one way.

SIMPLE FOLK

The shepherds were simple folk and the Lord met them where they were. He came to them in His glory and showed His power and majesty in a way they could not deny. But they had to get up off their butts and go to the stable to be able to fully realise just how amazing this power was and how accessible to them. God was a baby like they had been and they had at their homes.

But the sign was not the glory. It was a simple boring naked baby in a simple boring manger. God is not often found in signs, but in everyday life.

WISE MEN

The Magi were led to discover the secrets God has put in His creation by the use of their intelligence, position and opportunities. There was no need of an angel to tell them what was to come. They used the evidence around them.

They, to, had to get off their butts and go to Bethlehem. They had to plan a massive expedition and follow in faith. They lived and interacted in palaces but found the promised king in a simple house.

People came for all sorts of reasons. Anna and Simeon. Elizabeth and Zechariah. Some got off their butts and made the trip out of curiosity, some out of wonder, some out of excitement, some because the others did and they did not want to miss out. What about the entourage of the Magi. They would have met Christ too, or else heard about what was happening. They came in obedience, part of their jobs.

But for those who went and were confronted by the Son of God, if they told others, it is a sure sign that they have been convicted. Speaking out and living His way is how we can tell if we, or if others, are also convicted of His divinity.

THIRD GROUP

There was a third group of people who were confronted with Christ, not directly but they would have known. These are those who were in power who knew about The Baby but who chose to ignore the information and chose to do nothing.

The soldiers and courtiers would have known. The Priests would have known because it happened in their backyard. There is no record of them visiting the Baby, not even if just out of curiosity.

Herod, of course, took a path of active opposition and tried to stop it all happening. Better men than he have tried many times but none have succeeded and none will.

We all fall into one of these classes of people. We are all faced with choices and our lives and our eternal life is determined by whether we get off our butts and go and worship the insignificant thing a baby is.

TRADITIONS

Whatever the day, whatever traditions we hold, whatever we accept or reject, there is an absolute treasure trove of wonder in this story. We should be commemorating it and rejoicing in the amazing spiritual food hidden in the story. Above all we should be rejoicing about the birth of our Saviour, about the wonder of God in His prophesying, preparation and bringing to completion of the event. We should be snuggling into the wonderful simplicity of a beautiful story like a child snuggles into the pillows on a cold night listening to a bedtime story. This story is so simple, and yet so complex, open and in code to reach us all.

And I have come to see that the whole of the Gospel message and the revelation of God's plan for mankind are hidden in these few chapters which tell this story.

CHRISTMAS

So, maybe God is secretly pleased that Santa has become such a megastar. It means that the wonderful story of His Son's birth is less and less contaminated by the "crap" of this world and, as has always been the case, those that seek Him with a pure heart, will discern the truth and use this time, whether the dates be correct or not, to draw closer to Him.

Perhaps we should be brave enough to encompass the true Christmas message in our Trumpets or Tabernacle services.