



New Testament 1

Everyday FAITH Family Page

Law/Gospel

Like Herod, I do not want to worship the Savior, Jesus.

Christ comes to me, a sinner, to turn my hardened heart toward Him through His gifts of Word and Sacrament, enabling me to offer Him my worship and praise.

Bible Words

We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.

Matthew 2:2

Fun Fact

Herod the Great, close friend of Caesar Augustus, became “King of the Jews” by election of the Roman Senate, ruling Samaria and Galilee from 37 to 1 BC.

Notoriously paranoid, Herod killed his favorite wife, several sons, and many others, including infants in and around Bethlehem, in an attempt to stop the newborn king of the Jews.

Although Herod was raised as a Jew, religious leaders questioned his religion. His precise reconstruction of the temple and its vast improvements appeared some. An ambitious builder, he also created an impressive harbor at Caesarea. Herod died soon after Jesus’ birth in 2 BC (errantly “before Christ” because of sixth-century dating errors).

The Visit of the Wise Men

Matthew 2

The account of the Wise Men’s visit to Bethlehem sometimes confuses us because many books, dramas, and songs conflict with the Bible.

For example, “We Three Kings of Orient Are” is a familiar Christmas song. However, the Bible does not identify three Wise Men. Instead, it tells about three gifts they brought: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And the Bible does not say they were kings. Matthew uses the Greek term *Magi* (MAY jai), which refers to members of a priestly class among the ancient Medes and Persians. Their gifts show wealth and generosity, not royal status.

Usually, *orient* refers to countries in the Far East, such as China or Japan. However, the term *Magi* points to visitors from the Mideast, possibly Persia.

The Bible hints at a months-long trip of over a thousand miles. By the time the Wise Men arrived, the Holy Family lived in a house in Bethlehem, not in a stable (Matthew 2:11). And when King Herod tried to kill baby Jesus, he ordered the deaths of male children in Bethlehem age 2 and younger.

The Wise Men never appeared at the stable. They probably never met the shepherds. But they worshiped the toddler Christ Child and brought Him gifts.

What about the Star?

The star that led the Wise Men was extraordinary. Scholars suggest natural occurrences to explain it, such as a new star, a comet, or the alignment of two planets, but the biblical account shows God at work.

The star was not reported over Bethlehem on the night of Jesus’ birth. God’s sign in that space and time was a multitude of angels. The star captured the attention of the Magi and prompted their journey west to find the King of the Jews, whose birth it announced.

Yet the Bible does not say the star led the Wise Men to the capital city of Jerusalem, where they looked for the new king. When the Wise Men left there, the star “went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was” in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:9). These are not characteristics of a natural phenomenon. They show God’s miraculous work.