

1. What reason did the wise men give why they had come - 2:2?

The wise men stated that they had come to find and pay homage to the newborn king of the Jews. They had seen his star in the East and had come to worship him.

2. What reason did Herod give for calling the chief priests and scribes together - 2:4,5?

Herod called together the chief priests and scribes to inquire about where the Christ was to be born. He asked them about the place where the Messiah was supposed to be born according to the prophets. The chief priests and scribes referred to the prophecy that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem of Judea.

3. What question did Herod ask of the wise men - 2:7,8? What request did he make of them, and what reason did he give for the request?

Herod asked the wise men about the exact time the star had appeared. He then requested them to go to Bethlehem and search diligently for the child. Herod's reason was that he wanted to worship the child as well, but his true intention was to eliminate any potential threat to his throne.

4. How did the wise men identify the place where Jesus was - 2:9,10? How did they react as a result?

The star, which they had seen in the East, reappeared and went before them, leading them directly to where the child Jesus was. They rejoiced exceedingly when they saw the star because it guided them to the exact location of Jesus.

5. What did the wise men do when they found Jesus and Mary - 2:11? What gifts did they present?

Upon finding Jesus and Mary, the wise men bowed down and worshiped Jesus. They presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts were valuable and symbolically significant, representing Jesus' kingship (gold), divinity (frankincense), and eventual suffering (myrrh).

6. Special Assignment: How does the Bible account compare to common tradition?

The Bible doesn't specify the number of wise men; it mentions the gifts but not the number of individuals. Traditionally, they are thought to be three because of the three types of gifts presented. Additionally, the Bible does not explicitly mention a stable. The wise men found Jesus and his family in a house (Matthew 2:11), not necessarily in a stable.

This account differs from common traditions that often depict three wise men named Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar and place them at the manger alongside the shepherds, which is a conflation of different parts of the nativity story.

The biblical narrative provides essential details about the wise men, their gifts, and their significance in recognizing Jesus as King and divine. It emphasizes their homage and recognition of Jesus' importance.

11. What was Joseph told to do - 2:13? What reason was given for this instruction?

Joseph was instructed by an angel in a dream to take the child Jesus and his mother and flee to Egypt. The reason for this instruction was to escape Herod's wrath and protect Jesus from being killed.

12. How long did they stay? How did this relate to what the prophet had said - 2:14,15?

Joseph, Mary, and Jesus stayed in Egypt until Herod's death. This period of time fulfilled the prophecy that stated, "Out of Egypt I called my son" (Hosea 11:1). It is important to note that this prophecy refers initially to the nation of Israel but finds a parallel in Jesus' sojourn from Egypt to fulfill God's plan.

13. How did Herod react when the wise men did not return to him - 2:16? What did he do?

Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had evaded his instruction to return and inform him about the child's location. In a cruel and desperate attempt to eliminate any potential threat to his reign, Herod ordered the slaughter of all male children in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under.

14. Special Assignment: Consider the age of the boys Herod slew. Did the wise men visit immediately after Jesus' birth? What can we learn about Herod's character?

The wise men did not visit Jesus immediately after his birth. Herod, in his attempt to ensure the elimination of any potential rival, had all boys under the age of two killed. This suggests that the visit of the wise men might have been some time after Jesus' birth. Herod's ruthless and paranoid character is evident in his extreme actions to maintain his power, even resorting to infanticide.

15. What prophecy was fulfilled by Herod's act - 2:17,18? Where was this prophecy found? What is the significance of the reference to Rachel and to Ramah?

The prophecy fulfilled by Herod's act is found in Jeremiah 31:15. The reference to Rachel weeping for her children in Ramah signifies the deep sorrow and mourning of the people, as Rachel is considered the mother of Israel and is symbolically mourning the loss of her descendants.

16. Application: How did the wise men and Herod illustrate the different reactions people have to Jesus? Notice that these reactions began from the time of His birth.

The wise men demonstrated reverence and sought Jesus to worship and honor him. In contrast, Herod reacted with fear, hostility, and a desire to eliminate Jesus, illustrating the varying responses people have towards Jesus throughout

history—some seeking him with adoration, while others react with fear and hostility.

17. What was Joseph instructed to do - 2:19,20? Why was it safe to do this?

Joseph was instructed in a dream to return to Israel with Jesus and Mary because those who sought the child's life were dead. It was safe to return because Herod, who posed a threat to Jesus, had died.

18. What did Joseph do in response to the instruction - 2:21,22? What further information did he learn when they arrived in Israel? Why would this concern him?

Joseph obeyed the instruction and returned to Israel. However, upon arriving in Israel, he learned that Herod's son, Archelaus, was ruling in Judea, causing concern because Archelaus was known for his brutality, which could potentially endanger Jesus' safety.

This sequence of events demonstrates how Joseph followed divine guidance, and yet, circumstances in Israel might not have been entirely safe, leading to his decision to settle in Nazareth to protect Jesus.

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