

WISE MEN STILL FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP HIM

I. Matthew 2:1-12

A. There were many prophecies in the OT concerning the coming Messiah. Micah 5:2 predicts where Jesus would be born... Professor Peter Stoner wrote a book titled *Science Speaks* first published in 1958 where he calculated the mathematical probability of Jesus fulfilling just 8 of hundreds of OT prophecies. The odds came to 1×10^{28} . Those odds are 1 in 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000. (That's a lot of zeros!) Just the single prophecy that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem was 2.8×10^6 or 1 in 280,000...

B. The accounts of Jesus' birth are found in Matthew and Luke. Melding the two accounts together gives us the full picture...

C. Matthew 2:1-12 is about the wise men from the east (a.k.a. Magi)...

1) Just how far and specifically where in the east they came from, we don't know. We do know they brought expensive gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Because they brought three gifts, many have surmised there were three wise men but there may have been more. We also know the Magi followed a star, a bright moving light of some sort in the sky that guided them to the place where Jesus was. That of course was the little town of Bethlehem, a few miles outside Jerusalem.

2) Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled when they learned why the Magi were there. Herod was a non-Jew, appointed king by the Romans, and was notoriously ruthless. He killed his wife, three sons, mother-in-law, uncle, and soon will slaughter all the boys two and under in Bethlehem. But why was the rest of Jerusalem troubled? If I told you Jesus was coming back tonight, would you be excited or troubled?

3) V10-11 *"When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh."* (Sorry, no drummer boys were present...)

D. What can we sort out from all this? Doesn't it behoove us to separate what the Scriptures tell us verses 2000 years of speculative traditions...

1) Some refer to the wise men as kings but we see no Scriptural evidence for that. (See Psalm 72:11; Isaiah 60:13...)

2) Were there just three Magi? Because they brought three gifts, that has become the tradition. Even names have been given to the three: Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthasar. But in the Eastern Syriac churches the tradition is twelve. Matthew doesn't give us a Magi head count...

3) Whereabouts in the East did they come from? All the way from China or India? While that's possible, the area of ancient Babylon & Medo-Persia is more likely, an 800+ mile trip. When Judah fell to Nebuchadnezzar, the exiles were taken to Babylon. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego were among the Hebrews added to King Neb's consortium of wise men. After Neb's famous dream which Daniel interpreted for the king, Daniel was given expensive gifts and put in charge of the think tank. (Daniel 2:46-49) Could it be that these wise men were descendants of Daniel's college--God-fearing scholars of the OT Hebrew texts, and the gifts they brought were from that treasury? Some day we'll know...

E. But the big take away for us is not how many wise men there were, their eastern points of origin, or the speculative significance of their gifts. The fact that they would travel that far just to humbly bow down in worship the Messiah King, Jesus Christ, is truly our amazing take away! Phil. 2:8-11--this is who the wise men came to worship: *"And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

F. Poor shepherds found Him in a feeding trough and wealthy wise men found Him in a house. Disciples found Him by the Sea while others found Him in the countryside. Some found Him in Jerusalem, some in Judea, some in Samaria, others all around the globe. A thief and a Roman Centurion found Him at His crucifixion as He suffocated and bled out on the cross. Saul found Him on the way to Damascus to wipe out His followers. Some have found Him in caves and shacks and others in cathedrals and palaces. Some on battlefields, some in hospital rooms, some at church altars, some in the woods, some at sea, and some on their deathbeds. He can be found among those in every nation, tribe, and tongue and He can be found right here and now....

G. Close your eyes and listen to Isaiah 55:6-7 (NIV) *"Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on them, and to our God, for He will freely pardon."*

* Close with Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Matthew 2:1-12 (ESV)

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, **2** saying, "Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him." **3** When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; **4** and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. **5** They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: **6** *"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."* **7** Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. **8** And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found Him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship Him." **9** After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the Child was. **10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. **11** And going into the house they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. **12** And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Micah 5:2 (ESV)

2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for Me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

Daniel 2:46-49 (ESV)

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. **47** The king answered and said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery." **48** Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. **49** Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king's court.

Philippians 2:8-11 (ESV)

8 And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Isaiah 55:6-7 (NIV)

6 Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. **7** Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on them, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.

Film Clips & Other Links

"For All You Have Done" - Rend Collective with Dan Mohler

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBEWSowU9rI>

A Social Network Christmas - IgniterMedia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sghwe4TYY18>

Prophecies Jesus Fulfilled - Josh McDowell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33buor5NfcU>

Science Speaks - Online Edition - Dr. Peter Stoner

<http://sciencespeaks.dstoner.net/>

Do You Hear What I Hear--Tim Hawkins :-)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ey_IL57a-b0

Bonus Stuff

Psalm 72:10-11 (ESV)

10 May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts!
11 May all kings fall down before Him, all nations serve Him!

Isaiah 60:1-3 (ESV)

1 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. **2** For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and His glory will be seen upon you.
3 And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Numbers 24:15-17 (ESV)

15 And he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, **16** the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: **17** I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.

Analysis of Eight Prophecies

By Harry R. Osborne - Article Excerpt - Truth Magazine

<http://www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume40/GOT040196.html>

Taking just these eight specific prophecies concerning the Messiah, Peter Stoner wrote in his book, *Science Speaks*, to show that mere coincidence cannot explain all of these being fulfilled in one man. He applied the science of probability to show the chance that all eight prophecies would be fulfilled in one man. That probability was calculated to be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000! When Stoner's calculations were submitted to the American Scientific Affiliation for verification, both a committee of review and the Executive Council found them "dependable and accurate in regards to the scientific material presented" (see foreword by H. Harold Hartzler in *Science Speaks*). Is there any comparison we can make to help understand that huge number?

It does not take a great deal of mathematical prowess to understand that 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 shows that the odds are heavily against these prophecies being fulfilled as a result of sheer chance. But do we really have any concept of how many 100,000,000,000,000,000 is? Is there any comparison we can make to help understand that huge number?

In the book *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, Josh McDowell points out the fact that it would take 100,000,000,000,000,000 silver dollars to cover the state of Texas two feet deep. Suppose we marked one of those silver dollars and let a man with a blindfold wander as long and far as he wished, but instructed him to pick up one specific silver dollar. He would have the same chance of picking up the right silver dollar as that one man would have of fulfilling those eight prophecies about the Messiah.

- Harry R. Osborne, Excerpt from "Analysis of Probability Regarding Prophecies" from *Guardian of Truth* XL: No. 14, p. 6-7, July 18, 1996.

Sermon Excerpt from Charles H. Spurgeon

<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/1698.htm>

The Beloved friends, if wise men of old came to Jesus and worshipped, should not we come also? My intense desire this morning is that we all may pay homage to Him of whom we sing, "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given." Let those of us who have long worshipped, worship anew with yet lowlier reverence and intenser love. And God grant—oh, that He would grant it!—that some who are far off from Him spiritually, as the Magi were far off locally, may come to-day and ask, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have come to worship Him." May feet that have been accustomed to broad roads, but unaccustomed to the narrow path, this day pursue that way till they see Jesus, and how before Him with all their hearts, finding salvation in Him. These wise men came naturally, traversing the desert; let us come spiritually, leaving our sins. These were guided by the sight of a star; let us be guided by faith in the divine Spirit, by the teaching of His word and all those blessed lights which the Lord uses to conduct men to Himself. Only let us come to Jesus.

- Charles H. Spurgeon, excerpt from "The Star and the Wise Men" delivered on Sunday morning, December 24th, 1882, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, London.

Quote From Martin Luther

"There are some of us... who think to ourselves, 'If I had only been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby. I would have washed His linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!' Yes, we would. We say that because we know how great Christ is, but if we had been there at the time, we would have been no better than the people of Bethlehem... Why don't we do it now? We have Christ in our neighbor?"

History Shaped in Cradles

Adapted from Charles Swindoll

Take the year 1809. The international scene was tumultuous. Napoleon was sweeping through Austria; blood was flowing freely. Nobody then cared about babies. But the world was overlooking some terribly significant births.

For example, William Gladstone was born that year. He was destined to become one of England's finest statesman. That same year, Alfred Tennyson was born to an obscure minister and his wife. The child would one day greatly affect the literary world in a marked manner.

On the American continent, Oliver Wendell Holmes was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And not far away in Boston, Edgar Allan Poe began his eventful, albeit tragic, life. It was also in that same year that a physician named Darwin and his wife named their child Charles Robert. And that same year produced the cries of a newborn infant in a rugged log cabin in Hardin County, Kentucky. The baby's name? Abraham Lincoln.

If there had been news broadcasts at that time, I'm certain these words would have been heard: "The destiny of the world is being shaped on an Austrian battlefield today." But history was actually being shaped in the cradles of England and America. Similarly, everyone thought taxation was the big news—when Jesus was born. But a young Jewish woman cradled the biggest news of all: the birth of the Saviour.