

122219 ...******The true Christmas story is true to life...it is the supernatural colliding with the natural...** And, God's supernatural work doesn't come nicely packaged and presented to us as a gift we simply have to unwrap... God's supernatural gift and gifts come wrapped in problems and obstacles...problems we would rather be running away from ...not waiting around to joyfully received in the morning... it is always easier to understand things in the rear view mirror of time, sometimes great lengths of time, than it is often to understand in the present... only God has this insight and power to accomplish...

Isaiah 46:10 (NLT) ¹⁰ Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.

*Ecclesiastes 3:11..... God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in **the** human heart, but even so, people cannot see **the** whole scope of God's work **from beginning to end.***

One of the Beautiful aspects of Scripture we are given is the past History of God's work leading to the accomplishments of what he wants at some predertmined point in the future. and nowhere is this seen better than in the Christmas story...with the help looking at history we will see this played out today as we take a look at the Maji...the wisemen who visited the toddler Jesus in Bethlehem...

we will answer the question: why pagan wise men astrologers/astronomers also known as Magi would make the long journey to pay homage to a foreign Jewish new born King?....and how they came to this knowledge?

My hope is...

*and your knowledge of God, trust of His Word and your faith in Jesus stronger than when you came in here today....and make room in your hearts **this Christmas for God's delays....that don't make much sense in the present but will in the end...***

Lets jump in....

Two Gospels give the account of Jesus' birth...Matthew and Luke...Luke tells us about the Shepherds and Matthew gives us the account of the Magi or wise men. It is interesting that Luke gospel was written for Gentiles...the non-Jewish audience And Matthew wrote His Gospel for the Jewish religious person...

We pick up this narrative of the Christmas story approximately two years after the birth of Jesus...

MT 2:1 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod.

- The governing Roman authority at the time over Judea was King or Governor Herod the Great
- History gives us quite a bit of Herod's biography and accomplishments and the barbaric, political, and manipulative life that he lived. Herod was born in 73 BC .
- Herod's grandfather and father—both named An-tip-ater—had served as military commanders in their homeland of Idumea, which was once a tribal state located to the south of Judea. Idumeans were a nomadic people of Jewish mixed blood and looked down upon by Roman Royalty ...as backward and hillbillyish...
- Roman historians show that Herod's father and Herod were assets to the Roman military machine, Both men were rewarded for their faithfulness to Rome with positions of power in areas under Roman rule.
- Herod demonstrated this trait and skill as he came on the scene when Rome was in power.
- When Herod's father was killed by poisoning in 43 BC, Herod began to emerge as his father's political heir and successor under the Roman umbrella of power.
- Herod the son made a name for himself by putting down a rebellion in that area Gallilee and then thwarting further dissention around Jerusalem.
- He persuaded the Roman senate to give him the title, 'King of the Jews', and to pledge himself to return and take Judaea back under Roman allegiance. his rule would span from 39 BC to 4 BC. For thirty-three years Herod ruled harshly and with great impact as king of Judea—.
- His successful story as a ruler of a Judea was marred by Herod's chronic insecurity. Partly because the Jews did not like him because he was an Idumaean and believed his faith to be false and so despised him...
- . And partly because Roman Royalty looked down on him as being less than they, And the people he ruled the Jews believed his faith to be false and so despised him...
- This had the affect of making people tolerate his kingship but made him feel threatened leading to increasing insecurity, he saw conspiracy and plotting from every quarter.

- He was brutal and shed much blood to secure his throne from any who might appear as a threat.
- including family.. killing his brother-in-law, one of his wives, a mother in law, ...and three of his sons....
- When Herod was not killing off potential threats to his throne, he was building his kingdom and expanding his influence throughout the region. He was wealthy beyond belief and increasingly taxed those under his rule.
- It was Herod who rebuilt the great temple in Jerusalem as well as cities with structures that still stand to this day. **Caesarea on the Mediterranean Coast to his summer palace at Masada**
- Herod's architectural footprint stretched far and wide during his reign as king.

So when these wisemen from the East came looking for a King ...Someone else called the King of the Jews...there was a problem

*Matt2:1 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking,
² "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him."*

- **Magi: Were Eastern wise men who counseled A king, WERE also priests who performed the religious rituals, they were astrologers' expert in interpreting dreams and other "magic arts." They were also Astronomers who studies the celestial skies. A sort of priestly caste, and were attached to the royal courts of Babylonia and Persia and even those of more distant lands such as Arabia and India, as consultants and advisers to the nobles of those lands.**
- **The Magi dignitaries would have come on the scene in spectacular array fit for an audience with a new king of a foreign nation. Accompanied with a full military escort fitting for dignitaries representing foreign royalty.**
- **They came because a star whose appearance they had been waiting for ...had risen signaling a King greater than other Kings was now on the seen...**

To understand this star the Eastern wise men saw and followed announcing a special king's birth king we must go back 1600 years prior to this event...to the time of Moses and the Israelites as they near the end of their forty year journey in

the desert.. they had camped across from Jericho, just steps away from going into the Promised Land. They were ready to cross the Jordan, and begin the conquest.

- **As recorded in Numbers 21, they had just defeated the Amorites under King Sihon, Then they went next to Bashan and defeated King Og and his armies. In this way, the whole East Bank of the Jordan River became Israelite territory. The last country to pass through was the country of Moab and Edom.**
- **Population estimates conclude that Israel consisted of perhaps 2 to 3 million people, plus all the livestock and all the gear that they had brought with them. This was a train of people that stretched for miles! It took them a day or two to pass any one point from the first to the last person. Israel was a huge, mobile nation!**
- **Moab was about the same size as the children of Israel, and they watched all these people pass through northern reaches of their territory. They also had heard what Israel had done to Sihon, Og, and all their people. They were frightened witless!**
- **As Israel approached this region, God had told them not to mess with the Moabites and the Edomites because they were distant relatives of the Israelites (Deuteronomy 2:8-9). descendants of Lot**
- **Evidently, the Moabites and the Edomites were not aware of God's edict because they figured that these 3 million people were a threat to them.**

The Moabites were filled with alarm and fear as they saw this mighty host of Israel marching around their land, conquering the country and encamping on their border. **The Moabites were ruled by a king whose name was Balak, knew of their military victories and tried a different ploy to stop their advancing...Demonic!**

There was at that time a man living far in the east, the area of Mesopotamia...of an early type of priestly caste as the wisemen... His name was Balaam.

- **This man was known far and wide as a prophet for hire and apparently was successful at calling down curses or blessings on people for financial gain...**
- **His reputation and notoriety was such that People believed that whatever Balaam said was sure to come to pass...**

- **We pick up the story here:**

Numbers 22:4... So Balak, king of Moab, ⁵ sent messengers to call Balaam son of Beor, who was living in his native land of Pethor near the Euphrates River. His message said: “Look, a vast horde of people has arrived from Egypt. They cover the face of the earth and are threatening me. ⁶ Please come and curse these people for me because they are too powerful for me. Then perhaps I will be able to conquer them and drive them from the land. I know that blessings fall on any people you bless, and curses fall on people you curse.”

⁷ Balak’s messengers, who were elders of Moab and Midian, set out with money to pay Balaam to place a curse upon Israel. They went to Balaam and delivered Balak’s message to him. ⁸ “Stay here overnight,” Balaam said. “In the morning I will tell you whatever the LORD directs me to say.” So the officials from Moab stayed there with Balaam.

⁹ That night God came to Balaam and asked him, “Who are these men visiting you?” ¹⁰ Balaam said to God, “Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent me this message: ¹¹ ‘Look, a vast horde of people has arrived from Egypt, and they cover the face of the earth. Come and curse these people for me. Then perhaps I will be able to stand up to them and drive them from the land.’”

**long story short...he goes with them ...three times Balak takes Balaam to different place to spy on the Israelites and call curse upon them...
but Balaam cant...God won't let him...
three times he pronounces Blessings ...because he could not otherwise...
this blessing instead of curse is summed up in...
his first prophecy...**

Numbers 23: 7 This was the message Balaam delivered: “Balak summoned me to come from Aram; the king of Moab brought me from the eastern hills. ‘Come,’ he said, ‘curse Jacob for me! Come and announce Israel’s doom.’ ⁸ But how can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I condemn those whom the LORD has not condemned?

- **And after the first blessing...Balk takes Balaam...to see a dffernt view of the people hoping tht will cause him to curse them...**

Numbers 23:13 Then King Balak told him, “Come with me to another place. There you will see another part of the nation of Israel, but not all of them. Curse at least that many!”

But Balaam responds....

numbers 23:18 This was the message Balaam delivered: “Rise up, Balak, and listen!

Hear me, son of Zippor. ¹⁹ God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through? ²⁰ Listen, I received a command to bless; God has blessed, and I cannot reverse it!

Then a third time....

Numbers 23:27 Then King Balak said to Balaam, “Come, I will take you to one more place. Perhaps it will please God to let you curse them from there.” **Numbers 24:1** By now Balaam realized that the LORD was determined to bless Israel, so he did not resort to divination as before. Instead, he turned and looked out toward the wilderness, ² where he saw the people of Israel camped, tribe by tribe. Then the Spirit of God came upon him, ³ and this is the message he delivered: “This is the message of Balaam son of Beor, the message of the man whose eyes see clearly, ⁴ the message of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who bows down with eyes wide open: ⁵ How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob; how lovely are your homes, O Israel!

- **You see them as horrible Balak God gives me eyes to see them as he does...inspite of all their errors and failings ...he see them as beautiful....and God is determined to bless them...**

after the third blessing...

Numbers 24:10 King Balak flew into a rage against Balaam. He angrily clapped his hands and shouted, “I called you to curse my enemies! Instead, you have blessed them three times. ¹¹ Now get out of here! Go back home! I promised to reward you richly, but the LORD has kept you from your reward.”

¹² Balaam told Balak, “Don’t you remember what I told your messengers? I said, ¹³ ‘Even if Balak were to give me his palace filled with silver and gold, I would be powerless **to do anything against the will of the LORD.**’ I told you that I could say only what the LORD says!

- **Then he see a vision...not only will these people have the land promised to them....by their God...no curse will overcome God’s will**

- **They will have this God come live among them in the distant future...**

*Numbers 24: ¹⁴ Now I am returning to my own people. But first let me tell you what the Israelites will do to your people in the future.” ¹⁵ This is the message Balaam delivered: “This is the message of Balaam son of Beor, the message of the **man whose eyes see clearly**, ¹⁶ the message of one who hears the **words of God**, who has knowledge from **the Most High**, who sees a vision from **the Almighty**, who bows down with eyes wide open: ¹⁷ **I see him, but not here and now. I perceive him, but far in the distant future. A star will rise from Jacob; a scepter will emerge from Israel....***

- **Balaam sees the future...clearly and the one who is giving him these words....the Most High Almighty God...he will come from heaven through these people to earth...**
- **This will be fulfilled when a unique Star (a great light) associated with Israel would accompany a future Sceptre (that is, King) who would eventually rule the world.**
- **Just like the later prophet Isaiah would say... **a great light shining in the darkness to signal the Messiah’s coming****
- *Isa 9:2 The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.*
- **The later pagan Magi, who were familiar with this prophecy of Balaam familiar with this prophecy and also the various prophecies of Daniel (who had been the most respected of the "wise men" at the courts of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus?note Daniel 2:45; 6:28).**
- **Balaam sees another King coming who will rule over all kings...He will be the King of Kings...**

This celestial phenomena takes place 1600 hundred years later to Herod Matt Matt2:3 King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. 4 He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?” 5 “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote: 6 ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’” (Micah 5:2,4)

- When Herod was disturbed you bet everyone was disturbed, for it usually meant heads were going to roll!
- So he calls together the religious leaders...who would know more about this...
- What strikes me as so odd, the apathy of the chief priests and the teachers of the law...they know where the Messiah is to be born...but could care less...not one of them journeys the six miles to follow up on this information given by Herod...

Matt 2:9 After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!

¹¹ They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

- **The Wisemen representing a king from another land would have come with all their pomp and lavishly display their gifts and honor the new king through worship...as was often customary for a King, which was a custom among nations to keep the peace.**
- **Gold** has been long valued due to its beauty and resistance to corrosion **It is a metal that does not tarnish.** It has been used in jewelry and commerce for thousands of years. the appropriate gift for a king
- **Frankincense and Myrrh** are aromatic resins extracted from rare trees
- **Frankincense an almost white resin,** was one of the most prized and costly substances in the ancient world, worth more than its weight in gold. It was used in medicines and incense (Exodus 30:34). and science has recently shown the intake of Frankincense whether thru inhaling incense or the ingestion of it as medicinal properties...has a calming effect...it has anti-depressant and anti-anxiety properties...
- **Myrrh, a dark resin,** was widely used in perfumes, incense and embalming. All of these substances were extremely expensive, usually reserved for royalty when all three were combined because only royalty could afford this kind of wealth. Frankincense and myrrh signaling life forever...
- make room for waiting though it delays...**nothing and no one can thwart the will of God...**all History counts in the story... **end**

- **Ancient rabbis could refer to comets as “scepter stars.” The “Star” in Numbers is almost certainly a comet.**
 - **Whatever it did at that time revealed that the Messiah had been born, motivating them to make their journey to find and worship him.**
 - **The Magi seem to have concluded that Balam’s oracle in Numbers, about the rising scepter-star, was the key to interpreting the comet’s behavior.**
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- **The Israelites had spent all this time coming out of Egypt, wandering from camp to camp, sometimes staying quite long in one place and perhaps just a night in another, moving again, sometimes coming back to stay at a place where they had been then moving onward again. Nevertheless, they were always marching inevitably toward the Promised Land—Canaan.**

- ... Herod is mentioned in only two places in the New Testament: Matthew 2 and Luke 1:5. Both places are accounts of the birth of Jesus. Luke 1:5 gives the timing of the birth narrative as “In the days of Herod . . .” Matthew invests a bit more time in chapter 2 of his gospel to help introduce his readers to Herod.

Gen 41: 8 The next morning Pharaoh was very disturbed by the dreams. So he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. When Pharaoh told them his dreams, not one of them could tell him what they meant. also in the book of Daniel....

four hundred years later the time of Moses...

Ex 7:10 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did what the LORD had commanded them. Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a serpent! ¹¹ Then Pharaoh called in his own wise men and sorcerers, and these Egyptian magicians did the same thing with their magic.

there are Three groups of people and three different responses to Jesus' birth are present in the first 11 verses of Matthew 2.

One...Herod and he was troubled at the news of Jesus..Jesus messed with his life...did not want any of that...

two...The Jewish chief priests and teachers of the Law...the Religious who were indifferent to Their King...they had their religion.

And Three... Gentile Maji... men who were seeking the King of Kings ... and were ready to worship Jesus.

It is not hard to see the same three responses of people today when it comes to celebrating the birth of Jesus: some are troubled and don't want to hear of him, others are indifferent, and there are people ready to worship.

- **When Herod was disturbed you bet everyone was disturbed, for it usually meant heads were going to roll!**
- **So he calls together the religious leaders...who would know more about this...**

Matt 2:3 King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. 4 He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?" 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote: 6 'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'" (Micah 5:2,4)

- **What strikes me as so odd, the apathy of the chief priests and the teachers of the law...they know where the Messiah is to be born...but could care less...not one of them journeys the six miles to follow up on this information given by Herod...**

To understand why Maji/ eastern wise men would seek out a king we must go back 1600 years in History...to the time of Moses.. When the Israelites had traveled around the land of Edom, and encamped beside the river Jordan, opposite the City of Jericho...they were close to beginning their entrance into the promised land.

They had already won a great victory over the Amorites and a region called Bashan. There they fought and won killing the Kings of those lands and winning their lands. This made the Israelites masters of all the land on the east of the river Jordan, to the south were the Moabites...the next land and King which stood in their way prior to Jericho. The Moabites were filled with alarm and fear as they saw this mighty host of Israel marching around their land, conquering the country and encamping on their border. **The Moabites were ruled by a king whose name was Balak, and he tried to form some plan for driving away the people of Israel from that region.**

There was at that time a man living far in the east, near the great river Euphrates, **whose name was Balaam**. This man was known far and wide as a prophet, and was a notorious prophet who hailed from the area of Mesopotamia...the type of priestly caste as the Maji...that is, a man who talked with God, and heard God's voice, and spoke from God, as did Moses. People believed that whatever Balaam said was sure to come to pass; but they did not know that Balaam could only speak what God gave him to speak.

Numbers 22:4... So Balak, king of Moab, ⁵ sent messengers to call Balaam son of Beor, who was living in his native land of Pethor near the Euphrates River. His message said: “Look, a vast horde of people has arrived from Egypt. They cover the face of the earth and are threatening me. ⁶ Please come and curse these people for me because they are too powerful for me. Then perhaps I will be able to conquer them and drive them from the land. I know that blessings fall on any people you bless, and curses fall on people you curse.”

⁷ Balak’s messengers, who were elders of Moab and Midian, set out with money to pay Balaam to place a curse upon Israel.^[c] They went to Balaam and delivered Balak’s message to him. ⁸ “Stay here overnight,” Balaam said. “In the morning I will tell you whatever the LORD directs me to say.” So the officials from Moab stayed there with Balaam.

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“Do not go with them. You are not to curse these people, for they have been blessed!”

long story short...three times Balak takes Balaam to different place to spy on the Israelites and call curse upon them...thre times he pronounces Blessings ...because he could not otherwise...

Numbers 24: ¹⁰ King Balak flew into a rage against Balaam. He angrily clapped his hands and shouted, “I called you to curse my enemies! Instead, you have blessed them three times. ¹¹ Now get out of here! Go back home! I promised to reward you richly, but the LORD has kept you from your reward.”

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- Thus Balaam's reluctant, but divinely inspired, prophecy, revealed that a unique Star associated with Israel would accompany a future Sceptre (that is, King) who would eventually rule the world.
- **Balaam sees another King coming who will rule over all kings...He will be the King of Kings...**
- Ancient rabbis could refer to comets as “scepter stars.” The “Star” in Numbers is almost certainly a comet.
- There are various indications in Matthew that the Magi were impacted most by what they saw in the star’s rising. Whatever it did at that time revealed that the Messiah had been born, motivating them to make their journey to find and worship him.
- **The Magi seem to have concluded that Balamm’s oracle in Numbers, about the rising scepter-star, was the key to interpreting the comet’s behavior.**

it also appears the opening verses of Revelation 12 paint a picture of the heavenly sign the Magi witnessed.

Rev 12:1 A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. 2 She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.

- **The Magi saw a nativity drama unfolding in the heavens, in which the constellation figure “The Virgin” played the role of a pregnant mother giving birth to a baby. Whose part was played by a great comet.**

This celestial drama was strongly suggestive of Isaiah’s oracles about a virgin becoming pregnant and giving birth to a son

Isa 7: 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

- **and about a great light shining in the darkness to signal the Messiah’s coming**

Isa 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

- **The star appeared suddenly and was visible for over a year, something that makes sense only if it were a supernova or a great comet.**
- **That the star surprised the Magi with its impressive “rising” points strongly to it being a comet: Of all the celestial bodies, only comets behave in this manner. (Rising refers to the period when a celestial body re-emerges on the horizon after being hidden by the Sun.)**
- The later Magi, especially those in Babylon and Persia (where the influence of Daniel, as well as Mordecai and Esther) had been profound and long-lasting, would surely be familiar with this prophecy and also the various prophecies of Daniel (who had been the most respected of the "wise men" at the courts of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus?note Daniel 2:45; 6:28).

Including some other information which they did not share ...or possibly know about.. the information regarding the star...which also is given as a sign of the coming Mesissah...

- ***In Numbers 24:17, there's a prophecy by Balaam about a "scepter" and a "star" ("...a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel").***

Numbers 24:17 "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.

Lets examine his prophecy in context...

Numbers 24: 2 When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came on him 3 and he spoke his message: "The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly, 4 the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened....

Jumping to verse 8

8 "God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of a wild ox. They devour hostile nations and break their bones in pieces; with their arrows they pierce them. 9 Like a lion they crouch and lie down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse them. "May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!"

10 Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam. He struck his hands together and said to him, "I summoned you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times. 11 Now leave at once and go home! I said I would reward you handsomely, but the LORD has kept you from being rewarded."

12 Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not tell the messengers you sent me, 13 'Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything of my own accord, good or bad, to go beyond the command of the LORD—and I must say only what the LORD says'? 14 Now I am going back to my people, but come, let me warn you of what this people will do to your people in days to come." 15 Then he spoke his message: "The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly, 16 the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened:

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- **Then you take into account the star’s movement, in the space of a couple of months, from the eastern morning sky to the southern evening sky, where they see it when they’re traveling from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.**
- **That kind of movement is only possible for an object in the inner solar system, meaning that the star had to be a comet.**

- At the end of the Magi's journey, the star stands over the place of Jesus' birth, pinpointing a particular location. As New Testament scholar Craig Keener has pointed out, that's something only a comet can do.
- **Josephus** mentions a comet that "stood over" Jerusalem in the run-up to the Judean War. **Another Roman historian, Cassius iDo, mentions that another comet did something similar over Rome in 12 B.C.**
- **The glorious celestial wonder simultaneously reveals and hides. Not everyone looking into the sky understands.** For example, Herod, the rabbis, and the people of Judea- there it is, right before their eyes, but they don't get it. It's the mystery and beauty of the plan of salvation and the marvel of what God has done in Christ.

on to verse 7

Matt 2:7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." ⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.

next week we will take a closer look at these Maji..foreign dignitaries and their gifts...

but lets stop here and reflect...there are Three groups of people and three different responses to Jesus' birth are present in the first 11 verses of Matthew 2.

One...Herod and he was troubled at the news of Jesus..Jesus messed with his life...did not want any of that...

two...The Jewish chief priests and teachers of the Law...the Religious who were indifferent to Their King...they had their religion.

And Three... Gentile Maji... men who were seeking the King of Kings ... and were ready to worship Jesus.

It is not hard to see the same three responses of people today when it comes to celebrating the birth of Jesus: some are troubled and don't want to hear of him, others are indifferent, and there are people ready to worship.

The wise men were fulfilling the promise made in Jeremiah 29:13:

You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

Sometimes we get mad at God and we think, Where was God when I was going through

that horrible time? Why didn't God come and make it better? Jeremiah says, "When you seek me . . ." Maybe we're supposed to have a more active role in the process.

About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ² “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.”

- **Magi:** Were Eastern wise men who counseled the king, the priests who performed the religious rituals, and astrologers' expert in interpreting dreams and other "magic arts." They were also Astronomers who studies the celestial skies. A sort of priestly caste, and were attached to the royal courts of Babylonia and Persia and even those of more distant lands such as Arabia and India, as consultants and advisers to the nobles of those lands.
- The Magi came on the scene in spectacular array fit for a new king of a foreign nation. The gifts the Magi gave can be explained per gift. Gold is a metallic substance that symbolized, as a gift or related to a holy thing, something consecrated or devoted to God. It is a metal that does not tarnish. Frankincense was an incense, extremely aromatic, and contained one ingredient for the holy anointing of oil. It was one of the substances burnt during the cereal-offering (Leviticus 6:15), and it was placed in purified form on the showbread of the tabernacle (Leviticus 24:7). It was symbolic of religious fervor, but the connection to the tabernacle has been interpreted also as signifying Christ's priestly office. Myrrh was also used as an ingredient of holy anointing oil, was also very aromatic, and although used as a cosmetic fragrance or substance, was also used in female purification rites. It was also one of the substances used for embalming at burials. The constant theme of this substance seems to be symbolizing purity. All of these substances were extremely expensive, usually reserved for royalty when all three were combined because only royalty could afford this kind of wealth. It also means that the Magi was sent representing a king from another land who could offer up these gifts and honor the new king, which is a custom among nations to keep the peace.
- Another question to ask is why the Magi knew about the Christ child and not Herod and his court. Israel had lost its connection with the stars long ago, and only prophets kept it alive. The trouble is, there was no prophet in Israel at the time, not even in Judea, that is, until Christ was born. Then why did the Magi know? Which nation was known for the Magi? Where did the Magi come from? Since the only place to reference where the Magi came from should also be in the Word of God, we should go back to a place in the scriptures where it was first mentioned.
-
- Magi, or wise men have been mentioned much earlier than the book of Daniel. In the Bible, the first mention of wise men comes in Genesis 41:8: during the time of Joseph in Egypt...

Gen 41:8 The next morning Pharaoh was very disturbed by the dreams. So he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. When Pharaoh told them his dreams, not one of them could tell him what they meant.

- King Herod, the record shows, inquired extensively of the wise men to the date of the Messiah's birth. They indicated that the child should be about 15 months old, (see *Jesus Christ Our Promised Seed* by Victor Paul Wierwille, American Christian Press) and the wise men were sent to find the child in

Bethlehem. When the wise men did not return, Herod had all male children two years and under killed in Bethlehem. This is the reason Herod killed children in that age range.

MT 2: 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

- Jesus was a "paidion" (toddler), not a "brephos" (infant)
- It means that the Magi were sent representing a king from another land who could offer up these gifts and honor the new king, which is a custom among nations to keep the peace.
- The Magi came on the scene in spectacular array fit for a new king of a foreign nation. The gifts the Magi gave can be explained per gift.
- The gifts reflected the aspects of Christ's nature: gold to a king, myrrh to one who will die, and incense, as homage to a God

Though many people have heard of Frankincense and Myrrh and have even sung about them in Christmas carols, few have actually seen, let alone owned, these precious substances.

Frankincense and Myrrh are aromatic resins extracted from rare trees.

Gold has been long valued due to its beauty and resistance to corrosion **It is a metal that does not tarnish.** It has been used in jewelry and commerce for thousands of years. the appropriate gift for a king

Frankincense an almost white resin, was one of the most prized and costly substances in the ancient world, worth more than its weight in gold. It was used in medicines and incense (Exodus 30:34). and science has recently shown the intake of Frankincense whether thru inhaling incense or the ingestion of it as a medicine...has a calming effect...it has anti-depressant and anti-anxiety properties... **It was symbolic of religious fervor, but the connection to the tabernacle has been interpreted also as signifying Christ's priestly office.**

Myrrh, a dark resin, was widely used in perfumes, incense and embalming. they knew he would die..**also used in female purification rites.**

All of these substances were extremely expensive, usually reserved for royalty when all three were combined because only royalty could afford this kind of wealth.

- It also means that the Magi were sent representing a king from another land who could offer up these gifts and honor the new king, which is a custom among nations to keep the peace.



To understand why Maji/ eastern wise men would seek out a king we must go back 1600 years in History...to the time of Moses.. When the Israelites had traveled around the land of Edom, and encamped beside the river Jordan, opposite the City of Jeriocho...they were close to beginning their entrance into the promised land.

They had already won a great victory over the Amorites and a region called Bashan. There they fought and won killing the Kings of those lands and winning their lands. This made the Israelites masters of all the land on the east of the river Jordan, to the south were the Moabites...the next land and King which stood in their way prior to Jericho. The Moabites were filled with alarm and fear as they saw this mighty host of Israel marching around their land, conquering the country and encamping on their border. **The Moabites were ruled by a king whose name was Balak, and he tried to form some plan for driving away the people of Israel from that region.**

There was at that time a man living far in the east, near the great river Euphrates, whose name was Balaam. This man was known far and wide as a prophet, and was a notorious prophet who hailed for the area of Mesopotamia...the the type of priestly caste as the Maji...that is, a man who talked with God, and heard God's voice, and spoke from God, as did Moses. People believed that whatever Balaam said was sure to come to pass; but they did not know that Balaam could only speak what God gave him to speak.

Numbers 22:4... So Balak, king of Moab, ⁵ sent messengers to call Balaam son of Beor, who was living in his native land of Pethor near the Euphrates River. His message said: “Look, a vast horde of people has arrived from Egypt. They cover

the face of the earth and are threatening me. ⁶ Please come and curse these people for me because they are too powerful for me. Then perhaps I will be able to conquer them and drive them from the land. I know that blessings fall on any people you bless, and curses fall on people you curse.”

⁷ Balak’s messengers, who were elders of Moab and Midian, set out with money to pay Balaam to place a curse upon Israel.^[c] They went to Balaam and delivered Balak’s message to him. ⁸ “Stay here overnight,” Balaam said. “In the morning I will tell you whatever the LORD directs me to say.” So the officials from Moab stayed there with Balaam.

⁹ That night God came to Balaam and asked him, “Who are these men visiting you?” ¹⁰ Balaam said to God, “Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent me this message: ¹¹ ‘Look, a vast horde of people has arrived from Egypt, and they cover the face of the earth. Come and curse these people for me. Then perhaps I will be able to stand up to them and drive them from the land.’” ¹² But God told Balaam, “Do not go with them. You are not to curse these people, for they have been blessed!”

long story short...three times Balak takes Balaam to different place to spy on the Israelites and call curse upon them...thre times he pronounces Blessings ...because he could not otherwise...

Numbers 24: ¹⁰ King Balak flew into a rage against Balaam. He angrily clapped his hands and shouted, “I called you to curse my enemies! Instead, you have blessed them three times. ¹¹ Now get out of here! Go back home! I promised to reward you richly, but the LORD has kept you from your reward.”

¹² Balaam told Balak, “Don’t you remember what I told your messengers? I said, ¹³ ‘Even if Balak were to give me his palace filled with silver and gold, I would be powerless to do anything against the will of the LORD.’ I told you that I could say only what the LORD says! ¹⁴ Now I am returning to my own people. But first let me tell you what the Israelites will do to your people in the future.”

¹⁵ This is the message Balaam delivered: “This is the message of Balaam son of Beor, the message of the man whose eyes see clearly, ¹⁶ the message of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who bows down with eyes wide open: ¹⁷ I see him, but not here

and now. I perceive him, but far in the distant future. *A star will rise from Jacob; a scepter will emerge from Israel....*

- Thus Balaam's reluctant, but divinely inspired, prophecy, revealed that a unique Star associated with Israel would accompany a future Sceptre (that is, King) who would eventually rule the world.
- The later Magi, especially those in Babylon and Persia (where the influence of Daniel, as well as Mordecai and Esther) had been profound and long-lasting, would surely be familiar with this prophecy and also the various prophecies of Daniel (who had been the most respected of the "wise men" at the courts of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus?note Daniel 2:45; 6:28).

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men^[a] from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ²“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose,^[b] and we have come to worship him.”

³ King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. ⁴ He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote:

⁶ ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,
are not least among the ruling cities^[c] of Judah,
for a ruler will come from you
who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’^[d]”

⁷ Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸ Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

⁹ After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! ¹¹ They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

¹² When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

The Magi, when seeing the signs in the heavens that 500 years later, traveled extensively to the court of the king expecting to see the new Messiah. They saw Herod. Herod's men pointed to Micah 5:2 as to the source where the Messiah would be born.

Micah 5:2

2But 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.

then we jump ahead 800 years From about 750 BC to 626BC the middle East was dominated by the Assyrian empire. But on November 22, 626BC Babylonian General Nabpolassar (Nebuchadnezzar's father) wrested control of Babylonia away from the Assyrians.

Becoming the first independent Babylonian King. Later he formed a military alliance with Media, and in 612BC destroyed the capital city of Assyria (Ninevah) and Babylon became the strongest single kingdom in the Middle East. Thus ushering in the beginning of the Babylonian Kingdom.

Babylon

Babylon means "babilu" (gate of god). It is an ancient city in the plain of shinar on the Euphrates River, about 50 miles south of Modern Baghdad. Babylon was founded by Nimrod of Gen. 10, who developed the world's first organized system of idolatry, which God condemned (Gen. 11). It later became the capital of Babylonia and the Babylonian Empire.

Upon his fathers death in 606BC Nebuchadnezzar his eldest son ascended to kingship...

Nebuchadnezzar and Nebuchadrezzar. Means "May (the god) Nabu protect the son," or "May Nabu protect the boundary."

In 605 BC King Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon(present day Iraq) consciously pursued a policy of expansion, claiming the grant of universal kingship by Marduk the chief god...and praying to have "no opponent from horizon to sky."

He defeated Egypt and threatened to attack Jerusalem in the land of Judah...lets pick up the narrative...

DA 1:1 During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah and permitted him to take some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God. So Nebuchadnezzar took them back to the land of Babylonia and placed them in the treasure-house of his god.

- King Nebuchadnezzar gave Jehoiakim king of Juda a choice...be destroyed or pay tribute (or yearly taxes) to fill my coffers.
- Jehoiakim agreed to pay taxes (three years later he would rebel) but right now he paid.
- So the kingdom of Israel was taken "royal hostage" it actually was a somewhat common practice...and Israel was in the same predicament to the Roman empire at the time of Jesus.
- **This is how the "royal hostage" system works...**
 1. some close relatives of the hostage king are taken into captivity...usually along with gold and other precious materials...
 2. the hostages will live well in Nebuchadnezzar's royal court
 3. As long as the King pays the yearly taxes...if he refuse...they could die..

There were also other purposes for taking in young nobles from conquered countries...to serve in the palace administration...

1. a foreign noble was very useful employee...
2. he knew the history and language of his country
3. he knew their customs and laws...
4. and he would learn the customs and laws religion of Babylonia and be able to export them to his country.
5. he would be able to help in administrating the conquered territories
6. he could offer insight and political advice to the King
7. so it was important that they would look for the best and brightest of the hostage country...young noblemen..

DA 1:3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. ⁴ "Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of

learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon.^[c]”⁵ The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

⁶ Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. ⁷ The chief of staff renamed them with these Babylonian names: Daniel was called Belteshazzar.

Hananiah was called Shadrach. Mishael was called Meshach. Azariah was called Abednego

Nebuchadnezzar's main activity, other than as military commander, was the rebuilding of Babylon. **Daniel** was one of the men King Nebuchadnezzar took as a slave....

- Obviously Daniel was involved in the Jerusalem’s governing leadership and royal family.....
- He put him through 3 years training and placed him in his group of wise men/advisors.

About three years later...

Then tested them...failure could cost them and their teachers their life....minimum three languages...Hebrew, Aramiac, and akkadian the language of the priests...

¹⁷ God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams.

¹⁸ When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service. ²⁰ Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom.

- His Maji or wisemen

DA 2:1 One night during the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had such disturbing dreams that he couldn't sleep. ² He called in his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers, and he demanded that they tell him what he had dreamed. As they stood before the king, ³ he said, "I have had a dream that deeply troubles me, and I must know what it means."

- **Magicians... ..a psychic...one who receives information from spirits**
- **Enchanters...talks to the dead...a medium**
- **Sorcerers...one who practices witchcraft... one who possess occult knowledge... and practices magic arts ...one who cast spells uses potions...**
- **Astrologers...looks for guidance from the stars...also includes in those days astromoners...those who study the stars...**
- **Babylon was a very religious society...looking to the gods, the dead, and the stars for their guidance.**

DA 2:4 ⁴ Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, ^[c] "Long live the king! Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means."

⁵ But the king said to the astrologers, "I am serious about this. If you don't tell me what my dream was and what it means, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be turned into heaps of rubble! ⁶ But if you tell me what I dreamed and what the dream means, I will give you many wonderful gifts and honors. Just tell me the dream and what it means!"

⁷ They said again, "Please, Your Majesty. Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means."

⁸ The king replied, "I know what you are doing! You're stalling for time because you know I am serious when I say, ⁹ 'If you don't tell me the dream, you are doomed.' So you have conspired to tell me lies, hoping I will change my mind. But tell me the dream, and then I'll know that you can tell me what it means."

¹⁰ The astrologers replied to the king, "No one on earth can tell the king his dream! And no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer! ¹¹ The king's demand is impossible. No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people."

The last verse is worth underlining. The astrologers had this essential dilemma: There were questions, confusion, dark areas, unknowns about deep, important things that only God could answer but they do not live among men.

- Only a divine word can tell us what we need to know at the deepest level. But their gods didn't speak. Nor could examine the heart of a man.
- It is apparent that the King had given the astrologers his dreams before...and he has not been happy with their interpretations...either they were false, or were attempts to deceive him into acting according to their will
- So he changed the method...tell the dream then interpret...
- This exposed them as false...only God and you know the thoughts you have...

He gave the dream only he could interpret it... Now the King knows his advisors are mere men...not in touch with the giver of dreams..

DA 2:12 ¹² The king was furious when he heard this, and he ordered that all the wise men of Babylon be executed. ¹³ And because of the king's decree, men were sent to find and kill Daniel and his friends.

¹⁴ When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, came to kill them, Daniel handled the situation with wisdom and discretion. ¹⁵ He asked Arioch, "Why has the king issued such a harsh decree?" So Arioch told him all that had happened. ¹⁶ Daniel went at once to see the king and requested more time to tell the king what the dream meant.

¹⁷ Then Daniel went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened. ¹⁸ He urged them to ask the God of heaven to show them his mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not be executed along with the other wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven.

- Knowing the dream and it's interpretation...he rejoices and praises the one true God...who demonstrates his power through revealing history before it happens...

DA 2:24 ²⁴ Then Daniel went in to see Arioch, whom the king had ordered to execute the wise men of Babylon. Daniel said to him, "Don't kill the wise men. Take me to the king, and I will tell him the meaning of his dream."

²⁵ Arioch quickly took Daniel to the king and said, "I have found one of the captives from Judah who will tell the king the meaning of his dream!" ²⁶ The king said to Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar), "Is this true? Can you tell me what my dream was and what it means?"

²⁷ Daniel replied, "There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can reveal the king's secret. ²⁸ But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future. Now I will tell you your dream and the visions you saw as you lay on your bed.

²⁹ "While Your Majesty was sleeping, you dreamed about coming events. He who reveals secrets has shown you what is going to happen. ³⁰ And it is not because I am wiser than anyone else that I know the secret of your dream, but because God wants you to understand what was in your heart.

³¹ "In your vision, Your Majesty, you saw standing before you a huge, shining statue of a man. It was a frightening sight. ³² The head of the statue was made of fine gold. Its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs were bronze, ³³ its legs were iron, and its feet were a combination of iron and baked clay. ³⁴ As you watched, a rock was cut from a mountain,^[d] but not by human hands. It struck the feet of iron and clay, smashing them to bits. ³⁵ The whole statue was crushed into small pieces of iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold. Then the wind blew them away without a trace, like chaff on a threshing floor. But the rock that knocked the statue down became a great mountain that covered the whole earth.

³⁶ "That was the dream. Now we will tell the king what it means. ³⁷ Your Majesty, you are the greatest of kings. The God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor. ³⁸ He has made you the ruler over all the inhabited world and has put even the wild animals and birds under your control. You are the head of gold.

³⁹ "But after your kingdom comes to an end, another kingdom, inferior to yours, will rise to take your place. After that kingdom has fallen, yet a third kingdom, represented by bronze, will rise to rule the world. ⁴⁰ Following that kingdom, there will be a fourth one, as strong as iron. That kingdom will smash and crush all previous empires, just as iron smashes and crushes everything it strikes. ⁴¹ The feet and toes you saw were a combination of iron and baked clay, showing that this kingdom will be divided. Like iron mixed with clay, it will have some of the strength

of iron. ⁴² But while some parts of it will be as strong as iron, other parts will be as weak as clay. ⁴³ This mixture of iron and clay also shows that these kingdoms will try to strengthen themselves by forming alliances with each other through intermarriage. But they will not hold together, just as iron and clay do not mix.

⁴⁴ “During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever. ⁴⁵ That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain, though not by human hands, that crushed to pieces the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. The great God was showing the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its meaning is certain.”

Daniel tells the King his dream and what it means....the dream pertains to the future...

That 4 earthly kingdoms mentioned here and expounded on later by Daniel in different places in the book represent the empires of:

1. **Babylon** (represented by the lion/eagle symbol and gold)
2. **Medo-Persia** (considered as a single empire; represented as the bear, and silver)
3. **Greece** (represented as the leopard and bronze)
4. **Rome** (represented as the terrible beast, and iron).

Babylon

The king was regarded as the head of the state. That is why Nebuchadnezzar represented Babylon, the empire that began the prophecy.

- Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom ruled the world from 606-538 B.C. as one of the mightiest empires of antiquity, one that could aptly be described as the head of gold.

Succeeding kingdoms would be inferior to Babylon, but they would rule in their turn. Babylon would not last forever.

Medo-Persia Just as silver is inferior to gold, so the kingdom that followed Babylon was inferior to her. In 538 B.C. the kingdom of Medo-Persia came on the scene of action.

- The Medo-Persian kingdom was not inferior in power, for it conquered Babylon. It was not inferior in extent, but rather in wealth, luxury, and magnificence. Just as there were two arms of the image, so this kingdom is

made up of two allies. Medo-Persia ruled the world from 538 B.C. to 331 B.C. Even the Medo-Persian kingdom would not last forever.

Greece Alexander the Great led the Greeks to conquer the Medes and the Persians in the battle of Arbela in 331 B.C.. The kingdom of Greece, using armament of brass, came upon the scene of action.

Rome The kingdom that followed Greece was the iron kingdom of Rome, They were ruthless and used weapons of Iron. The Roman Empire with their Ceasars ruled the world from 168 B.C. to the fall of the Western Roman Empire, AD 476. The Eastern division lingered longer and fell in AD 1453 with the fall of Constantinople.

It is during the Roman empire in which the Kingdom that will endure forever will be established. Some 500 years after Nebuchadnezzar kingdom 4 the Roman empire began. This empire ruled at the birth death and resurrection of Jesus.

God's Kingdom

God's kingdom will not be a takeover of earthly kingdoms. He will completely consume, destroy and blow away all the kingdoms of earth. The New Testament says that God will create a new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1). God's kingdom will be everlasting.

⁴⁴ *“During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever. ⁴⁵ That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain, though not by human hands, that crushed to pieces the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. The great God was showing the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its meaning is certain.”*

- **The kingdom of God would not be a stone image hewn by man...or come from a mountain...(precious metal) But a rock from Heaven...**

This is the essence of what the prophecy of Daniel 2 reveals. God is in control of the events of human history.

He writes History before it happens!!!

The rise and fall of empires appear as if happening by the will of men, but Daniel 2 reveals to us very clearly that God is behind all human events.

Then the King does this...

DA 2: 46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar threw himself down before Daniel and worshiped him, and he commanded his people to offer sacrifices and burn sweet incense before him. 47 The king said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret."

*48 **Then the king appointed Daniel to a high position and gave him many valuable gifts. He made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, as well as chief over all his wise men.** 49 At Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be in charge of all the affairs of the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained in the king's court*

- *King Nebuchadnezzar recognized that Daniel's God, " is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries*
- *Daniel's God is above any other god*
- *He is the Lord or master of earthly King's*
- *He reveals or understands all mysteries...*

so five hundred years later...the Eastern Maji see the star prophesied by Balaam...and being taught by the Jewish men Daniel , shadrach, meshach and Abendgo...with the story passed down from one generation of wisemen to the next...until the star of Jacob appears in the sky...and they make the trek to Jerusalem...

MT 2:1 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, 2 "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose,^[b] and we have come to worship him."

Wise men still seek Him!

The King is here let us bow down and Worship...

end

that Balaam, the notorious prophet from Mesopotamia, was an early member of the Magi, perhaps even their founder. If so, this fact would at least partially explain why the Magi at the time of Christ were aware that a special star would be used by God to announce the Savior's birth to this world. It was Balaam's prophecy, of course, as recorded in the Bible, that spoke of this future star. Here is his prophecy, actually constrained by God to be uttered against the prophet's own will.

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There is even an ancient tradition that Balaam, the notorious prophet from Mesopotamia, was an early member of the Magi, perhaps even their founder. If so, this fact would at least partially explain why the Magi at the time of Christ were aware that a special star would be used by God to announce the Savior's birth to this world. It was Balaam's prophecy, of course, as recorded in the Bible, that spoke of this future star. Here is his prophecy, actually constrained by God to be uttered against the prophet's own will.

the next land and King which stood in their way prior to Jericho were the Moabites...who were the descendnets of lot some five hundred years earlier...

When the Israelites had traveled around the land of Edom, and encamped beside the river Jordan, a little north of the Dead Sea, they did not sit down to rest, for Moses knew that a great work was before them, to take the land of Canaan. He had already won a great victory over the Amorites at Jahaz, and slain their king, and won their land. Again Moses sent out an army into the north, a region called Bashan. There they fought with King Og, who was one of the giants, and killed him, and took his country. This made the Israelites masters of all the land on the east of the river Jordan, and north of the brook Arnon.

South of the brook Arnon and east of the Dead Sea were living the Moabites.

This people had sprung from Lot, the nephew of Abraham, of whom we read in earlier Stories (6 and 8). In the five hundred years since Lot's time, his family or descendants had become a people who were called Moabites, just as Jacob's descendants were the Israelites. The Moabites were filled with alarm and fear as they saw this mighty host of Israel marching around their land, conquering the country and encamping on their border. The Moabites were ruled by a king whose name was Balak, and he tried to form some plan for driving away the people of Israel from that region.

There was at that time a man living far in the east, near the great river Euphrates, whose name was Balaam. This man was known far and wide as a prophet, that is, a man who talked with God, and heard God's voice, and spoke from God, as did Moses. People believed that whatever Balaam said was sure to come to pass; but they did not know that Balaam could only speak what God gave him to speak.

Balak, the king of the Moabites, sent men to Balaam at his home by the river, with great presents. He said to Balaam:

Numbers 22:1 Then the people of Israel traveled to the plains of Moab and camped east of the Jordan River, across from Jericho. ² Balak son of Zippor, the Moabite king, had seen everything the Israelites did to the Amorites. ³ And when the people of Moab saw how many Israelites there were, they were terrified. ⁴ The king of Moab said to the elders of Midian, "This mob will devour everything in sight, like an ox devours grass in the field!"

So Balak, king of Moab, ⁵ sent messengers to call Balaam son of Beor, who was living in his native land of Pethor^[a] near the Euphrates River.^[b] His message said:

"Look, a vast horde of people has arrived from Egypt. They cover the face of the earth and are threatening me. ⁶ Please come and curse these people for me because they are too powerful for me. Then perhaps I will be able to conquer them and drive them from the land. I know that blessings fall on any people you bless, and curses fall on people you curse."

⁷ Balak's messengers, who were elders of Moab and Midian, set out with money to pay Balaam to place a curse upon Israel.^[c] They went to Balaam and delivered Balak's message to him. ⁸ "Stay here overnight," Balaam said. "In the morning I will tell you whatever the LORD directs me to say." So the officials from Moab stayed there with Balaam.

⁹ That night God came to Balaam and asked him, "Who are these men visiting you?"

¹⁰ Balaam said to God, "Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent me this message: ¹¹ 'Look, a vast horde of people has arrived from Egypt, and they cover the face of the earth. Come and curse these people for me. Then perhaps I will be able to stand up to them and drive them from the land.'"

¹² But God told Balaam, “Do not go with them. You are not to curse these people, for they have been blessed!”

¹³ The next morning Balaam got up and told Balak’s officials, “Go on home! The LORD will not let me go with you.”

¹⁴ So the Moabite officials returned to King Balak and reported, “Balaam refused to come with us.” ¹⁵ Then Balak tried again. This time he sent a larger number of even more distinguished officials than those he had sent the first time. ¹⁶ They went to Balaam and delivered this message to him:

“This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Please don’t let anything stop you from coming to help me. ¹⁷ I will pay you very well and do whatever you tell me. Just come and curse these people for me!”

¹⁸ But Balaam responded to Balak’s messengers, “Even if Balak were to give me his palace filled with silver and gold, I would be powerless to do anything against the will of the LORD my God. ¹⁹ But stay here one more night, and I will see if the LORD has anything else to say to me.”

²⁰ That night God came to Balaam and told him, “Since these men have come for you, get up and go with them. But do only what I tell you to do.”

"There is a people here who have come up out of Egypt, and they cover the whole land. I am afraid of them, for they have made war and beaten all the nations around. Come and curse them for me in the name of your God; for I believe that those whom you bless are blessed and prosper, and those whom you curse are cursed and fail."

end

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²⁴ Then Daniel went in to see Arioch, whom the king had ordered to execute the wise men of Babylon. Daniel said to him, “Don’t kill the wise men. Take me to the king, and I will tell him the meaning of his dream.”

²⁵ Arioch quickly took Daniel to the king and said, “I have found one of the captives from Judah who will tell the king the meaning of his dream!”

²⁶ The king said to Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar), “Is this true? Can you tell me what my dream was and what it means?”

²⁷ Daniel replied, “There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can reveal the king’s secret. ²⁸ But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future. Now I will tell you your dream and the visions you saw as you lay on your bed.

²⁹ “While Your Majesty was sleeping, you dreamed about coming events. He who reveals secrets has shown you what is going to happen. ³⁰ And it is not because I am wiser than anyone else that I know the secret of your dream, but because God wants you to understand what was in your heart.

³¹ “In your vision, Your Majesty, you saw standing before you a huge, shining statue of a man. It was a frightening sight. ³² The head of the statue was made of fine gold. Its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs were bronze, ³³ its legs were iron, and its feet were a combination of iron and baked clay. ³⁴ As you watched, a rock was cut from a mountain, ^[d] but not by human hands. It struck the feet of iron and clay, smashing them to bits. ³⁵ The whole statue was crushed into small pieces of iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold. Then the wind blew them away without a trace, like chaff on a threshing floor. But the rock that knocked the statue down became a great mountain that covered the whole earth.

³⁶ “That was the dream. Now we will tell the king what it means. ³⁷ Your Majesty, you are the greatest of kings. The God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor. ³⁸ He has made you the ruler over all the inhabited world and has put even the wild animals and birds under your control. You are the head of gold.

³⁹ “But after your kingdom comes to an end, another kingdom, inferior to yours, will rise to take your place. After that kingdom has fallen, yet a third kingdom, represented by bronze, will rise to rule the world. ⁴⁰ Following that kingdom, there will be a fourth one, as strong as iron. That kingdom will smash and crush all previous empires, just as iron smashes and crushes everything it strikes. ⁴¹ The feet and toes you saw were a combination of iron and baked clay, showing that this kingdom will be divided. Like iron mixed with clay, it will have some of the strength of iron. ⁴² But while some parts of it will be as strong as iron, other parts will be as weak as clay. ⁴³ This mixture of iron and clay also shows that these kingdoms will try to strengthen themselves by forming alliances with each other through intermarriage. But they will not hold together, just as iron and clay do not mix.

⁴⁴ “During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever. ⁴⁵ That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain, though not by human hands, that crushed to pieces the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. The great God was showing the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its meaning is certain.”

Nebuchadnezzar Rewards Daniel

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar threw himself down before Daniel and worshiped him, and he commanded his people to offer sacrifices and burn sweet incense before him. ⁴⁷ The king said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret.”

⁴⁸ Then the king appointed Daniel to a high position and gave him many valuable gifts. He made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, as well as chief over all his wise men. ⁴⁹ At Daniel’s request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be in charge of all the affairs of the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained in the king’s court

