

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
XII. Christ's Identity At Birth Testified By Gentiles
(Matthew 2:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. In our study of the gospel records so far, we have seen Christ in His infancy identified as God Incarnate and the Messiah by the Hebrews Joseph, Mary, Elisabeth, Zechariah, Simeon, Anna and the Bethlehem shepherds coupled with the Angel Gabriel and a multitude of God's angels who appeared to the Bethlehem shepherds.
- B. However, Israel's Messiah "one day will rule as King of kings and Lord of lords" over the nations of the world (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 69), so we would also expect a testimony to arise from Gentiles about the identity of Jesus Christ in His infancy.
- C. Matthew 2:1-12 provides this testimony in the visit of the magi, what we view for our insight and edification:

II. Christ's Identity At Birth Testified By Gentiles, Matthew 2:1-12.

- A. The Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures predicted a wonderful ministry of Israel's Messiah unto Gentiles:
 - 1. Messiah would be the "Root" of the tree of the Davidic kingdom that was cut down at the Babylonian invasion of Judah, and that "Root" would grow up to restore the Davidic kingdom and become a standard around which the peoples would rally, Isaiah 11:10. (E. J. Young, The Book of Isaiah, 1974, vol. I, p. 393)
 - 2. The Messiah would thus be a figurative "light" of God's revealed truth in the Gospel of Christ to the Gentiles that He might be God's salvation of mankind to the ends of the earth, Isaiah 49:6.
- B. The visit of the magi to the infant Christ in Matthew 2:1-12 prefigured the fulfillment of this predicted hope:
 - 1. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem 5 miles south of Jerusalem, some Gentile Magi came from the east to Jerusalem asking where the newborn King of the Jews might be, explaining that they had seen His star in the east and were come to worship Him, Matthew 2:1-2; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Matt. 2:1.
 - 2. The Magi were priest-sages and experts in astrology and religion, and though we can debate over how they had gained such insight, they were acting upon it, *Ibid.*, Pentecost, p. 66-67. The Magi did not know the Biblical prophecy on Messiah's birthplace, so they came to Israel's capitol of Jerusalem to ask about it.
 - 3. Herod the Great, an Idumean who had usurped Israel's throne and killed some of his own household for fear that they threatened his rule, was upset at news of a native-born Hebrew king, Matt. 2:3; *Ibid.*, p. 68.
 - 4. Herod gathered Israel's chief priests and scribes and demanded that they tell him where Messiah was to be born, and they cited Micah 5:2 that predicted His birthplace would be Bethlehem of Judah, Matthew 2:4-6.
 - 5. King Herod then privately summoned the Magi and inquired diligently of them when the star they claimed had signaled Messiah's birth had first appeared, and he sent the Magi to Bethlehem to find the Hebrew infant King and report back to Herod that he might also allegedly come and worship Him, Matthew 2:7-8.
 - 6. The Magi left Jerusalem and headed for Bethlehem, and the star that they had seen in the east went before them until it stood over the house where the Infant King was, Matthew 2:9. For a *star* to lead the *Magi* from Jerusalem to the *house* in Bethlehem where Jesus was implied a miracle by the God of the *heavens* (the *star's* moving and then stopping) and of the *earth* (the star's guidance of the *Magi* from one place to a another place on the earth), revealing that Israel's Creator God of the heavens and of the earth and not some local pagan deity (cf. pagan Rahab's confession in Joshua 2:9-11) was leading them! Realizing this, the Magi greatly rejoiced that the Creator God of the universe was leading them to His King! (Matt. 2:10)
 - 7. The Magi entered the home of the infant Jesus and His mother, and falling down, they worshipped Him as the Creator God's King, Matthew 2:11a. They gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, items that were typically given to royalty and were similar to the gifts Jacob had his sons gave Joseph in Genesis 43:11-12 when they viewed Joseph as a high-ranking official, Matthew 2:11b; *Ibid.*, p. 69.
 - 8. "Now for the first time in the New Testament, Gentiles, having received a message from God, accepted it and responded to it in faith" (*Ibid.*), testifying by their worship that Jesus was the Creator God's King!
 - 9. God then warned the Magi in a dream not to go back to Herod to inform him of Jesus' location, so they returned to their homeland another way to avoid meeting once again with Herod the Great, Matthew 2:12.

Lesson: *Not only was the Infant Jesus testified by angels and Hebrews to be Israel's Messiah and Son of God, but prefiguring Christ's relation to all of the nations, Gentiles came to worship Him as the Creator God's King.*

Application: *Since long before Jesus testified of His Person and work, God led angels, Jews, and Gentiles to testify that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Creator God's King, may we also trust in Him and worship Him.*