

December 7th



Advent 2025

—THE CONTRASTS OF CHRISTMAS—

“I had seen birth and death, but had thought they were different; this Birth was, hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death. We returned to our palaces, these Kingdoms, but no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation, with an alien people clutching their gods. I should be glad of another death.”

—T.S. Elliot, *The Journey of the Magi*

“HEROD & THE MAGI”

Setting the Stage:

John 1:11-13, Matthew 2:1-12.16

Herod the King—

The Magi—

The Old Testament Background

- With destruction imminent, the Lord warned his people to go willingly into _____ in Babylon.

Jer. 21:8-10—⁸“And to this people you shall say: ‘Thus says the Lord: Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. ⁹He who stays in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, but he who goes out and surrenders to the Chaldeans who are besieging you shall live and shall have his life as a prize of war. ¹⁰For I have set my face against this city for harm and not for good, declares the Lord: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.’”

- The career of the prophet _____ occurred during these years of Babylonian captivity.

- (1) Daniel and his friends were chosen to learn Babylonian _____ and _____.

Dan. 1:3b-4—bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, ⁴youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

- (2) In God’s providence, they rose to prominence among the “_____” of Babylon. (1:20; 2:12)

“wise men”—חַכְמַיִם (*hakkîm*)—Likely a bureaucratic title referring to a class of advisors to the Babylonian court that included astrologers, diviners, dream interpreters, and administrative advisers.

Dan. 2:48—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.

- (3) During this time, Daniel gave prophecies concerning the rise of _____ that God would use to rule over His people until the appointed time.

The Great Image (2:31-35)—A broad outline of gentile rule from the Babylonian empire through the coming of the end-time empire and its destruction by Messiah whose kingdom fills the whole earth.

The Four Beasts (7:1-28)—The divine perspective on the events of the prior vision with a contrasting focus on the end-time antagonist (Antichrist) who is judged and the Son of Man figure who is given everlasting dominion over the kingdoms of the earth.

The Ram, the Goat, (8:1-27)—A focus on the kingdoms that would follow Babylon, specifically the Medo-Persian and Greek empires. A future ruler (Antiochus IV) would greatly oppress Israel, serving as a type of the coming end-time antagonist (Antichrist).

- (4) God revealed to him specific details concerning the _____ of the coming of Messiah.

The Vision of the Seventy Weeks (9:24-27)—With these “weeks” representing groups of years, it was possible to look forward and to roughly anticipate the lifetime of the ‘Anointed One’ who would be cut off.

69 “weeks”: $69 \times 7 = 483$ years — Decree to rebuild Jerusalem → 445 BC — 445 BC + 483 = Early/Mid AD 30’s

Key Points: In the events of _____, there is always more going on than we can fully understand. (Isa. 46:8-10)

The Lord is not slow in keeping His _____. Rather, He is working at the pace that brings the greatest glory to His name. (2 Pet. 3:9)

The Historical Background

Herod the Great

“His character was typical of an age that had produced many men of intellect without morals, ability without scruple, and courage without honor. He was in his lesser way the Augustus of Judea: like Augustus he overlaid the chaos of freedom with dictatorial order, beautified his capital with Greek architecture...enlarged his realm, made it prosper, achieved more by subtlety than by arms, married widely, was broken by the treachery of his offspring, and new every good fortune but happiness.” —Will Durant, *Caesar & Christ*

- His rise to power proved that he was a formidable ruler.
- His reign was continually troubled both nationally and personally.

The Magi

“The term *magos* (pl. *magoi*) can refer to magicians, sorcerers, astrologers, or dream interpreters. In the Persian period the magi were a priestly caste that interpreted dreams, and the Septuagint uses the term as such in the book of Daniel.”

- *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels*

Matthew 2:1-12

- The journey of the magi had a specific _____.

Question: “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?”

⇒ The Magi had clearly been influenced by Jewish _____ concerning the coming of a Great King. There was also some kind of celestial phenomena that they were able to observe.

Num. 24:17—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

Herod and the people were _____!

- Herod gathered the religious _____ of the day.

Question: “Where is the Messiah to be born?”

⇒ The answer, according to Scripture, was _____.

Micah 5:2a—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,

These men knew the prophecies and yet they were not _____ His arrival!

- Herod and the Magi had contrasting responses to the coming of Messiah:

Herod was troubled by Christ, but the Magi _____ over Him! (2:10)

Herod raged against the authority of Christ, but the Magi _____ Him! (2:11)

Key Point: What things do we _____ and whose _____ do they serve?

Receiving the Incarnate Son

1. Receiving Christ means the glorious loss of the _____ we cling so tightly to. (Matt. 16:25-26)
2. Receiving Christ means that we find a new _____ as His worshipers. (Col. 3:3-4)
3. Receiving Christ can transform embittered people like _____ into joyful worshipers like the _____.

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