



Who is *Jesus*?

- Messiah of Israel, Son of David, Son of Abraham
- Yeshua is a Hebrew, more specifically a Jew
- Yeshua is The Father's agent designated to bring the plan about
- The Salvation plan and process is The Father's
- ***Yeshua*** = Yehoveh Saves (NOT God Saves)
- Yeshua died on the cross for our sins: He is part of who God is; and He is our Passover Lamb, Lord, and King



MATTHEW CHAPTER 2

- Matthew provides no details about the importance of Christ's birth in *Beit Lechem* because his Jewish audience already knew it
- Yeshua's birth year based on the reign of King Herod, from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C.
- The story of the Magi and the Star are found only in the Gospel of Matthew



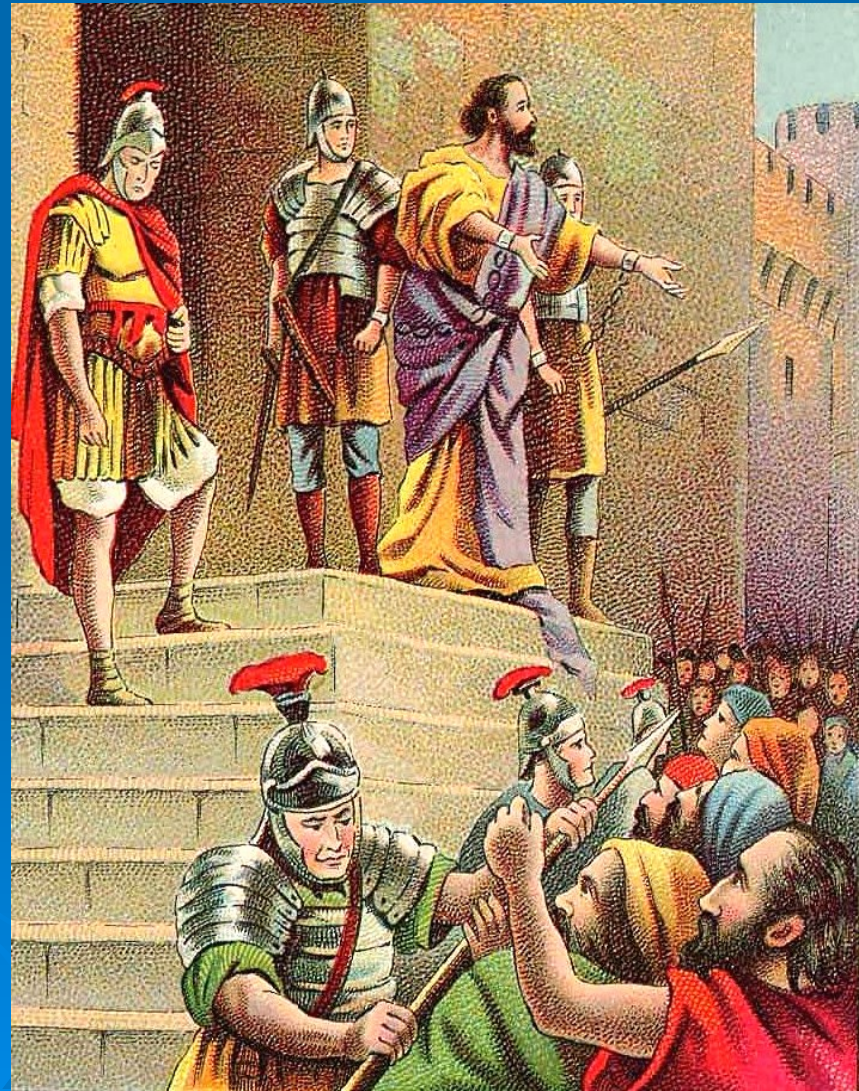
WHO WERE THE MAGI?

- Bible doesn't say how many Magi there were
- They were not kings
- They were highly respected experts who used the sky to interpret current and future events
- They were Hellenistic Astrologers...not Babylonian!
- Jews did not practice astrology



THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Rome and the Holy Land were in constant tension
- Jews were offended, Rome was frustrated at Jews' stubbornness
- Jews expressed their hope for a Messiah to deliver them
- Romans on high alert for this deliverer
- Astronomers had developed mathematical equations to predict movements of the stars and planets
- No real distinction between astronomy and astrology
- Knowledge of the stars used mainly for astrology predictions



ARIES THE ZODIAK SYMBOL OF JUDEA

- Is the Star of Bethlehem a fictional myth? Simply a miracle of God? A rare celestial event?
- Might the Star be a Jewish Midrash on the story of Balaam and Balak?
- Numbers 24:15–17
- Some scholars believe that the mention of a star by Balaam refers to the Star of Bethlehem



• A Star. Out of Jacob



PARALLELS BETWEEN THE BALAAM STORY AND THE MAGI

- 1) King Herod and King Balak from Edom region
- 2) King Herod's plan to kill Christ was ruined just as Balak's plan to kill the Israelites was ruined
- 3) Balaam was a Magi
- 4) Magi came because of a star, Balaam prophesied a "Star out of Jacob"

HEROD THE HELLENISTIC TYRANT

- Magi asked the people of Jerusalem where the new king was
- Herod was not a Jew
- Herod was so paranoid that he killed 3 of his own sons
- Jews, and Herod, unaware of the arrival of a new king
- Herod believed the Magi and feared the prophecies of a Messiah/King



BETHLEHEM STAR A COMET?



- **Aster** = star, but used for most any luminous object in the sky
- Comets appear suddenly, last a few weeks, and disappear
- A comet that portended a king's death came during Vespasian's reign
- He said it was the king of Parthia that would die
- **Cometai** = long haired star
- Comets were harbingers of death, not of births

STAR THEORIES

- Supernova
- Nova = new star
- New light suddenly appears and then in time fades away
- A Supernova is super bright
- No 1st century evidence that a bright new star carried any meaning for astrologers
- A planetary conjunction means 2 or more planets appear close together
- There WAS a triple planetary conjunction in 6 B.C.





THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

- Whether comets, supernovas, or planetary conjunctions, none of these had to do with the birth of a king in the 1st century
- The portent of the birth of a king would have had to conform to a very specific, well-defined set of criteria
- Jews didn't look to the skies for their signs, but the Hellenistic star gazers did
- Whatever the Magi saw must have been subtle