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Why Magi?

Calvary Portsmouth 2020 Christmas Studies

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In Session 1:

- We saw how the truth of Christmas has been obfuscated by tradition
- Jesus came as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world
- He was born in the town of sacrificial lamb's
 - Bethlehem
- In the Tower of the Flock (Migdal Edar)
 - as prophesied by Micah
- Wrapped in 'swaddling bands' as a lamb that was to remain unblemished & laid in The manger
- Inspected by the very shepherds whose job it was to inspect and care for the lambs destined for sacrifice in Jerusalem!

Summary:

- So, when you think ‘Christmas’...
- You should think...

‘Sacrificial Lamb’!

- The location, the details and the Shepherds themselves all speak of this great truth!
- But, that is only half the story (specifically Luke’s half!)...
- When you think ‘Christmas’...
- You should also think...

The King of the Jews

- These two aspects are summarised in Isaiah 9:6-7

Lamb & King

- “For unto us a *child is born*, unto us a *son is given*: and the *government shall be upon his shoulder*: and his name shall be called *Wonderful, Counseller, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*.
- Of the increase of his *government* and *peace there shall be no end*, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with *judgment and with justice* from henceforth *even for ever*. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this”.

Isaiah 9:6-7

Model in Advance

- As a forerunner to Christ, Melchizedek was part of a line of kings and priests of Jerusalem spanning 1000 years from just after the time of the flood
- God had always intended a monarchy for the Nation of Israel, but had stated:

IO *I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?*

Hosea 13:10

Model in Advance

– Israel were not to be like the other nations:

²¹ He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and **the shout of a king is among them.**

²² God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

²³ Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

The Failure of Human Government

- Not content to be without a visible king, Israel ‘jumped the gun’ and appointed Saul as king
- That ended in failure!
- Man’s government of man will always be lacking at best, and tyranny at worst!

(The Prophecy of Balaam)

The Promise of Divine Government

- Then in God's time He appointed a king, (David) as a model / forerunner of His ultimate plan to rule over His people Himself
- 2 Samuel 7 documents God's promise to David of an eternal throne & kingdom!

(The Prophecy of Balaam)

The House of David

Matthew:

Luke:

Solomon

Rehoboam

Abijah

Asa

Jehoshaphat

Jehoram

Ahaziah*

Joash*

Amaziah*

Uzziah

Jotham

Ahaz

Hezekiah

Manasseh

Amon

Josiah

³⁰ Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

Jeremiah 22:30

Jehoiakim*

Jehoiachin*

Salathiel**

Zerubbabel

Abiud

Eliakim

Azor

Sadoc

Achim

Eliud

Eleazar

Matthan

Jacob

Joseph

Joseph

Juda

Simeon

Levi

Matthat

Jorim

Eliezer

Jose

Er

Elmodam

Cosam

Addi

Melchi

Neri

Semei

Mattathias

Maath

Nagge

Esli

Naum

Amos

Mattathias

Joseph

Janna

Melchi

Levi

Matthat

Heli

(Mary)

Deliberate Design

- Every detail - even in the regulations of the Torah - are there by deliberate design...
- ...and always point to Christ!

Daughters of Zelophehad

- There is a peculiar exception recorded in the Torah (Numbers 27)
 - the result of a petition by the daughters of Zelophehad,
- It provides for inheritance through the daughter, if no sons were available and she married within her tribe.
 - Numbers 26:33; 27:1-11; 36:2-12; Joshua 17:3-6; 1 Chron 7:15.
- It became traditional in such cases that the father would legally adopt his son-in-law

Daughters of Zelophehad

- Torah exception on rules of inheritance
 - Requested of Moses Numbers 27:1-11
 - Granted by Joshua Joshua 17:3-6
- Husband *adopted* by father of the bride
Ezra 2:61=Neh 7:63; Num 32:41, cf. 1 Chr 2:21-23, 34-35
- Anticipates the lineage of Christ
 - Joseph was the *son-in-law* of Heli Luke 3:23
nomi,zw, *nomizo*, reckoned as by law



The Gospel of Matthew

The Coming King

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise:
When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph,
before they came together, she was found with child
of the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not
willing to make her a publick example, was minded
to put her away privily.

Matthew 1:18-19

- Joseph was the legal heir to the throne of Israel Gr. 'dikaios' (dik'-ah-yos); equitable (in character or act); by implication, innocent, holy (absolutely or relatively):

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Matthew 1:24-25

- Incredible faith!

- 1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
- 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
- 3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Matthew 2:1-3

The Wise Men

- Who were they?
- Where did they come from?
- Why did they travel so far?
- How did they know about this King?
- How many were there?
- Why was 'all Jerusalem' troubled?

The Wise Men

- Who were they?



The Wise Men

- Dispelling the myths!



The Wise Men

- There are many myths surrounding the identity of the wise men,
- Some say they were all descendants of Ham from North Africa
- Some think that they were representatives of Africa, Asia & Europe,
 - being decedents & representative of Ham, Shem, & Japheth (Noah's 3 sons).

The Wise Men

- Eastern tradition:
 - 12 wise men,
 - Arrived at Christmas on Jan 6
- 3rd century: “Kings” bearing gifts,
Ps 72:10, 68:29
- Western tradition:
 - 3 kings who arrived after Christmas at Epiphany: Jan 6

Three Kings?

- 8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.
- 9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.
- 10 The **kings** of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

Psalms 72:8-10

The Wise Men

- When you look closely at Psalm 72 you find that the scope is the kings of the world.
- It is not talking about the time of Jesus' birth.
- We haven't seen this prophecy fulfilled yet – with all the kings of the earth bowing down before Him
- The kings mentioned here, come from lands due south & north/west, - not the east where the wise men came from

The Wise Men

- It is suggested there were 3 because there are three gifts mentioned
 - Gold, Frankincense & Myrrh
- We are told they followed a star from the east, all the way to the manger in Bethlehem.

The Wise Men

- 6th century chronicle, *Exerpia Latina Garbari*
 - Bithisarea, Balthasar
 - Melichior, Melchior
 - Gathaspa, Gasper
- Bede (673-735): three sons of Noah
 - Shem: Asia
 - Ham: Africa
 - Japheth: Europe
- 14th century Armenian tradition:
 - Balthasar King of Arabia
 - Melchior King of Persia
 - Gasper King of India

The Wise Men

- In the 4th Century an archaeological dig in Persia uncovered three skulls in a grave together
- Who else could it possibly be!!



The Wise Men

- They were cleaned up, and after 'verifying them' they were brought to Constantinople by Helena (the mother of Emperor Constantine) where they became religious relics.
- They were transferred to Milan in the 5th century.
- After that, Bishop Rainauld of Cologne, during a period of great prosperity in Cologne, took a fancy to them, and paid a huge amount of money to get his hands on them, from Milan.
- So he put them in Cologne Cathedral around 1163AD where they can still be seen on display to this very day!

The Wise Men

- Cologne Cathedral



The Wise Men

- The “Tomb of the Kings”



The Wise Men



The Wise Men



The Magi

- Verse one calls them 'wise men'
- Matthew is actually much more specific than that in the original text, he specifically calls them 'magi'
- The magi come up time and time and time again in ancient history.

The Magi

- The Magi were actually one of the most powerful groups of men in the ancient world.
- The Magi would have been well known at that time

The Magi

- The Priests of the Media
- Renowned for interpreting dreams
- Mixed up the science of astronomy with their superstition of astrology
- They started trying to predict the future
 - Fortune telling / Sorcery
 - Magic is derived from Magi
 - As is the word 'magistrate'
- They had a political and religious component

The Magi

- As their reputation grew, they were looked to for advice
- No government in the east would be without their team of Magi!
- Important decisions would first be run passed the Magi
- Particularly the appointment of a king
- They make a number of Biblical appearances...

The Magi

¹³ Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that *knew law and judgment...*

Esther 1:13-16

The Magi

¹ And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.

² Then the king commanded to call the **magicians**, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

Daniel 2:1-5

The Magi

48 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel 2:46-48

Chief of the Magi

- This was a hereditary order! ...
- Yet Daniel actually became Rabmag – (Jer.39), meaning Chief of the Magi.
- King Nebuchadnezzar gave up the worship of Ishtar, (from where we get 'Easter') and was apparently converted.

Chief of the Magi

- So, it seems that much happened to the magi under Daniel's ministry...
- In Daniel chapter 5 verse 7 we find the account of Belshazzar's feast
 - Where Items from the Jewish Temple we desecrated
- Note: the new king at that time, calls the soothsayers, but the **magi** are mysteriously not present!
- It seems that many of the magi, carried on as true believers looking for the coming Messiah from this time, under the influence of Daniel himself.

The Magi

9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

Acts 8:9

The Magi

- 6 And when they had gone through the isle to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus:
- 7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.
- 8 But **Elymas the sorcerer** (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

Acts 13:6-8

- 'Elymas the sorcerer' means literally 'one of the magi'.

The Parthian Empire

- Parthia, ancient empire of Asia, in what are now Iran and Afghanistan.
- The Parthians were of Scythian descent, and adopted Median dress and Aryan speech.
- Parthia was subject successively to the Assyrians, Medes, Persians, and Macedonians under Alexander the Great, and then the Seleucids.

The Parthian Empire

- 250 BC: the Parthians succeeded in founding an independent kingdom
- During the 1st century BC, grew into an empire extending from the Euphrates River to the Indus River and from the Oxus (now Amu Darya) River to the Indian Ocean.
- After the middle of the 1st century BC Parthia was, thus, a rival of Rome, and several wars occurred between the two powers.

The Roman Empire 68 BC – 476 AD



Judea: a Buffer Zone

- Pompey, the first Roman conqueror of Jerusalem, in 63 B.C. had attacked the Armenian outpost of Parthia.
- In 55 B.C. Crassus led Roman legions in sacking Jerusalem and in a subsequent attack on Parthia proper. The Romans were decisively defeated at the Battle of Carrhae with the loss of 30,000 troops, including their commander.
- The Parthians counterattacked with a token invasion of Armenia, Syria, and Palestine.

Judea: a Buffer Zone

- Nominal Roman rule was reestablished under Antipater, the father of Herod, who in turn retreated before a Parthian invasion in 40 BC.
- Mark Antony reestablished Roman sovereignty in 37 B.C., and like Carssus before him, also embarked on a similarly ill-fated Parthian expedition.
- His disastrous retreat was followed by another wave of invading Parthians, which swept all Roman opposition completely out of Palestine
 - (including Herod himself who had to flee to Alexandria and then to Rome).

Judea: a Buffer Zone

- With Parthian collaboration Jewish sovereignty was restored and Jerusalem was fortified with a Jewish garrison.
- Herod, by this time, secured from Augustus Caesar the title of “King of the Jews.”
- However, it was not for three years, including a five months’ siege by Roman troops, that the king was able to occupy his own capital city.

Herod's Slippery Rock

- Herod had thus gained the throne of a rebellious buffer state situated between two mighty contending empires.
- At any time his own subjects might conspire in bringing the Parthians to their aid.

Roman Tensions

- Augustus was also aged; Rome, since the retirement of Tiberius, was without any experienced military commander.
- Pro-Parthian Armenia was fomenting revolt against Rome
 - (which was successfully accomplished within two years).
- At the time of the birth of Christ, Herod was close to his final illness

Parthian Instability

- The time was ripe for another Parthian invasion of the buffer provinces, except for the fact that Parthia itself was racked by internal dissension:
- Phraates IV, the unpopular and aging king, had once been deposed and it was not improbable that the Persian Magi were already involved in the political maneuvering requisite to choosing his successor.
- It is possible that the Magi might have taken advantage of the king's lack of popularity to further their own interests with the establishment of a new dynasty if a sufficiently strong contender could be found...

A Precarious Visit?

- It was then that a group of Persian-Parthian king makers entered Jerusalem in the latter days of the reign of Herod.
- *“The Magi, likely traveling in force with unimaginable oriental pomp and adequate cavalry escort to insure their safe penetration of Roman territory, certainly alarmed Herod and the entire populace of Jerusalem”* – Chuck Missler
- Herod’s reaction was understandably one of fear when one considers the background of Roman-Parthian rivalry that prevailed during his lifetime.

The King Makers

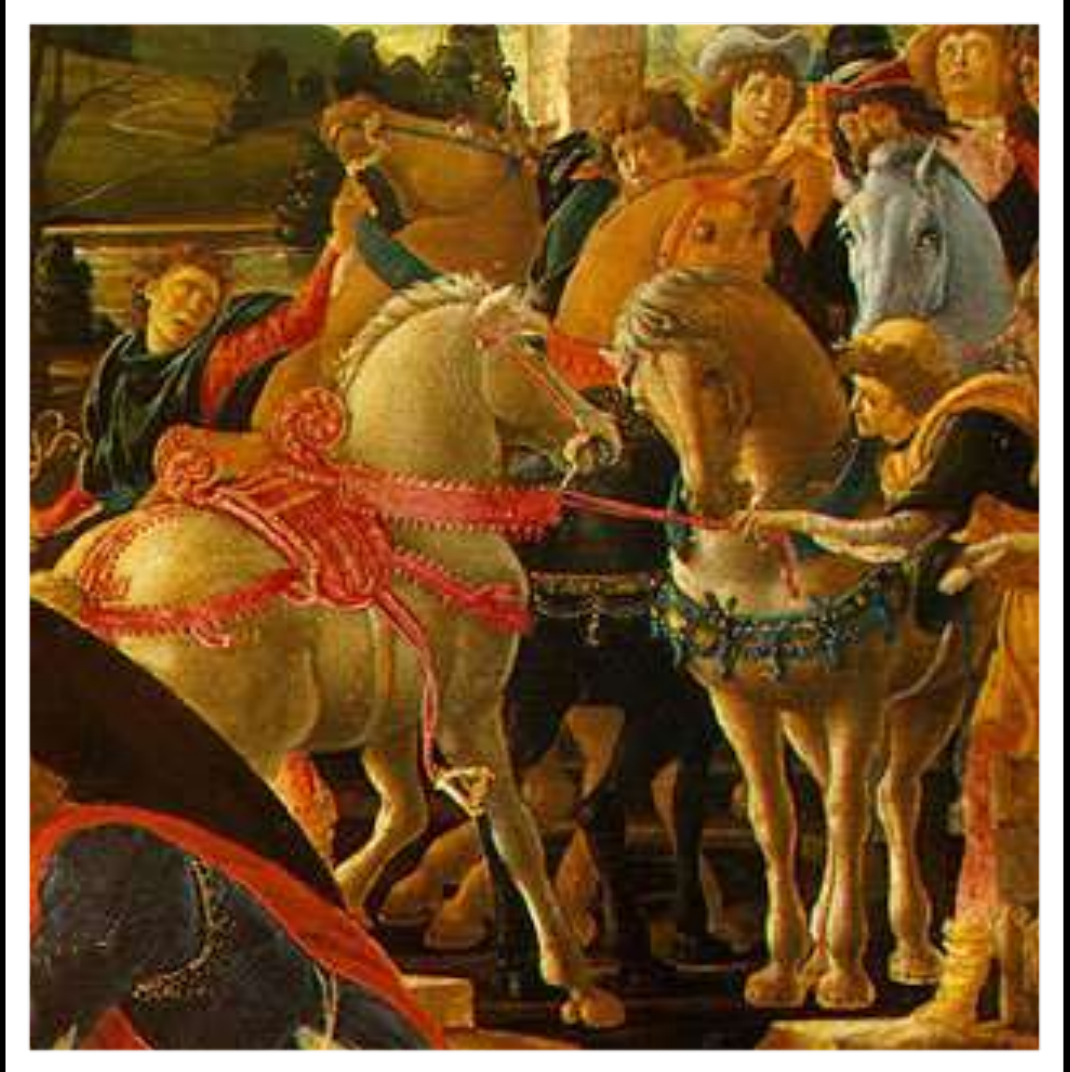


Picture by Giovanni, called the "Journey of the Magi"
- Note the horses (not camels!)

The King Makers

Botticelli's picture of "the adoration of the magi"

- Again, note the horses



The King Makers



“THE MAGI” CIRCA 1460

[illegible]

The Israelites were unable to capture the fortified towns of the plains during the early period of settlement.

The Great Sea
65 Miles
(Mediterranean Sea)

Jerusalem

The Israelites were under constant attack from Philistine invaders who occupied the coastal area at about this time.

Although all of Bashan was assigned to the half tribe of Manasseh, it is doubtful that settlement reached beyond the Yarmuk Valley.

During the period of Judge, invading Ammonites, Moabites and Midianites were repulsed by the Israelites.

The Short Stay In Bethlehem

- 21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.
- 22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

Luke 2:1-39

The Short Stay In Bethlehem

²³(As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

²⁴ And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

Luke 2:1-39

The Short Stay In Bethlehem

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

Luke 2:1-39

Order of Events

- Mary & Joseph go to Bethlehem for census
- Jesus is born (& a star appears?)
- Shepherds visit and return with joy!
- After 8 days Jesus is circumcised
- After 41 days Joseph & Mary take Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to present Jesus to the Lord & offer sacrifices
- Simeon & Anna glorify God
- The family then returns home to Nazareth
- Sometime later, Magi come seeking Jesus

- 1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
- 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
- 3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Matthew 2:1-3

- 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
- 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
- 6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Matthew 2:4-6

- 7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.
- 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Matthew 2:7-8

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

Matthew 2:9-10

- Why, at the point they come out from seeing Herod, would God send a star?
- Why would they even need the star at this point in time, if Herod had just given them the correct directions?
- They needed directions that Herod couldn't provide. Jesus was no longer in Bethlehem!

The Star of Bethlehem?



Artistic Licence?

- Matthew 2:7-11

Modern Translation

⁷Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸Then 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!"

⁹After 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. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! ¹¹They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.

KJV

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

- There is no mention of Bethlehem in verse 9!

Artistic Licence?

- Matthew 2:7-11
- Why is this important?
- Because the Magi never went to Bethlehem!
- Following the birth of Jesus...
 - ...after 8 days He was circumcised (Luke 2:21)
 - ...after 41 days Mary & Joseph took Jesus to the temple to present Him to the Lord according to the Law (there they met Simeon & Anna) (Luke 2:22-39)
- They then returned home to Nazareth!

And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. (Luke 2:39)

The Star of Bethlehem?

- When they came out from seeing Herod, “lo” = suddenly they saw that star which they had seen in the east.
 - They hadn’t seen it since then - and now, lo! there it was again!
 - No wonder they were excited and rejoiced with exceeding great joy!

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 2:11

- They come to a house (not stable or tower)
- They have with them their treasures, of which 3 specific gifts are mentioned:

Gifts

- Not necessarily all mentioned.
These mentioned because they are prophetic:
 - Gold
 - deity
 - Frankincense
 - priesthood (mixed into the shewbread by the priests)
 - Myrrh
 - when crushed, an ointment for burial
- Prophet; Priest; and King

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Matthew 2:12

Divine Providence

- The kingdom in Israel has seemingly come to an end in 587 B.C. when Zedekiah (the last king of Judah) was taken captive to Babylon
- The Crown was literally taken to Babylon
- God had prophesied through Hosea (3:4) that Israel would abide many days without a king
- Even though, upon returning from exile, there were those of the royal line, none assumed the crown or title of king of Israel
- Then at the time appointed, the Crown was brought back, by the king-makers (Magi), and given to the Son of David!
- He shall reign forevermore!

The King of Israel

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Luke 1:26-33

- The Throne of David is a nationalistic Jewish throne
- It demands the reestablishment of the royal throne of David, a Jewish King and Jewish Temple on the Temple Mt.

The King of Israel

² But 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.

Micah 5:2

King Jesus

- King of Saints x1 Rev 15:3
- King of kings x3 1Tim 6:15 / Rev 17:14 / Rev 19:16
- King of Israel x6 Is 44:6 / Zeph 3:15 / Matt 27:42 / Mark 15:32 / John 1:49 / John 12:13 /
- King of the Jews x18 Mt 2:2; 27:11; 27:29; 27:37 / Mk 15:2; 15:9; 15:12; 15:18; 15:26 / Lk 23:3; 23:37; 23:38 / Jn 18:33; 18:39; 19:3; 19:19; 19:21(2)
- Thy King x4 Hos 13:10 / Zech 9:9 / Mt 21:5 / Jn 12:15
- Total = 28x to do with National Israel

Two Messiahs?

- Isaiah 53 – The suffering Servant
- Psalm 2 – Rule with a rod of iron
- Not two Messiah's...
- But two comings!
- First: 'Lamb of God'
 - The Shepherds first
- Then: 'King of Israel'
 - The Magi some time later

- So, when you think ‘Christmas’...
- Think...

‘Sacrificial Lamb’!

- This has been fulfilled!”
- Then think...

The King of the Jews

- This *will* be fulfilled – soon!