

Who is the King?

Born in Bethlehem

Foundation

Bible passage: Micah 5.2 & Mtt 2.1-12

Micah was an Old Testament prophet who lived, like Isaiah (unit 17) about 750 before the birth of Jesus. Both had to warn the Israelites that destruction was coming because of their disobedience. The northern kingdom collapsed in their time and the southern, Judah, a century and a half later leading to the exile and return which we looked at in units 1-15.

Both prophets were to speak about God's judgement but also about how God would show forgiveness and would bless them again in the future. Part of Micah's message was about the promised future ruler.

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, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

When the people of Israel finally returned to the land after the exile they did not have their own king and were subject to other nations for most of the following centuries. Under Roman rule a King was appointed, Herod the Great, but he was an Edomite not an Israelite. Therefore, when some wise man turned up at his palace asking about a child who had been born "King of the Jews" he was understandably alarmed.

Herod called together the Jewish leaders and scholars to ask where the Messiah would be born. Knowing their Bibles they answered that he would be born in Bethlehem. Therefore, Herod



*Not the star the wise men saw,
but Sirius, the brightest star in the sky.*

took steps to eliminate the threat by having all the baby boys in the town killed. (At another time he even killed some of his own children.) But Joseph was warned in a dream and so he, Mary and Jesus escaped to Egypt until Herod had died.

Prior to the escape the wise men found the new baby, fell down and worshipped Him and gave Him gifts fit for a King.

Both Matthew and Luke in their accounts of Jesus birth highlight how He was the king the people were waiting for and quoted the Old Testament prophecies as part of their evidence.

Many of the people of Israel would not accept that Jesus was the Messiah. For many the stumbling block was the fact that Jesus died on the cross. That did not fit with what they understood about the Messiah. But many did believe that Jesus was the one and that His death was also foretold by the prophets. Later they would be given the name Christians because they kept going on about Jesus being the Christ, the Messiah, the long-promised King.

"Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?"



The star and Micah's prophecy led the wise men to the baby who was God's long-promised King.