Follow the Star: Reflect God's Love **December 17, 2006**
Outline **Matthew 2:3-11**

[3]When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. [4]When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. [5]"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, …

[9]After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. [10]When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. [11]On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.

I. **Introduction: The setting**

A. The Star

- *"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."*
- ASTER = star, a planet, an asteroid, a comet, or a meteor.
- Three most considered possibilities: (1) a conjunction of planets, (2) a comet, or (3) a supernova.

B. Bethlehem

- A small village, five or six miles south of Jerusalem, cradled between two ridges

II. **The characters**

A. King Herod
B. The Chief Priests
C. The Magi

III. **Three Responses: How does my life <u>reflect</u> the light of the Star?**

A. King Herod <u>Hostile</u>
B. The Chief Priests <u>Apathetic</u>
C. The Magi <u>Worship</u>

- *[10]When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. [11]On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Matthew 2:11*

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Study Guide **Matthew 2:3-11**

Monday -- Who were the magi? In some English translations, the Greek word MAGOS is rendered "astrologers." While MAGOS can mean astrologer, a study of Thayer's Greek lexicon (similar to a dictionary) shows that the word derives from Babylonian origin and means "oriental scientist, wise man, astrologer, or seer." That Babylonian word would have been used to describe Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who served as wise men/advisors in the royal court of Babylon, with Daniel in charge of them all (*Daniel 2:48*).

Tuesday -- There is one passage in the whole of the Bible that foretells the time of the Messiah's coming (his first coming, that is). The passage is *Daniel 9:24-26.* Daniel received and recorded this prophetic revelation while serving in the Persian court. Given Daniel's boldness to speak about his God, we can safely guess that the sages of Persia heard about it. Notice, however, that Daniel received no other details on the subject. This fact fits the picture we see in Matthew 2: "Magi from the east came to Jerusalem" knowing the identity of the one whom they sought, and the time of his arrival, but not much about the place.

Wednesday -- What was the star? The Greek word ASTER in Matthew *2:2-10* is a much more general term than our English word *star.* It can refer to any kind of heavenly body—a star, a planet, an asteroid, a comet, or a meteor. The three most widely accepted explanations for the star of the magi identify it as (1) a conjunction of planets, (2) a comet, or (3) a supernova.

Thursday -- The problem with the supernova explanation is that supernovae are so spectacular that nearly all observers would have noticed such an event and recorded it; yet it receives no mention anywhere but in the Bible. The Jewish leaders certainly seemed oblivious to the "star." Comets, too, are unsuitable candidates, for they are so common as to warrant no special response from the magi. Further, comets are so well documented through history that if one did occur, especially an unusual one, at the time of Christ's coming, it would show up in the records. Read again the birth of Jesus in *Luke 2.* Why would such a glorious star mark such a humble origin?

Friday -- The most plausible physical possibility is phenomenon called a recurring nova. An easily visible nova (a star that suddenly increases in brightness and then within a few months or years grows dim) occurs about once every decade. Novae are sufficiently uncommon to catch the attention of observers as alert and well trained as the magi must have been. However, many novae are also sufficiently unspectacular as to escape the attention of others. Most novae experience only a single explosion. But a tiny fraction has the capacity to undergo multiple explosions separated by months or years. This repeat occurrence seems necessary, for the Matthew text indicates that the star appeared, disappeared, and then reappeared and disappeared sometime later. Whether God used natural occurring phenomena or supernatural power in creating such a star…thank God for divine guidance in our lives!