

Non Posse Peccare: Jesus Was Successful in Proving the Prototype Divine Dynasphere Successful; Micah Used by Theologians to Locate the Place of Messiah's Birth, Matt 2:6; Herod Learns from Magi When They Saw the Star, 2:7; Herod Uses Rhetorical Veil to Plot Regicide, 2:8

1. In each of these temptations, Lucifer's objective was to cause Jesus to make a decision that would cause the great power experiment to be proved ineffective. For the temptations to be real, the Lord's volition must have been free to make a choice between the offer and the mission.
2. Two Latin phrases summarize the Lord's successful execution of the experiment: (1) *non posse peccare*, He was "not able to sin" in his undiminished deity (righteousness plus veracity plus immutability plus omnipotence equals perfection), and (2) *posse non peccare*, He was "able not to sin" in His true humanity (the enabling power of the Holy Spirit plus doctrine resident in the soul plus problem-solving devices equals perfection inside the system, i.e., the three spiritual skills).
3. Since Jesus utilized these assets to maintain perfection all the way through the challenges of the cross, the experiment was proved successful and therefore operational for any believer who chooses to utilize its assets in the Church Age.
4. Since Jesus was "able not to sin" by continued residence in the prototype system, we are also "able not to sin"—mentally, verbally, or overtly—whenever we reside inside the operational divine power system under the enabling power of the Spirit and with recall and application of resident doctrine.
5. Because the Lord was successful in executing the experiment means that we, too, may be also. He was perfect inside the system; so are we. We must step outside the system in order to sin but, as grace would have it, we may recover by confession alone to God alone of sins accumulated while residing in the spiritual darkness of lost fellowship.
6. The Lord summed up our problem in Matthew 22:29, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God." (NASB)

Several principles emerge from verses 5 and 6:

- 1) The priests and scribes know Micah's prophecy but they do not know the Savior of which it speaks.
- 2) They know Micah's prophecy reveals the location of the virgin birth but they have paid no attention to Daniel's precise prophecy indicating the timing of the event.
- 3) As a result they are ignorant of the Messiah's arrival just six miles from Herod's temple where they had been carrying out rituals without any concept of the fulfilled reality for over a year.
- 4) They hate Herod yet the prophecy reveals the arrival of the God-Man Savior whom they describe as the "Ruler of Israel" but are not motivated to seek Him.



- 5) The Messiah is the Shepherd who “rules” His sheep. The priests and scribes are spiritual rulers of Judah’s sheep. As rulers it was their job to teach the ritual plan of God as revealed in Scripture but they abandoned that resource and were later accused by the Lord of “teaching as doctrine the commandments of men” in Mark 7:7.
- 6) Micah has prophesied the advent of a “Ruler” who would “shepherd My people Israel.” The inattentiveness of the priests and scribes to the written Record of the prophets caused them to miss the telltale signs that were accurately observed and acted upon by the Magi.
- 7) What the Magi understood was that there would be a divine Ruler sent by God to not only rule Israel but to also restore order to a lost and dying world.

Matthew 2:5 - They [the priests and scribes] said to him [Herod], “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet.”

In this verse the theologians indicate their firm belief in the authenticity of Scripture. When they respond to Herod, they give credit to the infallibility of the Word with the perfect passive indicative of the verb **γράφω, graphō**.

The perfect tense indicates a completed act:

Its significance is the progress of an act or state to a point of culmination and the existence of its finished results. That is, it views action as a finished product. The point of completion is always antecedent to the time implied or stated in connection with the use of the perfect. In the indicative the perfect signifies action as complete from the point of view of present time.¹

This is a statement that says Micah’s prophecy was an act completed in eternity past and as a result stands written forever. It is even more dogmatic when it is remembered that Micah is quoting the Lord. But what the priests and scribes quote is not quite the same as what Micah wrote.

Matthew 2:5 - They [the priests and scribes] said to him [Herod], “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written in the past and thus stands written forever by the prophet: (CTL)

v. 6 - ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.’” (NASB)

This verse is pretty straight forward. Although not an exact quote from Micah, it gets the point across that Bethlehem is the birthplace of Messiah. The verb “shall come forth” is future active indicative of **ἐξέρχομαι (exerchomai)**.

The predictive future predicts an event which is expected to occur in future time. At this point the theologians should have pointed out to Herod that it had recently been fulfilled at Bethlehem, but being ignorant of the event they accurately convey the location without any attempt to mention its realization.

¹ H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (1927, Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1956), 200.



Of all the people who have gathered at Herod's palace, the only ones who understand that Micah's prophecy has already been fulfilled are the Magi whose party is made up not only of Jews but also a great number of Parthian Gentiles.

Matthew 2:6 - "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel." (CTL)

Although the theologians' response to Herod is not precisely correct, it is sufficient enough to convey the birthplace of Messiah which is at nearby Bethlehem.

Having learned where the birth occurred, Herod takes the Magi to a private location to interrogate them:

Matthew 2:7 - Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. (NASB)

Herod's interview of the Magi is separate from the theologians indicated by the adverb **λῴθρα (lathra)** which literally means "to be hidden" but it later came to mean "privacy," i.e., the theologians were excluded.

Herod is now in full mode recovery from his initial state of trepidation. His adroit nature has responded time and time again to extract him from tight spots.

Henry Dosker, in his article on Herod in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, mentions "in the great crises of his life he was never at a loss of what to do." (See p. 142)

His plan was to use the Magi to learn the location of the Messiah so he could assassinate Him. To do that he needs to know how old He is and those who have intimated they know are the Magi.

In Matthew 2:2, the Magi tell Herod they "saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." The verb "to see" is the aorist active indicative of **ὁράω (horaō)**. The constative aorist informs us they saw the star in Hecatompylos but that it was not involved in guiding to Jerusalem.

What the star did was inform them of the birth of the "King of the Jews" following which they made preparations to come and worship him.

The Magi's response to Herod is not recorded but we are able to discern from an order given by Herod to his security corps to go to Bethlehem and kill "all the male children who were two years old and under" (Matthew 2:16b).

Herod estimated that the Child could have been as old as two although it was more likely between a year and eighteen months between the Lord's birth and the king's order. Bethlehem was a very small village and there may not have been more than a dozen or so male children of that age living there.

Nevertheless, this was Herod's unspoken plan behind his deceptive remark to the Magi in verse 8.

Matthew 2:7 - Then Herod met privately with the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. (CTL)



v. 8 - And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him." (NASB)

This is a good example of how politicians will say things that appear to have noble intent but with no real honesty behind it. It is what we have often noted as the modus operandi of those who deal in deceit: Herod's instructions to the Magi are a rhetorical veil that conceals while it advances his hidden agenda.

The rhetorical veil is the appeal to find the Child so he, too, can go and worship Him. This alleged desire serves to conceal while it advances Herod's plan to assassinate Jesus.

The hidden agenda is preservation of his claim to the throne of Palestine as "king of the Jews."

Herod is not at all certain that what the Magi have reported is true and, if so, he is not convinced they will actually find the Child after almost two years have passed since the sign of His birth.

The word Child in this verse is the noun **παιδίον (paidion)** which refers to a small child. This is to be compared to the account of the virgin birth in Luke 2:12 where Gabriel, in telling the shepherds they "will find a Baby having been wrapped in strips of cloth lying in a feeding trough," uses the Greek noun **βρέφος (brephos)** which refers to a newborn infant.

Use of *paidion* by Matthew adds to the evidence that the Christ Child is of toddler age.

