

## Herod Feigns Interest in Worshiping Jesus, Matt 2:8; The Star Reappears to the Magi; It Leads Them to Joseph's House; the Meanings of "Star" in Scripture, 2:9; the Magi Celebrate, 2:10; the Magi Meet Joseph, Receive Permission to Enter His House, 2:11

The phrase "and when you have found Him" begins with the temporal conjunction that always accompanies the subjunctive mood: **ἐπὶ (epan)** and translated "when."

This is followed by the aorist active subjunctive of the verb **εὕρισκω (heuriskō)** translated "have found."

The subjunctive mood is the mood of probability. While the indicative assumes reality, the subjunctive assumes unreality. It is the first step away from that which is actual in the direction of that which is only conceivable.

What Herod is saying is that he is not sure after all this time that this Child would still be living in Bethlehem but he implores the Magi to "search carefully." He wants to show interest but at the same time not appear too insistent.

He then lies to the men in a statement that is intended to conceal while advancing his hidden agenda, the future active indicative of the verb **προσκυνέω (proskuneō)** which means "to worship":

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| future:     | Gnomic: a statement of fact which may be rightfully expected to occur; indicates the likelihood that a true-to-life event will take place, i.e., Herod will worship Jesus. |
| active:     | Herod asserts that he will produce the action of worshipping Jesus.  |
| indicative: | A statement of fact which makes this a boldface lie.   |

He is a typical politician confirming Solomon's contention:

**Ecclesiastes 1:9** - That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.

When there is a challenge to a politician's entrenched power he will say what needs to be said while simultaneously plotting the polar opposite.

Notice that the Bible, through the writings of Matthew, correctly records Herod's quote. He projects feigned interest in the Magi's mission, he urges them to continue their quest in Bethlehem, to search carefully for the Child, and, if He should be discovered, to let him know so that he, too, can come and worship Him. Herod's verbiage was accompanied by all the appropriate tones of voice, facial expressions, and hand gestures. Unseen or heard were the machinations of a pathological killer.

**Matthew 2:8** - And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child; and when you have found Him, assuming that you do, report back to me, for the purpose that I, too, may come and worship Him." (CTL)

**Matthew 2:9** - After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the child was. (NASB)



This is the third time *star* has appeared in this narrative. It had appeared to the Magi while in Parthia which they revealed in verse 2 by referring to it as “His star.” Herod inquires of the Magi in verse 7 about when the star appeared to them.

It is obvious that the star’s initial appearance served as a sign to the Magi and was perceived by them to signify the birth of the “King of the Jews” which naturally drew them to Jerusalem.

In verse 7, when Herod asks them when the star appeared, their answer led him to conclude that the Child’s birth could not have occurred more than two years ago.

Now we see in verse 9 that once the Magi began their journey down to Bethlehem this star appears to them again as they head south. It is mentioned a fourth and last time in verse 10.

The word for star is the noun **ἀστήρ (astēr)** and it has many meanings in Scripture other than “star.” Examples include (1) **Angels** e.g., the guardian angels of the seven churches of Revelation 2–3 (Revelation 1:20), (2) **Planets**: (a) Venus which is likened to Christ in Revelation 22:16, (b) Saturn, called Kiyun, **כִּיּוּן (kī'-un)**, in Amos 5:26, and (c) the morning star which can include all planets which may rise first in the morning: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, or Saturn, (3) **Constellations**: (a) Bear, (b) Orion, and (c) Pleiades (Job 9:9; 38:31, 32, and Amos 5:8, and (4) **Meteors** (Revelation 8:10).

The ancients who observed the night skies initially referred to the planets as **ἀστέρες πλανῆται (asteres planētai)**: “wandering stars.” The English word “planet” comes from the Greek word **πλάνης (planēs)** which means “wanderer.”

We will take a detailed look at the Magi’s star when we complete the passage. In verse 9 we are for the first time introduced to live action by the star. Previously we have heard only a report of it in verse 2 and a reference to it in verse 7. Here we are told it has reappeared to the Magi.

Apparently no one else is aware of its appearance. It only has meaning to the Magi and it is said to be the same star that they first observed in Hecatompylos some 12 to 18 months previous.

We are then told that it “went before them.” It did not lead them to Jerusalem but here we find it did lead them to Bethlehem, the imperfect active indicative of the verb **προάγω (proagō)**: to go before, lead the way, or lead forward.

imperfect:	Ingressive: stresses the beginning of an action, with the implication that it continued for some time. It is especially used in narrative literature when a change in activity is noted. <sup>1</sup>
active:	the star produces the action of going before the Magi.
indicative:	Declarative: this is a statement of fact.

<sup>1</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 544.



It is interesting that the star was not involved in leading the Magi on a one-thousand-mile journey but does lead them on a six-mile trip. The star's progress continues *until*, the temporal conjunction **ἕως (heōs)**. It marks the continuance of an action up to the time of another action and can be followed by the indicative mood which is the case here.

There are two verbs that follow. The first is the aorist middle participle of **ἔρχομαι (erchomai)** and is correctly translated *came*. The aorist participle precedes the action of the main verb which follows, the aorist passive indicative of **ἵστημι (histēmi)** and is correctly translated *stood*. It is a culminative aorist which denotes the attainment of the end of an effort or process. The star's halt gave the Magi the geologic coordinates for the location of the Christ Child, namely, a house.

**Matthew 2:9** - After hearing the king, they departed, and the same star, which they had previously seen in the east, proceeded before them until it came to a halt where the Child was. (CTL)

**v. 10** - When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. (NASB)

This verse notes a change of mental attitude by the Magi. They had previously received information from a star that motivated them to travel to Jerusalem. However, since the star provided no further details they arrived in Jerusalem in need of information that would lead them to the Messiah.

They were no doubt frustrated to learn that neither the king of the Jews nor the theologians who advised him had any knowledge of the Messiah's whereabouts. All they had to go on was a prophecy by Micah regarding His place of birth. However, this occurred better than a year ago.

After leaving Herod's palace they were again introduced to the star, the same one they had encountered in Parthia. This caused them to become reinvigorated with great joy. The word *rejoiced* is the aorist active indicative of the verb **χαίρω (chairō)** which means to be happy.

The aorist tense is ingressive which denotes entrance into a state or condition of becoming extremely happy. Happiness is a mental attitude that occurs when a believer is made aware of a principle, a standard, or a doctrine that offers guidance, comfort, or insight.

They had come a thousand miles to worship the Messiah and now with the reappearance of the star their confidence of fulfilling this desire produces an overabundance of happiness.

This is followed by the cognate noun **χαρά (chara)** which in context means "with great exultation." They shouted and cheered at the star's reappearance. It then led them to the house in which the Child was living with His parents.

**Matthew 2:10** - When they saw the star, they entered into a state of overabundance of happiness with great exultation. (CTL)

**v. 11** - After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (NASB)



The implication is that the star led the Magi to a specific house in Bethlehem. Upon arrival they were obviously allowed to enter the home. Although not mentioned in the verse, Joseph is mentioned in the context (v. 12). Indications are that Mary and Jesus were in the front of the house since male guests were not allowed to enter into women's quarters.

Other cultural standards were also observed: guests were openly welcomed in the homes of Jewish people and the homeowner would lavish every service on his guests. The custom when entering a home was to take off one's shoes and wash one's feet in a basin provided by the main entrance.

We have established the fact that the Magi's traveling party totaled in the thousands so it is logical to assume that only a small number actually entered Joseph's home to visit Jesus. However, the general belief that their number was three has no biblical basis. Those who did enter the home were most likely those with seniority among the Magi class. This is the only thing that would give the number three any legitimacy but there is no extra-biblical proof of this.

It must also be assumed that Joseph was informed of their desire to visit the Christ Child, their intent to worship Him, and to present Him with gifts. In light of the massive number of men making up the Magi's entourage, Joseph must have required some explanation of their interest in entering his home. He is obviously the one who allowed a select number to enter the room where his wife and Child were located.

Verse 11 begins with the Magi entering into the house but only after these necessary preliminary arrangements had been made with Joseph. The verse informs us that the first things the Magi saw upon entering the room was the Child and Mary His mother. Convinced that they were in the presence of the Messiah their first act was to fall down and worship Him.