

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## MATTHEW 1-2

**Question:** What do the following musical groups have in common? *Beatles – Point of Grace – Hootie and the Blowfish – Four Aces – U2 – Pointer Sisters...*

**Answer:** They're all examples of famous quartets.

A quartet is a musical group consisting of four members. It's music in four-part harmony – *soprano, alto, tenor, and bass*. And there're different types of quartets – *string quartets, barber shop quartets, even Gospel quartets*.

*And speaking of a Gospel quartet...* that's what we have in the first four books of the New Testament - one beautiful song written by a single composer, the Holy Spirit, in four-part harmony. God used all four Gospel writers – *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* – to sing the same song, but in four harmonizing parts.

It's as if the Holy Spirit film crew sat up four different cameras - at different angles – a camera at each corner of the action. The Gospels cover the same events, the same person, the same story, but from four differing perspectives.

*Mark* wrote with an emphasis on the *actions* of Jesus. Compared to the other Gospels, Mark has very little dialogue. It appealed to action-oriented **Romans**.

*Luke* wrote to the **Greeks**. The philosophers in Athens had a lofty view of man. Luke emphasizes Jesus' *humanity*. He depicts Jesus as the perfect man.

*John* wrote with the **whole world** in mind. He turns the

spotlight on the *deity of our Lord*. Jesus was God – the Creator, and Sustainer, and Savior of the world.

And *Matthew* wrote to the **Hebrews**.

Matthew was a Jew, writing to Jews, addressing Jewish concerns. His Gospel is a bridge that connects *Old Testament promises* with *New Testament premises*.

Nine times Matthew uses the phrase, **“It is written.”** He references the Old Testament. Fourteen times Matthew writes of **“that which was spoken”**.

There are 129 quotations or allusions from the Old Testament in the pages of Matthew’s Gospel. The first Gospel makes it clear that the *Messiah of the Old Testament* and the *Jesus of the New Testament* are one in the same.

Baseball fans know you can’t score a run without touching all four bases – well neither can you fully understand the ministry of Jesus without all four Gospels.

Jesus is *the* servant of God – Mark’s man of action.

Luke says He’s the man all men were meant to be.

According to John, He’s more than a man, He’s God in the flesh.

And Matthew reminds us that Jesus is the King of the Jews.

Understand all four Gospels, and you’ll *follow* Jesus, *trust* Jesus, *worship* Jesus, and *submit* to Jesus. He’s my example, Savior, God, and King.

Verse 1 begins, **“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ...”**

In typical Jewish fashion Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy. Property rights, inheritance, even vocation were tied to your genealogy.

Family trees were integral to Jewish life.

The Greek word translated “genealogy” is “genesis” – it means “beginning.” In the Jewish mindset each new family marked a new beginning for mankind.

By recording His genealogy, Matthew emphasizes the fact that Jesus began a new day, a new hope for fallen man. The family of Adam sinned against God and died spiritually. Jesus establishes a new family that brings forgiveness and life.

In Genesis 5, you’ll find Adam’s genealogy is filled with the repeated phrase, “and he died... and he died... and he died...” But as we’re about to see, the genealogy of Jesus is filled with “begots” – *births not deaths*. In the Adams’ family people are as good as dead. In Jesus’ family people find new life.

Matthew 1 sets the tone for the rest of the New Testament.

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham...” The Hebrew Old Testament made it clear that the promises of salvation were given to the Jews – and Matthew tells us Jesus was a Jew.

He was of the same bloodline with Abraham and David.

Remember Abraham was the first Hebrew. He was the racial father of the nation. David was God’s choice for king. He was the royal head of the nation.

And God made promises to both. He promised a *Savior* to Abraham – and a *King or Messiah* to David. Jesus was the fulfillment of both God’s promises.

Through Jesus’ *foster-father*, Joseph, He inherited the *royal right* to *David’s throne*. And through His *birth-mother*, Mary, he inherited the *racial right* from Abraham. The parents God picked for Jesus covered all the biblical bases.

The genealogy continues in verse 2, “Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon.

Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king.” Lots of history is swallowed up in these names.

Verse 6 “David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah.”

Notice the Bible’s honesty. Matthew could’ve called her by name “Bathsheba” – but not wanting to gloss over David’s sin the author is brutally honest...

Notice the 4 women in the first 6 verses of Jesus’ genealogy – Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Their appearance in the genealogy conveys vital truths.

First, a woman’s name in a Jewish genealogy was highly unusual. Jewish culture was male dominated. Women were considered second-class citizens.

Yet Matthew sets a tone for the elevated status Christianity

will give to women. Jesus and His disciples will revolutionize male and female relationships. Galatians 3:28 sums it up, “There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ.”

And the appearance of these 4 women is no accident. It's an exclamation point on God's grace... These four ladies were previously some seedy sisters...

Tamar and Rahab were prostitutes. Ruth was a gentile. Bathsheba was an exhibitionist. She bathed on the rooftop - in full view of the king's balcony.

As Matthew infers, later that night she ended up an adulterer.

Yet this is amazing. Matthew sees to it that Jesus' genealogy – a new hope for the world – the new family of God – is littered with prostitutes, and outcasts, and adulterers. Obviously, Jesus came to add to His family people soiled by sin.

Apparently, “the branches of Jesus' family tree are strong enough for sinners saved by grace.” If Jesus is willing to include in His family these four names – *Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba* – He's not ashamed to include mine.

Matthew continues in verse 7 with a countdown of the kings of Judah.

“Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah.

Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah.”

“Hezekiah begot Manasseh...” Who was Judah’s most vile and wicked king.

Manasseh brought idolatry into the Temple. He desecrated the Holy of Holies. Even though he later repented the damage he created could not be averted.

Hey, every family has a **stray sheep** – an alcoholic uncle, or a slutty sister.

But most families try to hide their skeletons in the closet – not Jesus. Our Lord Jesus publishes the sinner’s names in His genealogy for the world to see.

Jesus wants us to know He loves sinners. No matter how stained your past or problem-ed your present Jesus is not ashamed to call you His own. A seedy past can’t derail the glorious future He has for you if you trust Him and stay repentant.

Verse 10, “Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.”

Jerusalem fell and the last Jews were carried away to Babylon in 586 BC.

Notice Jesus’ genealogy is divided into three sections... from Abraham to David... from Solomon to the Exile... and now from the Return to His birth...

“And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob.

“And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.” Notice Matthew doesn’t follow suit and say “*Joseph begat Jesus.*” The author is very careful to say that Jesus was not born of Joseph, but of Mary.

Jesus was virgin born. God was His father. As we’ll see He was conceived of the Holy Spirit. Thus Jesus bypassed the inherent sin of the first man, Adam.

Jesus was born without sin, so He could later bear the sin of all men.

The genealogy ends in verse 17, “So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.” Which brings up the question, why the number 14?

There are numerous theories.

In the Scripture “7” is the number of “completion or perfection.” Jesus was a double measure of perfection – 7 X 2. At creation God worked 6 days and rested on the 7<sup>th</sup>. In salvation, in Christ, God’s work is completed again a second time.



The reason for “14” may be spiritual, or as practical as Matthew’s desire to list the genealogy in such a way as to make it easier for the Church to memorize.

When I was in High School I wore number “14” on my jersey – and the kids have always tried to keep the tradition alive. It’s become the family number.

Evidently, “14” is also *the family number* for the family of Jesus.

Here’s a final and strategic point about the genealogy of Jesus.

Since all Jewish genealogies were stored in the Temple - and since the Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD - it’s impossible for anyone living after 70 AD to produce the proper proof of a Messianic pedigree. If the Messiah had not come before the destruction of the Temple He could never have been identified.

Jesus is not only the Messiah - He’s the only person with the credentials.

The story moves on, verse 18, “**Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together...**”

Today, the progression between courtship and marriage is a 2-step process - engagement then marriage. But in Bible times there were 3-steps: *engagement, betrothal, and then marriage*. The betrothal was a preparatory time that lasted 12 months. During the betrothal arrangements were made, and details worked out.



A betrothed couple exchanged vows. They were legally bound to each other. In fact, to terminate a betrothal it took a bill of divorcement. Yet the couple lived separately, and did not indulge in marriage's sexual pleasures.

And we're told in verse 18 it was during their betrothal that Mary "**was found with child of the Holy Spirit.**" Can you imagine Joseph's shock and outrage?

*How could Mary betray Him before they were even married? Couldn't she wait on him?* Joseph was confused - and hurt - and no doubt angry.

**"Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly."** The Law gave Joseph the right to have Mary executed – *death by stoning*. The Jewish custom was to take the girl to the town square - put in a knee-deep box of manure - then pelt her with rocks until her face slumped over into the slime. It was an awful end.

I'm sure Joseph weighed out his options... he was too **moral** to overlook her betrayal, but he was too **merciful** to take out vengeance. In the end, despite his hurt and rejection Joseph loved Mary, and decided to just send her away quietly.

But he certainly couldn't buy the preposterous story she had told him.

Mary claimed the father of the child was the Holy Spirit – her conception had been a miracle. God had borrowed her womb. *Would you have believed her?*

What if a girl in our youth group turned up pregnant, and

with a sweet smile told us the child was of the Holy Spirit?  
*Sure! Not one of us would buy her story.*

It would take another miracle to convince Joseph of the truth of Mary's explanation. Joseph's marriage to his dream girl - was saved by a dream.

**“But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”**

And here's where we'd like a little more detail. *How exactly did this happen? God, break it down. Help us understand. Tell us the mechanics of the miracle...*

But that's not what God does... The Spirit overshadows the virgin. The seed of the spiritual impregnates a human egg. The human and divine mix and are one.

To probe any further is off limits – too sacred – don't touch the Ark or you might die. Here's a case where all we can do is look on in faith, and gawk at God.

The angel tells Joseph that Mary will give birth, but He'll supply the name.

**“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”** The name **“Jesus”** means **“Jehovah is salvation”**.

Isn't it interesting that of all the gifts God could have sent us He chose a Savior? It's not like we're a tough group to shop for – mankind has an infinite list of needs.

What about an *expert in terrorism*... who can end the war with extremists?

...Or a *peace negotiator*... who can bring rest to a war-torn world?

...Or an *economic whiz* – who can fairly and freely spread out the wealth?

...Or an *environmentalist* – who can fuel industry, while protecting the earth?

...Or a *coach for the Falcons* – who can take Atlanta to a Super Bowl?

But of all the needs the human family possesses the one God chose to address was our need for a Savior – *someone who could save us from our sins*. Hey, the ton of trouble that exists today is ultimately the result of one root problem - *sin*.

Above all, we need a Savior who can forgive us, and bridge the gap with God.

Rather than treat symptoms, God cut to the core of all our problems. The gift God chose to give to mankind was a Savior... and His name is **“JESUS”**.

**“So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son...”** Some OT scholars translate the Hebrew word for **“virgin”** in Isaiah 7:14 as **“a young woman.”** That’s not the most common translation, but it’s possible.

Yet when Matthew quotes Isaiah he brings clarity. He uses **“parthenos.”** It’s meaning is unequivocal - **“a woman who has never had sexual relationships.”**

Jesus' birth was a miracle... Sin passed down from Adam. We get sin from our father. That's why Jesus' Father was God. To die for the sin of man - Jesus had to be man without sin. As Mary's son He was human. As God's Son He was sinless.

Matthew continues his quote from Isaiah, "And they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." As we learned this morning, "with" is a wonderful word. All our loneliness ends here... *God with us.*

God could've saved us without being *with us*, but God pursues **witness** - not just salvation. There's a reason God saves folks. He wants to be near and with.

Notice too, verse 22 is another example of Matthew writing to Hebrew readers.

He points out that Jesus' miracle birth was predicted by the Hebrew prophets 700 years in advance. Isaiah 7:14 was a sign to Judah - a virgin would conceive – and His name would be called "Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

Now nearly 2000 years ago, the miracle of all miracles occurred. God became a man - the *Ancient of Days* became a *child of time* - the *infinite* became an *infant*.

Verse 24, "Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS."

I love Joseph's example of faith. Though the angel's visit assured Joseph that Mary had been faithful - don't think it

answered all of Joseph's questions.

If your faith is limited to only what you understand then it's a weak faith.

Faith doesn't always know **how** – but faith refocuses on those same letters. Faith realigns the **“h”** and **“o”** and **“w”** – until **“who”** comes into view.

Joseph had little to go on but God's Word, yet he diligently obeyed.

At Christmas we often focus on the baby, or Mary, or the shepherds, or the wise men, but I see this man of faith, Joseph, as Christmas' unsung hero.

One final point, notice we're told Joseph did not **“know”** Mary – a Hebrew euphemism for sexual intimacy - until after Jesus had been born. But the implication is when the time was right they consummated their marriage.

Matthew 13:55-56 tells us Jesus had at least 4 half-brothers and 2 half-sisters - which shoots down the Roman Catholic doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity.

Joseph is a model for men. His faith included a few cold showers, and sexual restraint. Whether you're single or married a man's faith will require the same.

Chapter 2, **“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?”**

**For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”**

These visitors to Jerusalem are called "**wise men**" or literally "**magi**".

The Greek historian, Herodotus, identified the magi as a priestly caste of Medes – probably men who served as advisors in the royal court of Persia.

The English word "**magistrate**" is a direct descendant of the word "magi".

The magi were skilled in mathematics, science, astronomy, and religion.

They kept one eye on the sacred writings and another eye on the heavens. They were on the lookout for a supernatural sign, and one had appeared...

A star in the East was pointing out the location of the Hebrew Messiah.

Remember, the Hebrew prophet Daniel once served in the court of Babylon. He was head over the magi. No doubt these men had studied his prophecies.

Daniel 9 would've told them that the coming of the Messiah was near.

The wise men were also familiar with another Babylonian astrologer named Balaam. He too, had been privy to God's plans, and had seen this star - years in advance. In Numbers 24:17 Balaam predicted, "**I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a star shall come out of Jacob; a scepter shall rise out of Israel.**"

What this "*star*" actually was we're not sure...

Famed astronomer, Johannes Kepler, theorized it was an

alignment of planets that occurred in 4 BC – the alignment was visible from Jerusalem – in the sky over Bethlehem. How an alignment of planets led them to the exact house is unknown.

Of course, it could've been a comet, or some other celestial body?

Or perhaps the star was supernatural. God put it in the heavens for this very moment? I believe it was the Shekinnah glory sent by God to point the way.

Whatever the star was, the magi reacted properly – they followed it to worship Jesus. We say it every Christmas, but it's true, **“wise men still worship Jesus.”**

They **come** to Jesus. They'll **bow** to Jesus. And they'll **give** to Jesus.

The wise men are forever examples of worship. True worship leaves where it is and moves in a direction toward Jesus. It swallows its pride and submits to His will. And it finds something to give – in response to the many gifts Jesus has given us.

Verse 3 **“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”** Notice all Jerusalem was frightened by the appearance of these magi.

We usually think of **three** wise men. Probably because of the three gifts they brought to Jesus. Tradition even lists three names – **Casper, Balthasar, and Melchior**. But nowhere does the Bible say there were just three...

Notice, when their caravan rides into Jerusalem, looking for the Messiah, they create quite a stir among the locals. Three



lone riders would've gone unnoticed.

These were Persians traveling through Roman territory. They might've been accompanied by a small army. Their caravan scared the puppet king, Herod.

And the magi were probably strangely dressed. They probably wore cone-shaped hats, and resembled the stereotypical picture of a wizard.

They also rode on *horses* not *camels*. They rode Arabian steeds.

But what disturbed Herod most were their words. They said they were looking for the “**King of the Jews**”. This was the official title Caesar Augustus had given Herod when he made him king of Judea. *Herod was king of the Jews...* Now these Oriental bigwigs were looking for another. *Herod* got a little *harried...*

“**And when (Herod) had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.**” Remember, the word “**Christ**” is Greek for “**Anointed**” - the Hebrew is “**Messiah.**” It was a title given to David's offspring - the eternal king who'd rule an eternal kingdom.

Herod calls together the leading Bible scholars to search the Scriptures.

“**They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'**”

The theologians point to Micah 5:2... Messiah will be born in Bethlehem.

It's astonishing, 720 years before the first Christmas God revealed His Son's exact birthplace. It's a startling testimony to the divine authorship of the Bible.

"Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

This was a cover-up.

Herod didn't want to worship the King, he wanted to assassinate him.

"When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him." *How many of you have a nativity set? Does it include the wise men?* Most nativity scenes depict the wise men and shepherds together - but the wise men's visit occurred months after Jesus' birth.

Luke 2 tells us that Jesus was born in a stable - but here, according to Matthew 2, by the time the wise men arrived Joseph had moved his family into a house.

Pretend you live in Bethlehem. You own a three bedroom on

Poplar Street.

Imagine this scene... An oriental caravan, conspicuous enough to shake up the capitol city of Jerusalem, descends on your tiny, little village. The entourage turns down your street. Oriental dignitaries walk up to the rented house next door.

They're greeted at the door, by the humble peasant couple who've just moved in. *What are kings doing at a carpenter's house?* Curiosity causes you to peer through the windows, *and you see the strangest sight yet...* noblemen bow before a bassinette – world leaders on their knees worshipping a toddler...

*How would you respond to see ambassadors worship the kid next door?*

It's interesting the reactions to Jesus we see in this story. Even today, people respond to Him in one of three ways – **antagonism, ambivalence, adoration.**

Some people are like **Herod** - *antagonism*. Herod hated the thought of a rival king. He didn't want to serve, but be served. Herod opposed Jesus at all costs.

Others are like the **scholars** in Jerusalem - *ambivalence*. They were religious. They knew their Bibles – Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. But though they knew His whereabouts they never bothered to come to Him and worship.

A few folks are like the **wise man** - *adoration*. Do you bow and worship Jesus?

People still respond to Jesus the same three ways - some people *hate Him* - others *ignore Him* - but wise men and women still come and *worship Him*.

Verse 11 tells us what the wise men gave Jesus. “And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

**Gold** is a gift for a **king**. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords.

**Frankincense** is a gift for a **priest**. He is our faithful and merciful High Priest.

But **myrrh** is a strange gift. Myrrh was used in ancient times as a burial spice - the equivalent of embalming fluid. Myrrh was a gift for a **man born to die**.

Jesus is all three – *our king, our priest, and our sacrifice*.

Verse 12, “Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, (the wise men) departed for their own country another way.” The wise men become privy to some divine intelligence about Herod’s real motives.

Rather than pass back through Jerusalem they take a different route home.

“Now when (wise men) had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream... (This is the second time Joseph gets touched by an angel.)

“Saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.”

History tells us King Herod was a little man with a big ego. Standing just 4’ 4” he suffered an extreme inferiority complex. Herod was a very paranoid person.

Once he suspected his wife and brother-in-law of plotting a coup. He executed his own family. Five days before he died he executed his oldest son for the same reason. Caesar Augustus said, "It's safer to be Herod's pig than to be his son."

Herod was a bloodthirsty ruler who hated his own people. He was a sick-o. God knew he would never rest knowing a rival king was on the throne. Thus, the angel instructs Joseph to leave for Egypt with the Child and His mother.

And Joseph obeyed immediately. "When he arose (the very next day), he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

It reminds me of the little girl who brought a strange picture home from Sunday School. Since it was Christmas time, the picture was supposed to be a nativity scene. Instead she'd drawn the picture of few people on a 757 jet airplane.

That's when she explained to her mother, "Mom, that's Pontus the pilot in the front seat. And that's Joseph and Mary behind him, and that fat man in the back row, he's Round John Virgin." But the mother asked, "Honey, why are they all in an airplane? The little girl answered, "Why mom, this is the flight to Egypt."

Verse 16, "Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem

and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.”

It was a case of mass infanticide. This was Bethlehem’s holocaust

Thanks to Herod, 16 years later Bethlehem High School would graduate very few students. Jeremiah 31 predicted Herod’s terror, verse 17, "Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: “A voice was heard in Ramah, (another name for Bethlehem) lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”

According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, a few months after Herod’s despicable act the Lord brought judgment on the evil tyrant.

Herod contracted a fever, as well as other symptoms.

Here’s a quote from Josephus... “Infection seized his whole body... there was a gentle fever upon him, and an intolerable itching over all the surface of his body... continual pains in his colon... tumors on his feet, and an inflammation of the abdomen, and a putrefaction of his privy member, that produced worms.”

I think the men will agree - “a putrefaction of his privy member” – *worms in the privy member* – was serious suffering. In the end, Herod got what he deserved.

Herod died of either a kidney disease coupled with gangrene – or some form of venereal disease. Josephus said he was buried at his palace outside Bethlehem on a hill known as the Herodium. You can see the Herodium from

Jerusalem.

It's interesting this past May a group of archeologists found Herod's tomb on the Herodium – in the exact location pinpointed by Josephus 2000 years ago.

“When Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.” After Herod died his kingdom was divided among 3 sons... Archelaus ruled Judah. Antipas ruled the Galilee. And Philip was king over the Golan – north and east of the Jordan River.

And Archelaus was the most ruthless of the three. He used the sword to solve his problems. Josephus recounts how he put down a revolt from some religious Jews by having 3000 Pharisees slaughtered in Jerusalem at one time.

Archelaus' cruelty created such opposition among the Jews that the Romans deposed him and sent him to Gaul or France. By the time Jesus begins His ministry Judah is a Roman province ruled by a governor named Pilate.

Verse 22, “And being warned by God in a dream (This was the fourth time God spoke to Joseph in a dream.), he turned aside into the region of Galilee.”



“And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth (his hometown), that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

The Old Testament didn’t predict that Jesus would come from Nazareth per se, but that He would be called a “Nazarene.” The Hebrew word is from the root word “netzer” which means “to sprout.” Nazareth meant *sprout town*, or *bean town*.

The word “netzer” was also translated in the OT as “branch.” This was the name given Messiah since He would be a branch from David’s family tree.

Thus it fulfilled Scripture for Jesus to be from Nazareth – not because the city was predicted, but because it meant He’d be called a “Nazarene” or *branch*.

This may’ve been in the mind of blind Bartimaeus when he heard that Jesus *of Nazareth* was passing by. He shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

He associated Nazareth or Nazarene with the branch from David’s family tree.