

wondered at the things which the shepherds told them. But they were under the fear and influence of kings and priests, and were not prepared to believe in a Messiah who came to them under a form of so much lowliness and humility. They had looked for him in the person of some powerful Prince or noble, who should be able at once to strike terror into his enemies, and encourage and reward his friends. Their pride and their prejudices were all arrayed against a King whose first appearance was in the feebleness of infancy, and with no apparent protection against his vindictive and powerful enemies. Therefore it was that though he was born, according to the promise of the Most High, of the family of Abraham and in the midst of the Jewish nation, "He came to his own, and his own received him not." The gifts that had been presented to our Saviour by the wise men of the East were probably designed as a providential supply for the expenses attending their flight into Egypt, for Joseph and Mary were poor, and without this resource would have been at a loss by what means to escape from Bethlehem or to subsist in a land of strangers, whose inhabitants had always been hostile to the people of God. The warning too came suddenly upon them, for it appears that the angel of the Lord came to Joseph on the night after the shepherds departed, and that Joseph arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt. During their exile into this unfriendly country, it is probable that the circumstances attending the birth of Jesus Christ were never mentioned by his parents, but that they hid them in the greatest obscurity; and being among people who were not likely to afford them any shelter or protection