

Herod and he treated them with much show of respect. Here in the capital city they would expect to find the king.

2. **Saying, where is he that is born King of the Jews?** for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.—The Jews expected that the birth of the Messiah would be heralded by a star, interpreting literally Num. 24: 17 and Isa. 60: 3. These wise men may have possessed traditions from the time of Daniel, or may have got their knowledge from the Jews of the dispersion. Many commentators maintain very strenuously that the "star" was a brilliant conjunction, or apparent blending, of the two planets Jupiter and Saturn, afterwards joined by Mars. The objections to this view are, (1) these planets never came so close together as to blend their rays; (2) the calculations do not meet the date exactly; (3) the Greek word means a single star, not a "conjunction;" (4) if the planets pointed towards Bethlehem when the Magi set out from Jerusalem, they would be some distance to the east of it when they arrived there about two hours afterwards: (5) no heavenly bodies at an elevation of 57 degrees above the horizon could point out a spot near the spectators, yet this star indicated precisely the very house in which the child was. "In the east," *i. e.* when in eastern lands, see verse 9. Some translate the words "in the rising." They were not guided by the star all the way, but what the star meant was revealed to them. They then set out for Jerusalem using the ordinary means of information as to the way. Hence their joy in verse 9. It was not unfitting that a star should be the sign to these astronomers that Jacob's Star had arisen. "To worship him," to do him homage, religious adoration.

3. **When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Je-ru'sa-lem with him.**—Herod's family was not of the royal line. They were Idumeans of Philistine descent. He reigned by grace of the conqueror. A legitimate heir to the throne of David might dethrone him. He was well enough acquainted with the prophecies to know that such a prince was promised. The people were afraid of the cruel measures which Herod would adopt in order to retain his power.

4. **And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the peo-**

ple together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.—Herod summoned the high priests and those who had filled that office, with the heads of the twenty-four courses (1 Chr. 24: 6-18) and scribes learned in the law. It may have been a full convocation of the Sanhedrim or great council of the Jews. (Mal. 2: 7.) Herod's question was a simple one and easily answered. It is not likely that he condescended to give them any reasons for asking. By asking about "the Christ," (R. V.) he showed that he quite understood what sort of a king the wise men were looking for.

5. **And they said unto him, in Beth'le-hem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet:**

6. **And thou Beth'le-hem, in the land of Ju'da, art not the least among the princes of Ju'da: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Is'ra-el.**—See Micah 5: 2. Read John 7: 42; 5: 39, 40. "Art in no wise the least," (R. V.) is a common rhetorical figure (*litotes*) for "art celebrated." Bethlehem is not even named in Josh. 15: 59. For "princes," Micah says "thousands" *i. e.* the central towns were the heads of "thousands," or princes, resided. These were subordinate divisions of the tribes—"Chiliads." See Judges 6: 15 (margin). "Rule," (R. V.) "be shepherd of, rule in love and mercy," (John 10: 11; Isa. 40: 11; 9: 7.) This was the primitive idea of a ruler. Homer calls his chiefs "shepherds of the people." Compare 2 Sam. 5: 2; 7: 7; Jer. 23: 2.

7. **Then Her'od, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.**—*i. e.* privately. He did not wish any of the Jews to suspect what he was plotting, and he trusted to the guilelessness of these Eastern sages so far as they were concerned. "Inquired diligently," *lit.* "ascertained accurately the time of the appearance of the star," *i. e.* how long since the star first appeared. He supposed, but erroneously, that this would fix the date of the birth.

8. **And he sent them to Beth'le-hem; and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.**—R. V. "search out carefully concerning" the young