

## **“We have come to worship Him”**

*December 13, 2015*

Matthew 2:1-12

### **I. Introduction**

The traditional story of the Wisemen and the Gospel story of the Wisemen have as many differences as they do similarities. Over the years, the traditions or legends regarding these men have grown; however, they are really based on very little Biblical fact. The only record of the wisemen is this portion of Matthew; before we go on, let's see what we really know. First, concerning the number of wisemen that came to visit Jesus—we don't have a clue to how many of them there were—in the East, tradition says there were 12 to 14 wise men; in the West, we say there were 3—three gifts imply 3 Wisemen—but the Bible doesn't tell us. The Bible doesn't give any of their names, but during the Middle Ages sages came up with the names of Casper, Balthazar, and Melchior. Also, contrary to tradition and even the song we sang earlier, they weren't kings—just wise men—they were even willing to stop and ask for directions.

It is assumed that they traveled on camels, but we don't really know how they traveled or even where they came from. We are told that they are from the east but that could mean Arabia or Persia or somewhere else in the Orient. However, since Magi were generally found in Persia or Babylon—for example, in [Daniel 2:48](#) we read that King Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel “**ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men**”—many assume that this is where they came from. If this is correct, they had to travel about 900 miles to arrive at Jerusalem. Between planning and traveling, this trip would have taken several months. A trip of this length would include servants and soldiers as well as the Magi themselves. So the group that showed up in Jerusalem would have been quite large and rather impressive.

There are some Biblical facts concerning the Wisemen, e.g. the gifts the Wisemen brought were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They did see a star, and somehow it directed them to Jerusalem. Another fact that gets ignored, or twisted by legend, is the place where the Wisemen found Jesus and His family. It wasn't in a manger surrounded by shepherds and angels and displaced farm animals; [verse 11](#) says that they found Him in a house. Jesus was more than just a newborn baby. [Turn to Matthew 2:16](#). Herod went up to the age of two because of the time which he had gotten from the Magi. Jesus was younger than 2, probably around 1, but He wasn't a baby. Since Herod didn't want to take any chances in case the Magi had miscalculated or deceived him, he expanded the age of the boys he ordered killed. This way the pretender to his throne would be sure to be eliminated.

From Matthew's account of the Magi, there are some things we can learn about these wise men.

## **II. Wise Men**

**A. First, they came in faith.** Since it was the capital of Judea, the Magi or Wisemen came to Jerusalem. It was the natural place to find the new Jewish king. Since, they as foreigners knew about this historic birth, they would have assumed that everyone in Jerusalem, and really all of Judea, would know about this special Baby. They must have been shocked when, as they kept asking, no one knew what they were talking about. After their long trip, they must have been rather disappointed and somewhat disheartened that no one had a clue about the new King of the Jews. The only thing their questions seemed to do was to get everyone riled up.

Matthew doesn't identify or explain the star they saw, but, not surprisingly, people have come up with a plethora of theories. What it really was isn't important—if it were, the Bible would tell us what we need to know. What **is** important is that the Magi saw what they identified as an information-giving-star (an IGS) and came to Jerusalem because of what it meant to them. Contrary to tradition, there is no evidence that the Wisemen followed the star or that it continued to shine throughout their

journey. It gave them just enough information to put them on the right road—the road to Jesus Christ. It (or a different star) reappeared to lead them after they left Jerusalem. The important thing is that the Wise Men didn't make their journey to just satisfy their curiosity. They came in faith to worship the newborn King of the Jews. They said, **“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”**

Why would someone leave the comfort of their homes to go on a dangerous journey? Adventure or romance or wealth—all possibilities, but they came in faith. **“Where is He who has been born the King of the Jews?”** In their questions there is no doubt that He had been born – the question is **“Where is He?”** They had seen the star – the evidence was real – now where is He? They had faith that He was alive – that He existed – now all they needed to do was to find Him. **Hebrews 11:6** says, **“Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”** And so in faith, they were willing to risk everything to find Him. The Wisemen were willing to leave the safety of their homes – to risk a journey full of difficulty to seek this special King. In **Matthew 7:7** Jesus said, **“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”** Their faith in seeking out the King would be rewarded.

**Hebrews 11:1** says, **“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”** In faith the Wisemen traveled—maybe 900 miles—to fall down before the King of the Jews. God had spoken to them through the stars and, like the shepherds, they had heard and responded to God's call. In **Jeremiah 29:13** God had promised to all men, **“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”** And since they were seeking, they were about to find Him.

King Herod was disturbed by their questions. The people of Jerusalem were troubled by their insistent questioning about this Baby. The chief priests and teachers of the law were indifferent to

their request, but the Wisemen never gave up. They had trials on their journey and they had trials in Jerusalem, but their perseverance was rewarded when they saw the young Jesus. They came in faith and their faith would bring fruit. [Turn to James 1:2-4](#). The Wisemen came in faith . . .

**B. They, also, came prepared to worship.** After Herod received the information he wanted from the Jewish leaders, we are told that he “[secretly called the Magi and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.](#)” Herod’s concern was for the time of the star’s appearance, not its meaning or its significance. It was enough for him to know only that the sign pointed to the birth of Someone who could be a threat to his own power and position. The time of the star’s appearance would indicate the age of the child who had been born—the age of the child who must die. As they proceeded to Bethlehem, a small village 5 or 6 miles SW of Jerusalem, the Magi had no way of knowing Herod’s evil intentions,.

The Lord rewarded their perseverance and faith and gave them some detailed help which led them directly to Jesus. He sent a special GPS system (God positioning/pointing system) just for them—God sent a star. “[The star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.](#)” That this star was not a real star is evident from the fact that it was able to stand directly over the house where Jesus and His family now lived. Perhaps it was like the pillar of light that led the Children of Israel in the wilderness ([Exodus 40:34-38](#)) or maybe even an angel or a host of angels, like those that appeared to the shepherds. Regardless of what it was, the Magi were overwhelmed that the special star reappeared to them. It seems almost as if Matthew was at a loss of words to describe their joy: “[And when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy](#)” (NAS).

As we saw earlier, contrary to tradition, the Magi didn’t find Jesus and Mary and Joseph in the barn or cave where He was born. They found them in a house. When they came to Jesus and His

family, they didn't worship Mary; they bowed down and worshipped only Jesus. No doubt the Magi were delighted to meet Mary and Joseph. They were special people--they had been specially favored by God and entrusted with the care of God's own Son while He grew to manhood. But the Wisemen worshipped only Jesus. Only He was God. Only He was worthy of worship.

Matthew writes that **“they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts.”** These gifts were part of their worship. They weren't an addition—they had planned on doing this from the day they left home. They had come prepared to worship and they had brought their best. They had brought gold, the most precious of metals, to honor the King of kings. They gave Him frankincense—a costly, beautiful-smelling incense that was used in the temple. It was used for special occasions—like the crowning a King or a High Priest. They gave Him myrrh a valuable perfume; Myrrh which was used in preparing bodies for burial. As perfume permeates an area, the love of God would fill the earth through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. They had thought about what to bring; they came prepared to worship. They came in faith.

**C. Finally, they went away changed men.** With their mission of worship and adoration completed, the Magi prepared to return home. No doubt they expected to hear at a later date the details of the life and succession to the throne by the Child born in Bethlehem. But **“having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.”**

They had planned on returning to Herod, but after worshipping Jesus and **“being warned in a dream,”** they changed the way they went. But, I suspect, that after finding and worshipping Jesus, they were changed on the inside, too. They had followed God's leading and their faith had been rewarded.

Their encounter with God must have changed them; just as it changes anyone who encounters Him. Jacob wrestled with God and never walked the same the rest of his life. Isaiah stepped into the presence of God and was changed. **Turn to Isaiah 6:1-5.** Isaiah was never the same again. Job

questioned God over and over again concerning his suffering and when God showed up, Job said in [Job 40:4-5](#), “I am unworthy-- how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer-- twice, but I will say no more.” Job met God and became a changed man. The Wisemen had seen God; they went away changed men.

### III. Conclusion

It's Christmas time and we hear the story of the Wisemen. They were wise because they had faith; they were wise because they worshiped God; they were wise because they were changed by God. All this happened because of a special Child born in Bethlehem. How about you?

**A. Do you come to the Son of God in faith?** Remember what we read earlier from [Hebrews 11:6](#): “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”? In [Ephesians 2:8-9](#) we read, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.” You can't be saved from your sins without faith in Jesus Christ. In [John 11:25](#) Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.” Do you have faith in Jesus Christ?

If you are a child of God, do you live your life in faith in God? If you want to be victorious, satisfied, you need to live in faith. [Turn to 1 John 5:1-5](#).

**B. How do you worship Jesus?** The Wisemen left everything to go and worship Jesus with the best they had. They sacrificed their own comfort, their time, and their safety to find the King and worship Him. [Turn to Matthew 10:37-39](#). Jesus put it this way in [Luke 14:33](#), “Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” Like we see in the story of the Wisemen, to truly worship Jesus requires sacrifice.

Jesus came to give His life for you. The greatest gift – the greatest sacrifice – you can give to God is yourself in return. [Romans 12:1](#) says, “I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer

your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.” The effort you make to worship God—at home or at TBC—is your sacrifice to Him. But remember: what God wants most of all – above everything else—is you. He wants your heart. He wants your attention—not just for an hour or so on Sunday mornings, but 24/7.

The question to ask is this: What are you willing to give Him? Are you willing to give Him your best? Are you willing to go on a spiritual journey to worship Him? Are you willing to give up your comfort zone to follow Christ? The Wisemen did, what about you? In [Mark 8:36](#) Jesus said, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”

**C. Finally, are you looking for a change in your life?** Find Christ this Christmas, let His Spirit fill you and you will be changed. Things will be different. Step out in faith and seek Him and worship Him just as the Wisemen did. In closing, [turn to Colossians 3:12-17](#).