

“We have come to worship Him”

December 16, 2018

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. Beginning with the Middle Ages, the traditions or legends regarding these men have grown, but they are actually based on very little Biblical fact. Today's Scripture is the only record of the Wise Men--so before we go on, let's see what we really know. First, concerning the number of wise men 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, but the Bible doesn't tell us. Since they brought three gifts, people assume that there were three Wisemen. Tradition says that their names were: Casper, Balthazar, and Melchior--but the Bible doesn't tell us any of their names. Also, contrary to tradition and even the song we sang earlier, they weren't kings—just wise men. And as *Wise* men, they were even willing to stop and ask for directions.

It is assumed that they traveled on camels, but the Bible doesn't tell us how they traveled or even from where in particular they came. 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 (think the Book of Daniel), 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 many months. A trip of this length would include servants and soldiers as well as the Magi. So the group that showed up in Jerusalem would have been quite large and rather impressive.

There are some Biblical facts concerning the Wise Men, e.g. the gifts the Wise Men brought were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Another fact is that they saw a star, but they didn't follow it to Jerusalem. It appeared where they were and then disappeared until they arrived at Bethlehem--that's why they had to ask for directions when they got to Jerusalem. Another fact that gets ignored or twisted by legend is the place where the Wise Men found Jesus and His family. Contrary to the Nativity scenes, including the one on the table in front of us, they didn't find Jesus 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. He knew Jesus wasn't a baby but Jesus was younger than 2, probably around 1. So, 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 the throne would be sure to be eliminated--Herod's rule would be protected.

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

First, they came in faith.

II. Wise Men

A. They came in faith. Since it was the capital of Judea, the Magi or Wise Men went to Jerusalem first. It was the natural place to find the new Jewish king. Since, they as foreigners, with limited spiritual knowledge, knew about this historic birth, they must 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. They must have been rather disappointed and somewhat disheartened that after their long trip, 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 and came to Jerusalem because of what it meant to them. There is no Biblical evidence that the Wise Men 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. 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 his home to go on a dangerous journey? There are many possibilities: adventure, the search for knowledge, romance, wealth. The Wise Men came in faith. They had no doubts that He had been born – their question was: **“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--they had **"come to worship 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 Wise Men 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 or more--to fall down before the King of the Jews. God had spoken to them through the stars and, like the Joseph and the shepherds, they had heard and

responded to God's call. God had promised to all men in [Jeremiah 29:13](#), "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 so-called Baby. The chief priests and teachers of the law were indifferent to their request, but the Wise Men never gave up. They had trials on their journey and they had trials in Jerusalem, but their perseverance would be rewarded when they saw the new King. They came in faith and their faith would bring fruit. In [John 6:37](#) Jesus said, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." The Wise Men 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. All he wanted to know was the time of the birth of the One 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. After getting the information, Herod sent them to Bethlehem, a small village 5 or 6 miles SW of Jerusalem.

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, 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. Did you notice that 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—in their faith, 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. Frankincense represented His deity. They gave Him myrrh a valuable perfume; Myrrh which was used in preparing bodies for burial. Gold for His royalty, frankincense for His deity, and myrrh for His humanity. They had thought about what to bring; they came prepared to worship.

C. Finally, they went away changed men. With their mission of worship and adoration completed, the Magi left Bethlehem. No doubt they expected to hear at a later date the details of the life and succession to the throne of this 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 as he had asked, 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 answered, Job replied, **“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 40:4-5). Job met God and became a changed man. The Wise Men had seen God; they undoubtedly went away changed men as well.

III. Conclusion

It’s Christmas time and we hear the story of the Wise Men. 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 one small Child. 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.”** In this month's memory verse, in **John 14:6**, Jesus said, **“I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”** Do you have faith in Jesus Christ?

Then if you are a child of God, do you live your life in faith in God? If you want to live a victorious, satisfied life, you need to live in faith. [Turn to 1 John 5:1-4.](#)

B. How do you worship Jesus? The Wise Men 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 lives of the Wisemen, to truly worship Jesus requires sacrifice.

In love, Jesus came to give His life for you. The greatest gift – the greatest sacrifice – you can give to God is yourself in return. The effort you make to worship God is your sacrifice to Him. God doesn't need things--[turn to Micah 6:6-8.](#) What God wants most of all – above everything else—is you. He wants your heart. He wants your attention – 24/7. The question to ask is: 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 Wise Men did– what about you? [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.**”

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