

“We have come to worship Him”

December 15, 2024

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 or Magi--so using Scripture, let's compare tradition with Biblical facts. First, concerning the number of wise men that came to visit Jesus. In the East, tradition says there were 12 to 14 wise men; in the West, we say there were only 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. We know that they were wise men, because they were willing to leave home to find “the one who has been born king of the Jews.”

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. The Bible says they were “Magi from the east,” but that could mean Arabia or Persia or somewhere else in East Asia. 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 also 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 Wise Men, e.g., the gifts the Wise Men brought were “gold, incense—frankincense, and myrrh.” Although they “saw his star in the east,” 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 *wisely* 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 they came “to the house” and saw the child.” By the time they arrived, Jesus and His family had left the manger and had moved into a house. He was no longer a baby; He was a child—an infant, not a baby. Turn to Matthew 2:13-16. Jesus was younger than 2, probably around 1. But in case the Magi had miscalculated or deceived him, Herod didn't want to take any chances, so he expanded the age limit of the boys to be killed to include all those who “were 2-years old and under.” This way this new pretender to the throne would be sure to be eliminated and Herod's rule and dynasty would be protected.

II. Wise Men

A. They came in faith. Since the wise men had left home to find “the one who has been born king of the Jews,” they went straight to the capital of Judea, Jerusalem. This was the obvious place to find this new “king of the Jews.” Since, they as foreigners, with limited spiritual knowledge, knew about this historic birth, they would have assumed that everyone in Jerusalem, and really all of Judea, would know about this special Infant. They must have been shocked when, as they kept asking, no one knew what they were talking about. They must have been quite 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: “King Herod...was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him.”

Matthew didn'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 have given more information. 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. 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.”

There are a variety of reasons that they left the comfort of their homes to go on such a dangerous journey: adventure, the search for knowledge, romance, wealth, but, regardless of the reason, the Wise Men came in faith “to worship him.” 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 Joseph and the shepherds, they had heard and responded to God’s call. God had promised 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 Child. 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 finally saw Jesus. 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, and they came to worship.

B. They came to worship. After Herod questioned the “chief priests and teachers of the law,” 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 he wanted, Herod sent the Wise men to Bethlehem, a small village 5- or 6-miles SW of Jerusalem.

The Lord rewarded the Magi’sr perseverance and faith and gave them some detailed help which led them directly to Jesus; 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). They were beside themselves with joy.

As we saw earlier, the Magi didn’t find Jesus lying in a manger; they found them in a house. And when they came to Jesus and His family, they didn’t worship Mary; “they bowed down and worshipped him.” 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 wrote 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 in worship of God. They gave Him myrrh a valuable perfume; Myrrh which was used in preparing mortal-human 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 by the Child born in Bethlehem. They had planned on returning to Herod as he had asked, but after worshipping Jesus and “**having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.**”

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 the Son of 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 about the reason for his sufferings and when God answered, Job replied 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 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 and an eternity in hell 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.” Later in John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Contrary to the world, there is only one way to heaven: Jesus Christ.

Because of their faith in God’s promise, the Wise men left home and traveled 1000 miles to honor the King of the Jews. Their faith changed their lives, does your faith affect your life? Do you live your life in faith in God? If you want to live a victorious, satisfied life, you need to live in faith in Jesus Christ.

Turn to 1 John 5:1-4. To live a satisfied life, you need to live in faith in God.

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 the Wisemen, to truly worship Jesus requires sacrifice.

In love, Jesus came to die on a cross in your place. 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. 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 were – are 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.” God wants all of you: your heart, mind, attention.

C. Finally, has knowing Jesus changed your life? Learn from the examples of people in the Old Testament, learn from Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and the Wise men; step out in faith and seek Him, worship Him, and allow Him to change you just as He has changed so many others--turn to Colossians 3:12-17.