

“Where Is the King?”

July 31, 2022

Matthew 2:1-12

I. Introduction

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew wrote his Gospel to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the King of the Jews. In today’s familiar Scripture, he gave three different proofs or bits of evidence. First was the arrival of the Magi, who came to give homage and gifts to the infant Jesus—
“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 is so much tradition or legend regarding these men and very few Biblical facts. From the Bible we don’t know how many of them there were, although most historians feel that there were many more than 3. We don’t know their names, how they traveled or where in particular they came from. We are told that they are from the east so that could mean Arabia or Persia. From other historical works we know that Magi were generally found in Persia or Babylon. They were teachers and instructors of Persians kings. They were skilled in philosophy, medicine, and the natural sciences which for them included astrology. Coming from Babylon, they may have been influenced by the teachings and traditions of one of the greatest Babylonian wisemen ever—Daniel. Between planning and traveling about 900 miles, this trip would have taken several months. Such a lengthy trip would include soldiers and slaves as well as the Wisemen.

The second proof is a negative response—the antagonism and hatred of Herod. Herod’s devious scheme to discover and destroy this unknown baby showed his fear that the magi’s statement about the Child could be correct, and gave unintended testimony to Jesus’ true royalty. In 47 BC, when Herod was a young man of 25, Caesar Octavius appointed him governor of Galilee. Because of his work and the lobbying by his father and friends, Herod was made king of the Jews in 40 BC. After driving out the Persians in 37 BC, he finally gained control of all Israel and was awarded the title: “Herod the Great.”

Since he wasn’t Jewish, to make himself acceptable in the eyes of his Jewish subjects, he married a Jewish woman. In the early years he was a capable leader. During hard economic times he even returned the tax money back to his subjects. During a great famine in 25 BC, he melted down gold objects from the

palace to buy food for the poor. In 19 BC he began reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. (It was finished in AD 63.) However, Herod was also paranoid and jealous. He had his wife, 2 of his sons, his mother, and his brother-in-law, who was the high priest at the time, killed early in his rule because he suspected them of plotting against him. By the time he died in 4 BC, he had gone through 9 wives and was married to his tenth. Shortly before his death, he arrested and imprisoned most of the distinguished citizens of Jerusalem. The moment he died, these prisoners were to be executed so that the people would mourn his death. Five days before he died, he had a 3rd son killed. This was the man the Magi came to see.

The third evidence of Jesus' kingship is another messianic prophesy. There are about 330 Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus Christ. In today's Scripture Matthew quoted another one and, in this chapter, he pointed out 4 altogether. There is no reasonable possibility that even those four, let alone all 330, could have been fulfilled accidentally in the life of a single individual. That fact in itself is overwhelming evidence of Jesus' identity and of God's sovereign control of history and of the total reliability of His Word.

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

II. Wise Men

A. First, they came in faith. Having traveled to find the star-announced new Jewish king, they went straight to the capital of Judea, Jerusalem. This was the obvious place to find “**the one born 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.

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 tell us what we needed 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. After observing God’s message, 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 were a variety of reasons for them to leave the comfort of their homes to go on such a long, dangerous journey: adventure, the search for knowledge, romance, wealth, but 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—in faith, 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, even their reputations and lives to find “the King of the Jews.” 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.”

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 nearly 1000 miles to fall down before the King of the Jews. God had spoken to them through the stars, and, like Joseph, after hearing/seeing God’s message, they obeyed and went. 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.

Hearing about the Magi’s questions, Herod’s first response was to call the chief priests and teachers of the Law and ask them about the Christ—the Messiah—the One to be sent from God. Herod was wise enough to connect the “King of the Jews” of the Magi with the long-expected Messiah; the One everyone was expecting at any minute. If anyone should know about the Messiah, the religious leadership should. The “too-busy-to-get-involved” religious leaders were able to tell the King what he wanted to know—as Micah 5:2 prophesied: the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

Matthew wrote that, after talking to the “chief priests and teachers of the law,” Herod “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 their 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 besides themselves with joy. *They came in faith and they came to worship.*

B. They came to worship. 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. He was probably at least a year old. 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. These 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. In 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 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 the predicted 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. Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus and was changed dramatically (**Acts 9:1-19**). The Wisemen had seen God; they undoubtedly went away changed men as well.

III. Conclusion

The Wisemen 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.**” No one can be saved from their 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.**” Do you have faith in 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? If you want to live a victorious, satisfied life, you need to live in faith in God. Turn to 1 John 5:1-5. To overcome the obstacles of 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 we see in the lives of 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. 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 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 were – are you? Remember, God wants all of you.

C. Finally, has knowing Jesus changed your life? Renew your commitment to Christ, 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 Col. 3:12-17. In John 21:15 on the beach following His resurrection Jesus asked Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" If He were to ask you the same question, how would you answer/ What does your life say?