

God's Good News Story: The Birth of Jesus
December 31, 2023

Lessons From the Wise Men

O Come Let Us Adore Him

The story of the wise men is a story that is shrouded in mystery. From tradition we seem to know all the facts and details. But as we study the scripture, we find that there are a lot of questions we cannot answer about the wise men from the Biblical text. For example:

How many were there? We don't know.

Where did they come from? We don't know.

How long did their journey take? We don't know.

They seem to just show up mysteriously – and just as mysteriously they are gone. But one thing I am certain about is that the number of wise men and women increases in every generation as people continue to seek the Christ.

Matthew 2:1-2:12... *"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.' When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them*

where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.' Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.' When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way." (NKJV)

Let's look at three facts that we can learn from the story of the wise men.

1. A wise man's journey is one of FAITH.

"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?
For we have seen His star in the East."

What would prompt someone to leave the comfort of their homes to go on a dangerous journey? Romance? Yes. Wealth? Most definitely. But faith? Yes – faith. "Where is He who has been born the King of the Jews?" What a probing question – there is no doubt in their language 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. Their purpose was established – find Him. And so they were willing to risk everything to find Him. They were willing to leave the safety of their homes – to risk a perilous journey to seek a King.

Can you imagine their neighbor's reaction? "Are you going on a journey?" "Yes." "Where are you going?" "We don't know for sure." "How far is it?" "Well we don't know that either." How long are you going to be gone?" Well we were not quite sure on that either." "Boy for wise men you sure don't much do you?" But you know they must have said the same things to Abraham when he left his home for the Promised Land. They must have said the same things to Noah who was building an ark – even though it had never rained in the history of the earth up till that point. They

must have said the same kind of things to Peter, Andrew, John and James when they left the fishing nets to become fishers of men. What are you crazy? Are you insane? Are you out of your minds? No not crazy – not insane – not out of their minds – men of faith.

FACT: God's journeys always involve FAITH.

Hebrews 11:6 (MSG)... *It's impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that he exists and that he cares enough to respond to those who seek him.*

People of faith have been willing to respond to the challenges of the unknown over and over again down through history.

William Cary was a shoemaker when one day he heard of the millions of people in India who had not heard the Good News of Jesus Christ. He believed the great commission to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel." He believed that that verse was speaking directly to him. So he volunteered to go to India but was told "Young man, sit down. When God wants to convert the heathen,

He will do it without your help.” Cary went anyway – supporting himself. For seven years he worked without seeing a single convert – but by the end of his life he saw hundreds of churches and thousands of converts. Today he is known as the “Father of Modern Missions.” He was a man of faith.

The second point I want to make is:

2. A wise man’s journey is one of WORSHIP & SACRIFICE.

When the wise men came on their journey it was for the purpose of worship. They brought with them gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These gifts have a lot of symbolism associated with them. Gold represents wealth. It is a gift fit for a king. (Jesus was the King of Kings) Frankincense is the sap of a tree that was dried and hardened and used as incense to worship God. Thus we see a gift for his deity. (Jesus was the Son of God) Myrrh is a fragrant perfume that was used to anoint the dead – to embalm and preserve them. (Jesus was The Sacrificial Lamb) But there is more to worship than gold, frankincense, or myrrh isn’t there.

FACT: Worship always involves SACRIFICE.

Was there a price to be paid for the wise men’s worship? You bet. They had given themselves to a journey. Travel in those days was not very comfortable – in fact it could be down right dangerous.

The wise men had sacrificed their own comfort to find the king and worship Him. Listen to what David said about sacrifice:

“I will not offer to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost [me] nothing.” 2 Samuel 24:24 (HCSB)

Romans 12:1 says it this way:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (NKJV)

To truly worship requires sacrifice.

The greatest gift – the greatest sacrifice – you can give to God is yourself. You say but I have given nothing to Him today. I say yes you have! Even today you have given Him something of yourself. You have given Him your time by being here. You prepared for a journey this morning by getting up and getting dressed and ready to seek a King. You got into your cars – used your gas and came to church. Some of you when the offering plate came around put money into the plate to help pay kingdom expenses of maintaining the church building – heat, water, electricity all have to be paid for. When you put your offering into the plate you

helped support God's program – which includes purchasing Sunday School material – sending our youth to summer camp – and paying the staff salaries – just to mention a few. When you came today you came as a living sacrifice – even though you may not view it as that – even though you may not have realized it. The efforts you make to worship God is your sacrifice to Him. But here is a fact I want you all to remember today:

FACT: What God wants most of all – above every thing else is ME.

He wants your heart – He wants your attention – 24/7 – the question to ask is: What am I willing to give Him? Am I willing to give Him my best? Am I willing to go on a spiritual journey to worship Him? Am I willing to give up my comfort zone to follow Christ? The wise men were – are you?

3. A wise man's journey is one of CHANGE & OBEDIENCE.

Look at verse twelve with me: ***"Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way."***

Isn't it interesting that after they worshiped Jesus that they could not go back the same way that they had come? I find that to be a fact even today. Once you have met God you will never be the same. An encounter with God changes things – it changes you – doesn't it? It's always been that way.

Jacob wrestled with God and never walked the same the rest of his life. Isaiah stepped into the presence of God and proclaimed

"Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts." Isaiah 6:5 (NKJV) He was never the same again.

Job questions God over and over again concerning his suffering and when God shows up Job says.

Job 40:4-5 (MSG) *"I'm speechless, in awe—words fail me. I should never have opened my mouth! I've talked too much, way too much. I'm ready to shut up and listen."*

Job met God and became a changed man.

That is what happens when we walk into the presence of God. We become changed. That is what happened to the wise men when they encountered Christ – they

were changed. That is what happens when we encounter Christ – things become different.

FACT: To be truly wise we must be willing to obey God fully and make the necessary changes to adapt to His will.

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 and they were changed forever – all because of a child. How about you? Are you looking for a change in your life? Find Christ this Christmas and I can guarantee that you will be changed. Things will be different. Step out in faith and seek Him as the wisemen did.

Choose to be a Wiseman or a Wisewoman this new year in your Faith, Worship & Obedience

Adapted from Tom Shepard.

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