

8-23-20
Matthew 2
Wise Men & Women Still Look for Jesus

If you have been a Christian very long, you have probably heard the title of this sermon used in a number of different ways. Wise men and women still seek Jesus. Even though this title has been used a lot throughout the years, it states a simple truth.

The search for the beginning of creation and the meaning of life will always lead to a Creator and from the Creator to the Savior who is the King of Kings. Men and women who are wise seek the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe and of their own lives. We will talk more about this a little later.

Last week I spoke about the response of Joseph and Mary when the angel of the Lord told them about the circumstances of the birth of the Christ. But as we will see from this morning scripture, they were not the only ones who experienced a visit from the Lord.

Read with me in **Matthew 2:1-2**, “**Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.’**”

After some interaction with the reigning King Herod in Jerusalem, the following occurs in verses 9-11.

Matthew 2:9-11, “**After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother;**

and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

Some incredible things are occurring which we will talk about in a moment. But let's first set a few facts straight.

When we celebrate Christmas, some of the things we celebrate around Christmas are more tradition than fact. For example. Three kings. No where does scripture say there are three kings. The thinking of three kings comes from verse eleven where we read about three different types of gifts given to baby Jesus. The assumption is that each king had a gift, so three kings. There could have been only two kings or any number more than three. Actually they probably were not even kings.

Another tradition that we celebrate that is not factual is the arrival of the kings to the stable and finding Jesus in the manger. Look back with me at verse 11. It's underlined in your outline

“After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother.”

Scripture is silent about the timing of the arrival of the wise men. It is very possible that they did not arrive until a few years after the birth of Jesus.

One of the great things we don't think about is the gifts they gave Joseph and Mary and the Child. Gold, frankincense and myrrh. Frankincense and myrrh were types of expensive spices and of course gold was gold.

After the visit of the Magi, you will read about an angel appearing to Joseph again, telling him to escape with his family to Egypt to avoid the terror Herod the King was about to unleash. History and scholars say that it is possible that Joseph, Mary and Jesus lived in Egypt anywhere from 2-4 years. I wonder if these gifts were provided by God to fund their travel and living expenses during this time.

Now, concerning the timing of the arrival and the location of where the wise men found Jesus, how we celebrate them is not that important. The important thing is they were led by God to Jesus to help in the celebration of the Child King's birth.

Let's think about wise men a bit more.

In verse 1 we read they arrived from the east, east of Jerusalem. In the days when Jesus was born the lands east of Jerusalem, beyond the Roman empire, these lands were ruled by the Parthians. But for our study this morning it is important for us to know that prior to the Parthians ruling this land, it was ruled by the Persians and before them, the Babylonians.

Now I know I am throwing a lot of history at you in these first set of sermons on Matthew but hold on because the teachings of Jesus are coming up pretty quickly in the coming weeks.



Why is it important for us to understand the wise men came out of the lands that used to be Persia and Babylonia? Because one of the wisest men who ever lived, one of the greatest prophets of God who ever lived spent the bulk of his life in these lands.

Who do you think that was? Daniel. The great prophet of the Lord Daniel.

Most of you know of Daniel and how God protected him in the lion's den. And the story of his friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and

how God protected them when they were put into a fiery furnace. Miraculous move of God in these events. You can read about them in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament.

But the movement of God did not just end with them. No there was more.

The Magi who visited Jesus were part of a group that had existed for hundreds of years.

- 1. Magi was a title that was given to members of a priestly group of individuals in ancient Persia. They were considered wise, hence the title wise men.**

Another word used for Magi was magician or practitioner of magic. These individuals were usually versed in the use of chemicals, philosophy and most importantly for our study this morning, astrology, a study of the stars.

They were kind of like the Greek individuals we read about in scripture. They hungered for knowledge of any kind. They thought the pursuit of knowledge was what would take you to the highest level of human experience in this life. One of the great centers for Magi was in ancient Babylon and that is where Daniel lived and presumably died.



If you have studied the life of Daniel, you will know that he was taken captive when Jerusalem fell around 617 BC, before Christ. And taken to

Babylon. Through a series of events orchestrated by God Daniel is gains favor with the reigning king and the following occurs.

Daniel 5:11, “There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans *and* diviners.”

All of the wise men in the kingdom of Babylon, soon to be Persia, are put under the authority of Daniel.

If you read the story of Daniel you will also know that he prophesied, he was told by God the timing of when the Messiah, the Savior of Jews, would arrive on earth. God also shared several things about the end times when Jesus was going to come back.

Again, Daniel is an interesting and challenging book to read. Scholars have been researching Daniel’s writings for hundreds of years, trying to predict when Jesus is coming back. But we know that no one knows, not even Jesus Himself, no one but the Father knows the exact date when Jesus is scheduled to return to earth to set up His earthly kingdom. But we are given some insight into when the time is drawing near.

Okay, still with me?

So here we have Daniel who is living in the heart of the area where the wise men who are looking for Jesus are going to come from. I wonder if it was through the teachings of Daniel that the wise men were looking for a King to be born in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

It’s fascinating that in verse 1-2 of Matthew of our text we read...

Matthew 2:1-2, “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in

Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.’”

How did they know about a King being born and He was going to be the King of Jews? How did they know when a star appeared in the sky it would lead them to Jesus.



I won't try and explain the star appearing. Some have speculated that it was a comet or this or that. Scholars really don't know what it was but it was God doing something special. He wanted these wise men to come and be part of the celebration of Jesus' birth and bring Him gifts so He presented them with a star.

It is amazing that no one else noticed a special star appearing in the sky but they did. They were looking for it. They were looking for the birth of a King and they didn't miss it. They showed up right on time.

Think about this passage we read earlier.

Matthew 2:9-11, “After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

I don't think these wise men were Jewish. They might have familiar with the Jewish culture and teachings from Daniel and from all the Jews who lived in the east. But they knew a great event when they saw one.

They were filled with great joy and even worshipped baby Jesus.

This is in great contrast with most of the Jewish religious leaders and Jewish people in and around Jerusalem. Read verse three with me.

Matthew 2:3, “When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”

The people of Jerusalem were troubled about what the wise men were saying and who they were seeking. Someone who was born the King of the Jews.

In my mind the people in Jerusalem, especially the Jews, should have been the ones in the know. They had the writings of Daniel. They had all the prophecies of concerning the promised Messiah.

Verses 4-6, “Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people (the Jews), Herod inquired of them where the Messiah was going to be born. They said to him, ‘in Bethlehem of Judah; for this is what has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.’”

The Jewish people, the very ones God had called His own people. The very ones which the Messiah of the world was to come from, they missed it. God was doing one of the greatest things in the history of the earth and most of the Jews missed it. Missed the move of God.

This speaks to me in a couple of different ways.

Last week I spoke about the promptings of the Holy Spirit. How when God wants to do something in and through us, He gives us a nudge. Through the Holy Spirit He speaks to us in different ways. Maybe not a star in the sky. Maybe not a blinding light but He does speak to us in a number of different ways.

Jeremy.

What does God mean He wants to sift Jeremy? Purify him in some way would be my thought but that is for Jeremy to watch and figure out before the Lord. But Jeremy isn't going to miss it. He is tuned in and when it comes I bet he is going to be like the wise men. He will take the journey, come into the presence of Jesus with great joy.

The sifting may not be easy. The journey for the wise men to find Jesus certainly wasn't easy. Can you imagine traveling on the back of a camel for weeks, possibly months. But the pay-off? To be in the presence of the King.

2. The payoff of seeking Jesus is to find Him

That is our pay-off when we seek Jesus. Finding Him. He is the pearl of great price, the treasure in the field.

When the wise men saw the star and it led them to Jesus, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him.

When was the last time that happened to you? When was the last time that you were seeking Jesus and in your search God led you to Him and it filled you with great joy and you fell to the ground and worshipped Him.

This is the journey God and Jesus have for you. This is what happens when we are stay sensitive the moving of God in our lives. The reward is great. The reward is Jesus.

The second thing I believe we can learn from the wise men is they were aware of the times.

3. The wise men were aware of the times

If they followed the teachings of Daniel, he was fairly specific about when the Messiah would appear on the earth. They were watching and waiting and when the time drew near, they were ready. Ready and excited about the journey to meet the new King.

We too, are to be aware of the times we live in. Throughout the Old and New Testament you will find a lot of teachings about the return of Jesus. These teachings are not there for us to get out a calendar and try and figure out the exact day but we are to be aware of the general timing of His return so we will not be caught unaware.

So many Jewish people missed when their Messiah was born. The blessings they could have received were great. Jesus cried over them, cried over Jerusalem, saying, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I have longed to gather you together as a hen gathers her chicks but you were not willing.

But they were not willing to be like the wise men. They were not willing to go on a journey to find Jesus.

How about you this morning? Are you willing? Are you willing to go on a journey to find Jesus? Are you willing to position yourself in a place to hear from His Holy Spirit? Are you willing to go and do the things He is asking you to do?

Are you willing to seek the scriptures, the teachings about His return so you will not be caught unaware?

In our study of Matthew we will be looking at many of those passages but don't wait till then. Read them now. Become familiar with the days we are living in so you, like the wise men, will be ready to celebrate the return of your King, King Jesus.

As we close this morning think about the words to this song you will be singing. It talks about trusting in Jesus.

Trust, blessings and joy comes when we seek and find King Jesus.

Wise men and women still seek Him....Let's pray