



**DAVID JEWELL** Sun 28 Dec, 18:01 (1 day ago)

to DAVID

### **'The wise men' Matthew 2 v1-23**

After Jesus was born, Wise Men came to look for Him, probably from an area which is now in Iraq, Iran, or the Yemen. Although they are often called the 'Three Kings', the Bible does not say how many there were, or that they were kings. Three is only a guess because they brought with them three gifts: but however many there were of them, they probably would have had many more servants with them.

They were certainly men of great learning. The word Magi comes from the Greek word 'magos' (where the English word 'magic' comes from). Magos itself comes from the old Persian word 'Magupati'. This was the title given to priests in a sect of the ancient Persian religions such as Zoroastrianism. Today we'd called them astrologers. Back then astronomy and astrology were part of the same overall studies (and 'science') and went hand in hand with each other. The magi would have followed the patterns of the stars religiously. They would have also probably been very rich and held high esteem in their own society and by people who weren't from their country or religion.

They had seen an unusual new star in the sky, and knew that it told of the birth of a special king. No one really knows what the new star in the sky was, and there are many theories including comets, such as Halley's, supernovas, a conjunction of planets or something supernatural!

Herod asked the Wise Men to find Jesus and tell him where He was, not so he could go and worship him as he said, but so he could kill Him! He thought that Jesus sounded like a new King that could come and take his power away. It is likely that Jesus was not a newborn baby when the wise men arrived in Bethlehem. We can see from the passage that Joseph had settled the family in that city- the wise men arrived at the house, v.11, they saw **the child** with Mary. It was the appearance of the wise men that was to cause the family of Jesus to flee to Egypt-Herod would not have heard of the infant King without the wise men's enquiries.

So, what about these wise men? Well, **firstly their journey was one of faith**. There must have been those in their country who thought that they were mad, going off into the unknown without any knowledge of when they would be back. 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! No, not crazy - not insane - not out of their minds, but men of faith.

**God's journeys always involve FAITH.**

It's impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because, as the author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote: *'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 Carey** was a shoemaker when one day he heard that millions of people in India 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." Carey 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.**

When the wise men went 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:

## **3. Worship always involves SACRIFICE.**

Was there a price to be paid for the wise men's worship? They had given themselves to a journey. Travel in those days was not very comfortable - in fact it could be downright 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)

The book of Romans 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."

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-by coming here you have given time, money and energy.

## **4. A wise man's journey is one of CHANGE.**

Look at verse 12-they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod to inform him of Jesus' whereabouts. Isn't it interesting that

after they worshipped Jesus they could not go back the same way 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. We read in one of the greatest chapters in the Bible, Hebrews 11: *'By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshipped as he leaned on the top of his staff.'*

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."* He was never the same again.

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

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 worshipped 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 wise men did. 2026 is arriving. Will it be another year much the same as before? Are you honestly prepared to listen to God and go where He leads? It may not mean travelling hundreds of miles, it may not mean that you become the modern equivalent of William Carey, but it will mean change, because God loves you too much to allow you to remain the same! God bless you!