

# The Faith of the Wise Men

Matthew 2:1-12

# Who Were The Wise Men?

- Traditionally: “The original word is magoi from which comes our word magician, now used in a bad sense, but not so in the original. The persons here denoted were philosophers, priests, or astronomers. They dwelt chiefly in Persia and Arabia. They were the learned men of the eastern nations, devoted to astronomy, to religion, and to medicine. They were held in high esteem by the Persian court, were admitted as counselors, and followed the camps in war, to give advice” (Barnes)

# Who Were The Wise Men?

- Possible, but only in the sense that they existed; not necessarily in harmony with the history of that day; no rational cause for pagans to seek the King of the Jews for worship
- Traditions originally based on Catholic scholarship and tradition
- Certainly not kings, but stewards of knowledge for other kings
- Certainly not numbered, nor are we clearly informed of their country of origin

# Who Were The Wise Men?

- "The Jews believed that there were prophets in the kingdoms of Sabea and Arabia who were of the posterity of Abraham by Keturah, and that they taught in the name of God, what they had received in tradition from the mouth of Abraham." (Whitby)
- "That many Jews were mixed with this people there is little doubt; and that these eastern magi, or philosophers, were originally of that class. These, knowing the promise of the Messiah, were now, like other believing Jews, waiting for the consolation of Israel." (Adam Clarke)

# Who Were The Wise Men?

- Possibly descendants of the Jews who did not return from Babylonian captivity yet maintained elements of the Jewish traditions, prophecies, and synagogue worship. That they lost much in the intervening years is evidenced by going to Jerusalem instead of Bethlehem.
- Also possible that they were descendants of the northern tribes who maintained elements of the old law and who had begun trickling back to Palestine.

# They Believed The Sign God Gave Them

- Matt. 2:2 - “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.”
- “His Star” (Astera)
  - Literally in context - very bright and easily seen star, not a known star pulsing like Polaris, nor a nova, nor alignment of planets which occurred in 6 or 7 BC
- A movable star
  - Matt. 2:9 - “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.”

# They Believed The Sign God Gave Them

- A spiritual view
  - Luke 1:78 - “Through the tender mercy of our God,  
With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us”
  - Dayspring, same Greek word as star, is often used for the sun, which the ancients called the daystar or star of the day
- They journeyed a great distance to honor the King

# They Believed The Sign God Gave Them

- Before Christ was two years old, He was already doing three things:
  - Drawing people to Himself
  - Showing the world He is the light
  - Mal. 4:2 - “But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings”
  - Proving He is worthy of worship



# They Believed The Sign God Gave Them

- Our sign: The resurrection of Christ
  - Matt. 12:38-40 - “Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, Teacher, we want to see a sign from You. 39 But He answered and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

# They Were Informed By The Scriptures

- They went to Jerusalem, the seat of the Jewish religion
  - Matt. 2:3-8 - “When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 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. 5 So they said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 6 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.’ 7 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. 8 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.’”

# They Were Informed By The Scriptures

- In every Dispensation, including the Christian, direction comes at the house of God
  - Psalm 73:16-17 - “When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.”
  - 1Tim. 3:15 - “I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

# They Were Informed By The Scriptures

- They all learned how to find Christ from the Scriptures
  - Matt. 2:5 - “So they said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet’”

# They Were Informed By The Scriptures

- He was born in Judah -- Bethlehem according to prophecy
  - Matt. 2:6 - “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.”
- No priest came from Judah -- represents the coming end of the Mosaic system.
  - Heb. 7:14 - “For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.”

# They Worshiped Jesus

- At that time, worship often involved prostrating one's self
  - Matt. 2:9-11 - “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. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. 11 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.”

# They Worshiped Jesus

- They presented their gifts, which were of prophetic nature:
  - Gold - Represented His Kingship
  - Frankincense - A bitter plant; represented His sorrows
  - Myrrh - Represented His death; it was used for embalming.
  - They were enormously expensive; would represent several years income for a courtier in the king's palace
  - These gifts were never given to foreign sons of carpenters born in stables

# They Worshiped Jesus

- Tradition suggests that the gifts were probably used to fund their flight into Egypt to escape Herod's edict
  - Matt. 2:13 - “Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.”



# They Followed God's Directions

- They must not report back to Herod and must return to their own country.
  - Matt. 2:12 - “Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.”
  - It would put them at great risk if they were caught
  - It would risk relations between their countries, and their king's anger

# The Faith of the Wise Men

- They believed the prophecies about Jesus and proved their faith by their journey
- They were informed by the scriptures and went where the word told them to go
- They worshiped Jesus and gave sacrificially regardless of His outward status and circumstances
- They followed God's instructions regardless of the risks involved