

The Faith of the Wise Men

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. Matt. 2:1-12

B. Who were the wise men?

1. 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)
 - a. 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
 - b. Traditions originally based on Catholic scholarship and tradition
 - c. Certainly not kings, but stewards of knowledge for other kings
 - d. Certainly not numbered, nor are we clearly informed of their country of origin
2. "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)
3. "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)
4. 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.
5. Also possible that they were descendants of the northern text tribes who maintained elements of the old law and who had begun trickling back to Palestine.

I. THEY BELIEVED THE SIGN GOD GAVE THEM

A. Vs. 2 - The Sign - His Star (Aster)

1. Literally in context - very bright and easily seen star, not a known star like Polaris pulsing, nor a nova, nor alignment of planets which occurred in 6 or 7 BC
2. A movable star - vs. 9
3. A spiritual view - Luke 1:78 - Dayspring, same Greek word as star, is often used for the sun, which the ancients called the daystar.
4. They journeyed a great distance to honor the King

B. Before Christ was two years old, He was already doing three things:

1. Drawing people to Himself
 2. Showing the world He is the light - Mal. 4:2
 3. Proving He is worthy of worship
- C. Our Sign - The resurrection of Christ - Matt. 12:38-40

II. THEY WERE INFORMED BY THE SCRIPTURES

- A. Vss 3-8 - They went to Jerusalem, the seat of the Jewish religion
1. Jerusalem is portrayed as the House of God; means "city or possession of peace"
 2. In every Dispensation, including the Christian, direction comes by the house of God - Psalm 73:16-17; 1Tim. 3:15
- B. Vs. 5 - They all learned how to find Christ from the Scriptures
1. Why did the king in Jerusalem know nothing of this for years? It was spiritual apathy; they were not looking for the coming of Christ. They had lost more of the Jewish faith than their Eastern kinfolk who refused to be part of the restoration
 2. Vs 6 - He was born in Judah - Bethlehem according to prophecy
 - a. Heb. 7:14 - No priest came from Judah - represents the coming end of the Mosaic system.

III. THEY WORSHIPED JESUS

- A. Vss. 9-11 - At that time, worship often involved prostrating one's self
- B. They presented their gifts, which were of prophetic nature:
1. Gold - Represented His Kingship
 2. Frankincense - A bitter plant - represented His sorrows
 3. Myrrh - Represented His death - It was used for embalming.
 4. They were enormously expensive; would represent several years income for a courtier in the king's palace
 5. Were never given to foreign sons of carpenters born in stables
- C. Tradition suggests that the gifts were probably used to fund their flight into Egypt to escape Herod's edict - vs. 13

IV. THEY FOLLOWED GOD'S DIRECTIONS

- A. Vs. 12 - to avoid reporting back to Herod and return to their own country.
1. It would put them at great risk if they were caught
 2. It would risk relations between their countries, and their king's anger

Conclusion:

- A. The faith of the wise men can inspire us to believe and follow Christ.
1. They believed the prophecies about Jesus and proved their faith by their journey
 2. They were informed by the scriptures and went where the word told them to go
 3. They worshiped Jesus and gave sacrificially regardless of His outward status and circumstances
 4. They followed God's instructions regardless of the risks involved