

ADVENT

ADVENT WEEK 3: MATTHEW 2:1-12

Community Group Study Guide - Week of December 13, 2020

Jesus Christ did everything wrong by the world's rules and everything right by the commands of God and yet he triumphed! His birth story tells us that he wasn't born in a powerful urban center, wasn't born in a world class hospital or hotel, he did not have regal figures, at least those of the right ethnic background, attend his birth, and he wasn't born into a wealthy family, yet he is most influential figure in history and the solution to man's greatest problems! It's only in him that our sin is forgiven, all are greatest heart longings are satisfied, and our greatest questions are resolved.

Christians know this, yet many of us are limping through life because we often are not people of acclaim or in positions of power, affluence or influence. We can't sleep at night because we don't have the things that the world tells us that we need to be full and have peace. We can't sleep because the faithful church does not resemble worldly institutions of power. Though Christ has turned the wisdom of the world upside down and proven it shallow and foolish, we still are not at peace because of the influence of the world's wisdom on us.

Christmas is not a time when the "goodwill" of man is on full display, contrary to popular opinion and Hallmark movies. Rather, the foolishness of the wisdom of man is revealed and proven cyclical, shallow, and insufficient. Our insufficiency to save ourselves from our sin, find our way back to our Creator, and our need for Christ to come into our lives is on full display. When we understand it properly, Christmas is a time when we can proclaim words of the apostle Paul with confidence, "Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (1 Corinthians 1:20). The wisdom of the world is defeated by a baby born in a manger in Bethlehem! It's a time that our hope in the character of God, wisdom of God, and commitment to the commandments of God shall be renewed as we await the day that "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

DISCUSSION GOALS

Head

To understand that the wisdom of the world is cyclical, superficial and insufficient in its efforts to address the condition and needs of man.

Heart

To marvel at the way that God reveals the foolishness of man's wisdom by the arrangement of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem and his death on the cross.

Hands

To filter the world's wisdom through the lens of scripture as we march forward in life, and cling to the Lord with great faith even when there aren't great signs before us.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

In-Person Worship Services

THIS Sunday, December 20 at 9:30AM and 11:30AM.

Please go to <https://brookline.mosaicboston.com/serve> **to sign up to serve on the Mini Mo or Usher Team.**

We will hold **Christmas Eve Service** on **December 24 at 5PM.** This is open to the public.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read Matthew 2:1-12

1. Who are the wise men? What events in history, beliefs, or scriptures could have led them to seek the baby born King of the Jews? What can we learn from the wise men when we compare their actions in the text against those of King Herod, the priests and the scribes?
2. What is astrology? What kind of influence does it have in our society today? What does its relevance in our day suggest about the trends and cycles of leading secular thought throughout history? What other trends of philosophical, sociopolitical, psychological, developmental and/or religious thought have come and gone in recent ages?
3. **Read 1 Corinthians 1:20-25.** How does Matthew's birth narrative, which includes the interactions of the wise men, show how the "foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men?" Keeping the situation into which Christ was born in mind, how does preaching Christ crucified reveal "the power of God and wisdom of God"?
4. Where does the wisdom of the wise men lead them in their search for the King? How does this correspond with the general direction of the wisdom and philosophy of the world throughout history? Are there any areas in your thought life that you are struggling to submit to Biblical wisdom?
5. What knowledge helps the wise men reach their destination, the presence of the King of the Jews? What does this reveal about the limitations of the wisdom of the world? How can a person reach the position where they have peace with God?
6. **Read verses 9 and 10.** What is interesting about the reaction of the wise men when they see the star in the sky? Why are they so excited? How does their experience relate to that of all people with true Christian faith (see 1 Peter 1:8-9)?
7. **Read verse 11.** What details from this verse indicate that the wise men are approaching the King of the Jews to worship than they did when they claimed they wanted to worship him in verse 2?
8. In this text, we see gentile pagans falling at the feet of the King of Jews for worship and none of the Jewish scribes and priests doing so. How does this text help make Matthew's point to his Jewish audience that Jesus Christ was "the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1)? What kind of reactions would the salvation of the magi in Matthew's narrative inspired from Jewish and Christian readers of his day? How does Christianity break down ethnic, racial and economic biases in the heart of a person?