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**Wise Men Still Seek Jesus**

**Matt. 2:1-12**

Today we are impressed with things that really have no real value or importance for the most part.

Our chaotic world has people distracted, fearful and doubtful of the future, but the Scriptures always point us to the true hope of man, Jesus Christ!

\* Yet the gift of God, His Son, at His First Coming is not valued very much in our day.

Listen to the prophet Isaiah cried out, “Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would **come down!** That the mountains might shake at Your presence.” Is. 64:1

We want to look at the account of the wise men, regarding the birth of Jesus, which unfolds for us in a three movements: Matt. 2:1-12

- I. The wise men came seeking out the king of the Jews. vs. 1-3
  - II. The wise men were sent out to locate the king of the Jews. vs. 4-8
  - III. The wise men found the king of the Jews. vs. 9-12
- I. The wise men came seeking out the king of the Jews. vs. 1-3**

- A. The arrival of the wise men to Jerusalem. vs. 1
- 1. The wise men came in the days when Herod the king reigned. vs. 1a
    - a. He is said to be king, a title he constantly sought after through Rome and obtained in 40 B. C., and reigned for 37 years, yet never recognized as king by the Jews.
    - b. He was Herod the Great, the son of Antipater, an Idumean.
    - c. When Jesus was born the scepter had literally departed from Judah, a foreigner being now upon the throne. Gen. 49:10
      - \* It was a 1,200 mile journey, some say 25-30 days with a caravan.
  - 2. The wise men came from the east to Jerusalem. vs. 1b
    - 1. The word behold “idou” indicates the sudden and unexpected arrival of these wise men.
    - 2. They are called wise men “magos”, the root word comes from word meaning great, but it came to mean magician, sooth-sayers or diviner associated with astrology. Dan. 2:4, 10, 12, 48; Matt. 2:1, 7, 16; Acts 13:6, 8
      - \* These men are not seekers of the occult or astrology, but the birth of a king!
    - 3. They came from the east, some think from Media or Persia, modern day Iran, but probably Babylon, modern day Iraq.

**B.** The inquiry of the wise men at Jerusalem. vs. 2

1. The wise men asked Herod, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” vs. 2a-b
  - a. The question implies there had been an announcement and the certainty of the particular birth of this king.  
\* The aorist indicates a past fact.
  - b. The Scriptures were known in Babylon, Nineveh and Persia by men like Jonah, Daniel and others.
2. The wise men told Herod, “For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.” vs. 2c
  - a. The phrase “His star”, could have reference to the prophesy of Balaam. regarding the Messiah. Num. 24:17-19
  - b. They saw it from the east therefore traveled west towards Israel.
  - c. They came to worship “proskuneo” which means to kiss the hand, to fall on one’s knees, to touch the ground with one’s forehead, customary of the many of the middle east, in reverence and adoration to Him.
  - d. Nowhere are we told there were three wise, yet tradition has even named them Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar.
3. The mission of the wise men disturbed Herod. vs. 3

- a. The words spoken by the wise men brought an immediate response from Herod, “When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled.”. vs. 3a-b
  - 1) The word troubled “tarasso”, means to be agitated or perplexed.
  - 2) He was on the throne that he had sought for all his life.
  - 3) He had no room for a rival to eclipse him, let alone remove him from it.
  - 4) He personally had no room for Jesus, to rule over him.
- b. The consequences of his agitation, carried over to those he ruled over, “and all Jerusalem with him.” vs. 3c
  - 1) He, Herod the Great was a complete madman paranoid of losing his throne.
  - 2) He killed his own sons in 7 B.C. Aristobulus and Alexander, in 4 B.C. not too long before his death he executed another son, Antipater.
  - 3) He killed some of his wives.
  - 4) He executed large number of people, including prominent Pharisee.
  - 5) He imprisoned some prominent individuals to be executed the minute he died to insure someone would be grieving at his death, but they were instead released, resulting in the

- opposite, great celebration at his death.
- c. The supposed king, Herod, had no answer for the wise men.
    - 1) He was completely ignorant about the birth.
    - 2) He was living for self and power.

### Illustration

The angel said to Shepherds, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”  
Lk. 2:10-11

### Application

1. Herod is an accurate picture of every person that does not know Jesus as Savior and Lord, sitting on the throne of their own life.
  - a. As sinners we love to exercise our own authority to be recognized.
  - b. As sinners our pride hates rivals that diminish our self-importance.
  - c. As sinners we are ignorant about the things of God and our need of salvation from sin.
  - d. Yet God is faithful to send the gospel message to all sinner, in spite that most will reject it, trusting their intellect by rationalizing heaven, hell and judgment as the belief for fools.
    - \* “But the **natural man** does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are

foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

1Cor. 2:14

2. The people in our nation have been lulled to sleep about their need of God by believing in a variety of things for their world view, just like Herod.
  - a. They believe in their own inner potential and abilities.
  - b. Others believe in their academic achievement or amoral Political Correctness for their wisdom and success.
  - c. Still others believe in the many forms of religion, re-incarnation, pantheism or New Age, believing themselves to be spiritual, the new popular term be it good or evil.
  - d. When such people are confronted with the good news of the Gospel, that they are sinner in need of repentance through Jesus, who died to make atonement for their sins to forgive them and be their Savior, they will interpret your words as self-righteous, rather than an act of love for them.
    - \* “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” Jn. 3:19-21

3. The age that we are living in is an age of God haters, who like Herod are very militant to impose their views, from educators to legislators.

\* The first time I taught this text was 1992, 25 years ago, the animosity and intolerance for conservatives and Christians has grown and intensified to hatred.

- a. Marginalizing people that speak against relativism and preach the gospel.
- b. They target people who do not agree or vote like them.
- c. They use the media and those in power to get their agenda accomplished.

\* “Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?” And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.”  
Mk. 14:63-64

***The wise men came seeking out the king of the Jews at Jerusalem!***

## **II. The wise men were sent out to locate the king of the Jews. vs. 4-8**

- A. Herod called together the religious men of Jerusalem. vs. 4-6
  - 1. He determined to seek out the so called spiritual giants of the day, the Sanhedrin composed of 71 members, “And when he

had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together.” vs. 4a

- a. The chief priests were the ones who sought God for the people.
  - b. The scribes, were the transcribers and interpreters of the Scriptures the lawyers.
  - c. These were the men who were lead and advice the people on spiritual matters.
    - 1) They were men having appearance of being spiritual, but were not.
    - 2) They possessed accurate biblical truth, but it did not affect them.
    - 3) They spoke with theological language, but God did not hear them.
    - 4) They expressed their experiences with God, but often contradicting the Scriptures.
    - 5) They boasted in their academic accomplishments to affirm their spiritual qualifications, yet many of them were not doers of the word.
    - 6) They did not live with the people, but separate from the people.
    - 7) They thrived on their recognition from the people.
2. He asked the religious men about the prophetic location of the Messiah’s birth, “He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.” vs. 4b
- a. Herod was not a Jew, but an Edomite.

- b. Herod was not interested in the Jewish Messiah.
  - c. Herod was a self-centered man, not a God-centered man.
  - d. Herod was not looking for the Coming of Messiah, but rather to keep himself on his throne that was being threatened by the birth of the Messiah.
  - e. Herod was anxiously waiting to hear the location and order His destruction.
3. He heard the religious men utter the prophetic city, “So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet.” vs. 5
- a. The specific city was declared, “Bethlehem of Judah” was the birth place of the king of the Jews. vs. 5a-b
    - 1) Bethlehem means house of bread about 5-6 miles south of Jerusalem.
    - 2) Rachel was buried. Gen. 35:19
    - 3) Ruth lived there. Ruth 1
    - 4) David’s home was there. 1Sam. 16
    - 5) This was distinct from a city named Bethlehem in Galilee. Josh. 19:15
    - 6) Matthew omits Ephrathah “place of fruitfulness” in his quote.
  - b. The text is from Micah, they said the prophet singular. Mic. 5:2
    - 1) They had the high privilege of possessing the revelation of God, but not a passion for God.

- 2) The Scripture was proclaimed about 700 years before the birth of Messiah.
4. He heard the two-fold revelation of the prophecy. vs. 6
- a. The privilege of Bethlehem despite her seeming insignificance, “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah”. vs. 6a-d
    - \* Micah says, “Though you are little among the thousands of Judah”, which indicates the same thing.
  - b. The pre-eminence of the the child to be born was to be a Ruler and Shepherd, “For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.” vs. 6e
    - 1) Some point out that this last part is not in Micah, but from David. 2Sam. 5:2
    - 2) But the One to lead with authority and One to tend the flock of God, Israel, is described as the shepherd feeding the people two verses down. Micah. 5:4
      - \* Micah revealed the One to be Ruler was eternal, “from everlasting”
    - 3) Herod was listening to men who spoke the Scriptures without having a concern for the Messiah of Scripture.
      - a) They were not anticipating the Messiah’s Coming.
      - b) They were not excited about the birth of Messiah.

- c) They had no desire to be ruled and guided by the Messiah.
  - d) Herod wanted to make sure he remained on his throne.
- B.** Herod called the wise men to come before him. vs. 7-8
1. He was being deceptive to the wise men with his words, “Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared.” vs. 7
    - a. He summoned them secretly “lathra”, privately, so as to not draw attention to himself or be suspected. vs. 7a-b
    - b. He wanted to learn from them the time of the stars appearance. vs. 7c
      - \* The word determined “akriboo”, means to learn carefully and know accurately. vs. 13-18
  3. He covered up his motive and true intent by hypocrisy. vs. 8
    - a. Herod sent them out as his own private search party, “And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the young Child.” vs. 8a-b
      - 1) Bethlehem is located on a ridge of about 3,000 feet elevation.
      - 2) About 5-6 miles south of Jerusalem.

- b. Herod gave them an imperative command, “and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me.’ vs. 8c-d
- c. Herod lied to them, “that I may come and worship Him also.” vs. 8e
  - 1) He falsely communicated his desire to worship the Messiah.
  - 2) He used pretentious and fraudulent words to accomplish his evil desire to destroy the Messiah. vs. 13-14, 16-18

### **Illustration**

At His birth, “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” Lk. 2:13-14

### **Application**

1. The presence of people like Herod who appear to be interested in Biblical truth is for self-gain, they will always be with us having a variety of motives.
  - a. Some only seeking financial or physical help, taking advantage of Christianity.
  - b. Others simply to find a mate to marry.
  - c. Still others are only seeking a position of power in leadership to rule over people.
    - \* “Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they

loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” Jn. 12:42-43

2. The history of the church reveals there has always been individuals in ministry, be they Pastors, evangelist, etc, that like the priest and scribes only have an appearance of spirituality.
  - a. They are in it for money.
  - b. They are in it for the admiration of the people.
  - c. They are in it for exercising power and authority over people, as their slaves.

\* “And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of **all** and **servant** of **all**.” Mk. 9:35
3. There are church leaders, who are like the priests and scribes that have no concern for the Coming of Messiah, but only in advancing themselves and making this world a better place through community and good works.
  - a. They do not believe and reject that the life of Jesus is vicarious for our sins, but teach it is only an example to follow, which is a denial of the heart of the gospel. Jn. 3:16, 1Jn. 2:2
  - b. They believe it is a waste of time to be concerned with the prophetic teaching of the Second Coming, but are to be attempting to bring in the Kingdom through good works.
  - c. They believe anyone can come to God, apart from Jesus Christ and particularly through “contemplative prayer”, which is eastern meditation, particularly in yoga.

\* “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” 1Tim. 4:1

4. Herod type individuals are deceptive in their words.
  - a. They are self-centered.
  - b. They are self-willed.
  - c. They are self-absorbed.
  - d. They are selfish.

\* “A worthless **person**, a wicked man, Walks with a perverse mouth.” Prov. 6:12

*The wise men were sent out to locate the king of the Jews in Bethlehem!*

### III. The wise men found the king of the Jews. vs. 9-12

- A. The wise men were seeking a king over their lives. vs. 2c, 9-10
  1. They were led by God to greater truth out of sincere seeking, “When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them. vs. 9a-d
    - a. They had no idea Herod was lying, but took him at his word, “When they heard the king.” vs. 9a
    - b. They continued on their sincere dedication, “they departed.” vs. 9b

- c. They were led by God, “and behold the star which they had seen in the East and it went before them.” vs. 9c-d
  - 1) The star was not some constellation, Saturn, Jupiter, Halley’s Comet or a super-nova.
  - 2) This star was a divine sign God used to guide them from the west to the east and not to Bethlehem.
- d. They were not satisfied till they stood before the Messiah, “till it came and stood over where the young Child was.” vs. 9e
  - 1) Literally, “having come took its stand”, the aorist tense.
  - 2) The star had to have been fairly low to indicate the exact house.
  - 3) No star moves in direction for some time, appears and disappears, then stops, moves again and finally stops.
- 2. They understood their long search for the newly born king and Messiah was over, “When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.” vs. 10
  - a. The word rejoice “chairō” means to be glad.
  - b. The adjectives that follow are piled on to describe the incredible satisfaction and emotions of the final arrival, they were glad with exceeding mega joy.

- 1) They had been persistent in seeking the Messiah and found Him, as He God guided them to worship Him.
  - 2) They sought a person, not a system of philosophy, but God Incarnate.
- B.** The wise men were true to their intent once God revealed to them the Messiah. vs. 11
- 1. They entered the house, “And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him.” vs. 11a-c
    - a. The place was a house not a cave or outdoor enclosure. vs. 11a
      - 1) Time had elapsed since the birth of Jesus.
      - 2) Possibly two years since Herod would later command to kill the male children from two years and under. Matt. 2:16
  - b. The first thing that caught their eyes was “the young child with Mary His mother”. vs. 11b
    - 1) Jesus is not in a baby in a manger.
    - 2) Jesus is always mentioned first before Mary, He is the focus, not Mary.
    - 3) Joseph is not mentioned at all.
    - 3) The last time we hear of Joseph is after Jesus was twelve.
  - c. The wise men “fell down and worshiped Him”, not Mary. vs. 11c



- 1) The word worshipped “prosluneo”, means to prostrate oneself showing reverence to one of a superior rank.
  - 2) This was God in living flesh, the long awaited Messiah the King of the Jews.
2. They gave of the best they had, And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” vs. 11d-g
- a. They came with treasures “thesouros”, which means the place in which good and precious things are collected and laid up. vs. 11d
  - b. They presented gifts “doran” to Him, these were presents in their expression of adoration, honor and reverence. vs. 11e
  - c. They gave Jesus three things. vs. 11f-g
    - 1) They gave Him gold, symbolic of His deity and His office of King.
    - 2) They gave Him frankincense symbolic of His priestly and sacrificial service.
    - 3) They gave Him myrrh symbolic of His office of prophet who was to die, which was used for embalming.  
\* Ps. 72:10-11, 15; Is. 60:5-6
- C. The wise men having found the Messiah were instructed by God to return home. vs. 12
1. They were warned as they were asleep, “Then, being divinely warned in a dream.” vs. 12a-b

- a. Revealing the faithfulness of God to speak to them by a dream. Matt. 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22
  - b. Revealing the loyalty of the wise men.
2. They were warned about Herod, “that they should not return to Herod.” vs. 12b
- a. Protecting them from the evil plot of Herod.
  - b. Protecting them from the lost of their lives.
3. They were obedient to God, “they departed for their own country another way.” vs. 12c
- a. Revealing their dependency on God alone.
  - b. Revealing their trust in God’s way.

### **Illustration**

The angel said to the shepherds “And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” Lk. 2:12

### **Application**

1. The wisest thing any person can do is to seek Jesus to be king over their lives.
  - a. Seeing themselves as lost in sin, as revealed by Scripture, regardless of our accomplishments.
  - b. Seeing their need of forgiveness, regardless of how moral or ethical we might be for we know our own hearts.
  - c. Seeing their need of a Savior, regardless of our good works, grace alone will do.

\* “As it is written: “There is **none** righteous, no, not one; There is **none** who understands; There is **none** who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is **none** who does good, no, not one.” Rom. 3:10-12

2. The wisdom that God gives by the illumination of the Holy Spirit reveals God’s truth about Jesus.
  - a. That Jesus is the God-Man. Jn. 1:1, 14
  - b. That Jesus is the Savior of the world. Jn. 4:42
  - c. That Jesus is the only name by which men must be saved. Acts 4:12
  - d. That Jesus is the only mediator, between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. 1Tim. 2:5
3. The way to remain wise is for those having found the Messiah to be obedient to God in what He reveals in His Word.
  - a. To live dependent on Jesus always, to grow, develop and mature through the word.
  - c. To be part of the church in service to the Lord.
  - d. To live a crucified life by being filled with the Holy Spirit continuously.
  - e. To be a witness for Jesus passionately till He comes for His church in the Rapture, declaring the Second Coming!

\* “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.”  
Phil. 3:13-15

***The wise men found the king of the Jews to worship Him!***

### **Conclusion**

This is the account of the wise men, regarding the birth of Jesus that unfolded in a three movements:

- I.** The wise men came seeking out the king of the Jews at Jerusalem!
- II.** The wise men were sent out to locate the king of the Jews to Bethlehem!
- III.** The wise men found the king of the Jews to worship Him!