

## HOW THE WISE MEN SOUGHT JESUS

Take your Bibles and turn once again to Matthew 2. This morning we are going to continue our look at the wise men from the east that came to worship Christ. We are doing so for two reasons:

1) There is a lot of **mystery**—and a lot of **myths**—regarding the wise men who visited the young Christ. We noticed last week that the Bible does not **give the number**—and yet tradition says there were **three**. Tradition doesn't end there, though. We supposedly **know their names**: Balthazar, Caspar and Melchior.

That's not all—some claimed to have found **their skulls!** And wouldn't you know, the **eye sockets** of their skulls all faced one direction. Anyone care to guess? **Towards Bethlehem!**

Some of these myths have been promoted for so long that we “take them as Bible” when they are **not** Bible! When tradition and the Bible collide, we need to side with the Bible! **Amen?** So, one reason for looking at the account of the wise men is to separate **fact from fiction**.

2) A second reason we should study the account of the wise men is that it is **in the Word of God**. And if God included it in His Word, there are things He wants us to **learn from it**. We noted last week this truth: that **people who have the truth don't always value the truth!** We see that in vs 5-6. The **scribes knew** from the OT book of Micah that Christ would be born in Bethlehem. They **knew**—but they didn't care! They had **no time for Him**—and **no interest in Him!**

Do we **have the truth?** **We do**, don't we? Many of us own **not just one** Bible—we own **several** of them! But do we read it...and obey it...and share it? Or is it possible that like the scribes, we **have the truth** but don't value it?

That **wasn't** the greatest failure of the scribes, though. The greater tragedy was that they had the truth about **how and where** to find Christ—but they didn't **want Christ!** Imagine getting a **map of a buried treasure** on your grandfather's land that would make you rich! All you have to do is follow the map and dig up the treasure! [Ask] How many of you would at least **try it?**

And yet, millions of people have access to the map that points them to the **riches of being forgiven**—and **having a home in heaven with God forever**—and yet they won't follow what God says to get to Him! Oh may that not be you!

Please follow along as I read verses 1-11. Title of my message this morning is “How the Wise Men Sought Jesus.”

Notice again verses 1-2 (read). So the wise men **followed the star** to Jerusalem, right? Is that what **it says?** That's what **tradition says**—but that is not what the **Bible says!**

--**It doesn't say** we have **followed His star** from the east and are come to worship Him.

--And it doesn't say we have seen the star **to the east?** If they saw the star **to the east**—and went **to the east**—they would never have ended up in Jerusalem. Why? Because Jerusalem was west of them!

So what does the Bible say?

It says, we have **seen His star** in the east, and are come to worship Him. In other words, **while in the east** we saw the star!

### 1. The nature of the star

So what was the nature of the star? What was it like?

--Was it a “regular” star like the stars that we can look up into the sky and see on a clear night?

--Was it Halley's comet or some other super nova? Any of you notice the bright light last night @5?

--Was it the convergence of Jupiter and Saturn in the sign of the fish—an early symbol for Christianity?

--Or was it **not a star** at all, but rather a **bright light** that could be best **described** as a star?

--One other question. Was it seen by only the wise men—or could others see it too?

Don't know because we aren't told! In reality, we are **not told a lot about the star**, but here is what we know.

--It is called **His** star. Who is the "His"? The star of the King of the Jews! In other words, Christ's star!

--It was **not seen** the entire time. Why do I say that?

--vs 9 "...and lo, the star, which **they saw** in the east, went before them..."

--vs 10 "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

--Why did they rejoice? Because they saw it while in the east, but it **had disappeared**. It then **reappeared** after they departed Jerusalem and headed for Bethlehem.

--Also, they saw it in one place, **then it moved**, "and went before them, till it came and **stood over** where the young child was."

Since the Bible is **not specific** regarding the **nature** of the star, it is not something we can be dogmatic about. In other words, we can agree to disagree and still be friends!

--If it was a **real star**—a luminous planet in the sky—it was certainly a **miraculous one** that could appear, disappear, reappear, move, and stop! And that is probably what it was!

--On the other hand, if you believe it was the "glory of the Lord" appearing like it did to the shepherds to announce the birth of Christ, I have no problems with that either!

## 2. The role of the star

So if the star did not **lead them** the entire time, what did it do? What was its **function; it's purpose**?

I believe it served at least two purposes.

### A. It was an attention-getting sign

It's easy to forget that there were people—besides Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, and Joseph—who were anticipating the coming of the Messiah.

**Luke 2:25-26** "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, **waiting for the consolation of Israel**: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. <sup>26</sup> And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before **he had seen the Lord's Christ.**"

--Imagine that—being told by God that before you die, you will see the Lord's Christ—the Lord's anointed One! Simeon wasn't the only one, though!

The woman at the well was also expecting the Messiah to come.

**John 4:25** "The woman saith unto Him [Jesus], I know that **Messias cometh**, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things." You may remember that she was a Samaritan—half-Jewish & half-Gentile!

**John 7:31** "And many of the people believed on Him, and said, **When Christ cometh**, will He do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" They believed Christ was coming—and this had to be Him—because no one was going to do more miracles than what Jesus had been doing!

Is it possible, then, that these men—although Gentiles—were **expecting the King of the Jews** and that the star was merely to get their attention that He had come? Can't be dogmatic, but certainly a reasonable view!

If it wasn't initially an attention-getter,

### B. It was an assurance-giving sign

The wise man had seen the star in the east. **Somehow** and in **some way**, it was revealed to them that it was **His** Star—Christ's star—and that He had come. So they departed to Jerusalem. We'll see **why** in a little bit.

But they didn't **stay in** Jerusalem—instead they went **to Bethlehem**. Why? **Because of the star**? No—**because of the Scriptures**! The king told them what the scribes—and Scripture—said.

**Vs 8** "And he sent them **to Bethlehem...**" **Vs 9** "When they had heard the king, **they departed;**"  
What happened after they departed? "and, lo, **the star** which they saw in the east, **went before them...**"

**Vs 10** “When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding joy.”

They went to Bethlehem because the **Word of God said to**—but the star gave them assurance that they were going the right way because that is how this whole journey had begun!

Ever have that happen? God uses His Word to tell you to do something—and you do it—and then you get this “sign from heaven” that gives you assurance that you are doing what God wanted you to do! When God led my wife and I to come here, there were some verses He used to show me that this is where He wanted us. But in His goodness and kindness, He confirmed that decision by providing us a home that we both love and appreciate!

Back to the wise men. We know that the wise men left Jerusalem—and headed to Bethlehem—because they had direction **from the Word of God**. We **can be dogmatic** about that because that is what the Bible says!

But **what was it** that got them seeking for the King of the Jews in **the first place**? This is something we **cannot** be dogmatic about because the Bible **does not** specifically say. There are really only two options, though.

1) They received **special revelation** from God that was **not recorded for us**. Maybe one of them had a **dream or vision** where they were told that the King of the Jews would be born and that when they **see a star**, they should head to Jerusalem. Certainly possible, but the “flaw” in that is why would God give them special instructions, but not send them to **Bethlehem** in the first place? That question is even more valid when you consider all the children that were killed by Herod after the wise men had come to Jerusalem!

2) The second option—and the one I hold to—is this: They believed what Daniel had taught—and written—600 years earlier! In other words, they came primarily **because of the Scriptures**—not the star!

### **3. The role of Scripture in the journey of the wise men**

So is there enough in the book of Daniel to have sent them on this journey? I believe there is, but you will have to decide for yourself as we go through it! Please take your Bibles and turn to Daniel 2.

#### A. The prophecy of 4 world-kingdoms

Going to hurry through this—and skip quite a bit—but I believe you will see that the wise men had good reason to be expecting the King of the Jews.

In the way of background, King Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon—the most powerful nation of the world at this time. Babylon had conquered the southern kingdom of Israel and destroyed both the temple and Jerusalem. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego—plus many other Jewish young people—had been taken to Babylon.

Chapter 2 starts out with Nebuchadnezzar having a dream, but not being able to remember it! So he calls in his magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers—aka his wise men/magi—and asks them to **tell him his dream and the interpretation**. In vs 10, they kindly and discreetly tell him he is “crazy” and that no king has ever made such a request!

God reveals to Daniel **both the dream and the interpretation**, and he is brought before King Neb. **The dream** is about an image—a statue. Look at vss 32-33.

Head was gold; breast and arms of silver; belly and thighs of brass; legs of iron; and ft part iron & clay. **The interpretation** is this. End of vs 38, Nebuchadnezzar—Babylon—is the head of gold.

We know from other parts of Daniel—and world history—that the Medes and Persians followed Babylon, then came Greece, then Rome. That’s not all that was revealed to Daniel, however.

There is also... B. The prophecy of God’s coming kingdom

--vs 34 “Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image...and brake them”

--vs 35. Whole image is crumbled and becomes like chaff that the wind blows away. Notice “...and the stone became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”

Jump ahead to vs 44 where we have the interpretation. “And in the days of these kings shall the **God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed**: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall **break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.**”

Turn now to Daniel 7. This time *Daniel* has a dream. It is about **4 beasts** instead of an image with **4 distinct parts**. The interpretation is the same, though—it has to do with the same world powers.

Look at verses 13-14 (read). Sounds a lot like we just read in Daniel 2!

Now Daniel 9:25. Time does not allow me to elaborate on this verse, but notice it refers to “Jerusalem”—and “Messiah the Prince.”

A little hard to piece together, but if they were students of history—and the Scriptures—they would have known it was... C. A possible time for Christ to come

Why was it possible for Christ to come **now**? Because the kingdom of Babylon had come and gone, the Medes and Persians had come and gone, Greece had come and gone, and Rome had been in power for roughly 30 years. So the stage was set for God’s king to destroy Rome and set up His kingdom!

I believe the Scriptures—and then somehow the star—indicated to them that it was time seek the King of the Jews!

Lastly—and in the way of application—I want us to consider this last point:

#### **4. The role of Scripture in your journey of life**

The Scriptures—the Word of God—is what directed the wise men from Jerusalem to Bethlehem at the end of their journey—and I believe led them to start their journey in the 1<sup>st</sup> place. The scribes, on the other hand, had the Scriptures and **knew what was written**, but weren’t overly concerned about **following what was written**.

But what about **us**? What role does the Bible play in **your life**? How important is it to you to **know what** God says—and **do what** God says? Let’s consider a few things that God Himself tells us about His Word!

##### A. God’s Word leads us to Christ

The scribes **declared** that truth—and the wise men **demonstrated** that truth. Let’s not forget that Jesus Himself declared that truth: **John 5:39** “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” The NT was **not written** at the time Jesus spoke these words, so He was referring to the OT. But think about what Jesus is saying. ‘Search God’s Word, because in God’s Word you believe you will find the truth **regarding eternal life**. And you are right—and they will **point you to me!**’

Now **John 5:40** which I believe are some of the saddest words in the Bible “And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” Those two verses kind of sum up the attitude of the scribes, don’t they?

##### B. God’s Word keeps us from error

Jesus declared that truth, too! When posed a question by the Sadducees that they thought would stump Him, Jesus turned it back on them. **Mt 22:29** “Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.” Stated another way, Jesus was saying, “You are wrong because you don’t know what God says—or what God can do!” The implication was that they **should have known**; He expected them to know.

I wonder how many times Jesus **would say to us**—if He were standing in the flesh next to us—‘you’re **believing** wrong—or **behaving** wrong—because you don’t know **what I’ve said** and don’t know my power!’

##### C. God’s Word should guide our daily living

I’ve had a **rough couple of weeks**, especially this past week. **No need to elaborate**, but I will say this—God asked me to do some things that I did not want to do. How did He ask me? Through His Word, specifically this passage:

**I John 3:16-18** “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to **lay down our lives for the brethren**. <sup>17</sup> But whoso hath this world's good, **and seeth his brother have need**, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, **how dwelleth the love of God in him?** <sup>18</sup> My little children, let us **not love in word**, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”

Don't just love in **word**—don't just **say you love**—demonstrate your love **by doing!** And so I did! It was not always pleasant—and **my attitude** was certainly not what it **could have been** and **should have been** at times—but God helped me in a very tangible way for which I'm extremely thankful.

How important is God's Word to you? What role does it play in your life?

Has it brought you to Christ?

Is it your source of truth to keep you from error?

Is it your guidebook for daily living?

So what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. One of the many reasons God gave us His Word is to lead us to His Son. Have you come to Christ and received Him for yourself, as your personal Savior? May Jesus not someday say to you, “And you did not come to me, that you might have life!”

2. If you are saved, how important is God's Word to you? Is it where you go to for truth? Is it your guide for what you believe—and how you behave? It should be, right?!