

WHY THE WISE MEN SOUGHT JESUS

Take your Bibles and turn once again to Matthew 2; follow along as I read verses 1-11.

Our focus for the past couple of weeks has been on lessons we can learn from the wise men and their visit of the young Christ. As mentioned last week, there is a lot of **mystery**—and a lot of **myths**—regarding the wise men.

--The Bible doesn't tell us **how many**—but people insist that there were 3!

--The Bible doesn't tell us **how they traveled**—but people insist they rode on camels!

--And the Bible doesn't tell us exactly **when** they visited Jesus—but it does say they visited Him **at the house** when He was **a young child**—not at the manger on the night He was born!

So **when tradition**—what people believe and pass down—**collides** with God's Word, we need to stick with God's Word, **amen**? But to what degree do we **force** what the Bible says—or doesn't say—on others?

--Do we go to every home that has 3 wise men at the manger and ask them to remove them? No!

--Should we tear "We Three Kings of Orient Are" out of our hymnal? I don't believe that is necessary!

--Should we stop celebrating Christmas **in December** because Jesus was probably born **in the spring**—the most likely time that shepherds would have been watching over their flocks at night near Bethlehem.

--You can if you want, I suppose, but good luck finding Christmas cards in March or April!

Back to our text. This morning, I want to move away from discussing some of the **unknowns** to one truth that we **cannot miss**. What is that? That **the wise men sought Jesus so they could worship Him**! Is it possible that God is silent about some of the finer details because He wants us to focus on **what they did**—not on **who** they were...and **how many** there were...and **how long** it took them to get there? I believe it is and that is what we are going to look at this morning.

1. Declaration to worship made by the wise men

How do we know that the wise men wanted to find Jesus so they could worship Him? Because that is what **they said**! It was the **declaration** that **they themselves** made!

Vs 2 "...Where is He that if born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are **come to worship** Him." No mystery as to why they came, is there? They came to **worship** Him!

It wasn't **just their intent**, though—it was something they **actually did**! We'll spend more time on this in a little bit, but for now jump ahead to **vs 11** "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and **worshipped Him**..."

2. Determination to worship seen in the wise men

How determined were the wise men to worship Christ?

First, their determination is... **A. Seen in the sacrifices they made**

Although we don't know exactly **where** they came from—or **how long** it took—we do know the trip was **not easy**. There were no Super 8's—or Motel 6's! Instead, there was a lot of "roughing it."

Even if they **had servants** who set up camp...and cooked and served them food...and tore down camp...and packed everything back up again, there still was **no easy way** to cross the desert!

There were no cars...or trains...or planes... so whether you traveled **on animals**—or **by foot**—it was still **hard**. Sand isn't the easiest thing to **walk in**—and sand can certainly blow! Depending on the time of the year, they certainly could have **encountered sandstorms**. I spent a few months in Saudi Arabi for Operation Desert Storm and the sandstorms were intense. If you went outside, you wore big goggles to protect **your eyes**—and a big scarf to protect you from getting sand in **your mouth**!

On top of those hardships, there was the danger of traveling in areas where **bands of robbers** roamed. None of that mattered, though. They were willing to put up with heat, hardship, and possibly bodily harm because they wanted to **find** Christ—and worship Him!

Second, their determination to find and worship Christ is...

B. Seen in seeking help from others

Middle of verse 1 "...behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" They were **asking for help** in finding Jesus from people who they thought would know!

See, ladies, not **all men** are too proud to ask for directions 😊! I mentioned previously that their asking was **not a once or twice** kind of thing—they were **continually asking** because they wanted the answer! I believe their mindset was that they did not come all this way **to fail to do** what they set out to do! So... they kept asking until they found the answer they were looking for!

They were not too proud to **seek help**—and they were not too proud to **take the help** when it was given!

Their determination was also... C. Seen in their submission to the Scriptures

Ever listen to "Unshackled" on WVCX out of Tomah? Many of the stories are about people who find themselves in incredibly **desperate and difficult situations**, so much so that they will try **just about anything!**

But the **last resort**, it seems, is **turning to the Bible** to find God! Isn't that a strange way to think? But it's not just the "Unshackled" people who operate that way!

--**Many people** will look at the **instruction manual** when putting something together,

--Or an **operating manual** to get something to work right,

--And will listen to "experts" regarding whatever thing it is they might be researching, but think **it is foolish** to look at what **God says** about Himself—and how to get into **His heaven!**

I'll say it again—what a strange way to think!

These men weren't like that, though. In fact, it probably wasn't **their determination** that drove them to the Scriptures as much as it was just **plain wisdom!** "**The fear of the Lord** is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 9:10)

What about you? Where do you turn to **find God** and the truth **about God**? I didn't ask, "where **should** you turn to"? I asked, "where **do you turn**?" Do you turn to books...or DVD's...or documentaries...or radio programs...or television shows...or YouTube videos? Or do you turn to what **God Himself says**? Shouldn't be a hard choice—but for too many people it is!

We've seen the **declaration** that the wise men wanted to worship Christ, then the **determination** they put forth to do that very thing. Next let's consider...

3. Demonstration of worship performed by the wise men

The wise men didn't just **say** they wanted to worship Christ—**they did it!** Notice again **vs 11** "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and **fell down**, and **worshipped Him**: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh." I want to park on this one for a while.

A. What does it mean to worship?

"Worship" is one of those words that we **know what it means**—or at least **we think we know** what it means—but is hard to describe or explain.

--It comes from the old English word "worth-ship" which means to "ascribe/give worth to; value."

--In the OT, the word carries the idea "to bow down, to do homage."

The word "worship" here in vs 11—and in vs 2 and 8—comes from the Greek word "*pros-koo-neh'-o*."

It means "to kiss the ground when prostrating before a superior, to worship, to fall down/prostrate oneself; to adore on one's knees."

--We have that picture here, don't we? Vs 11 "...they fell down" **doesn't mean they tripped**; it means they **willingly bowed down**. But **after they bowed** down, they worshipped. So even though worship may **include bowing down**, there is obviously more to it than that. I think you'd agree that

worship encompasses **both attitudes and actions**. It is not just one or the other—it is both! In fact, Jesus "called out" those whose worship was only "lip service."

Mt 15:8-9 “This people draweth nigh unto me **with their mouth**, and honoureth me **with their lips**; but their **heart is far** from me.⁹ But in **vain they do worship me...**”

Their worship was vain...it was empty...it was meaningless—because their heart was not in it!

That certainly wasn't true of the wise men, though. In fact, we see the opposite of that.

Let's consider first the... **i. Attitude of worship**

So what was the attitude—or attitudes—that the wise men displayed?

(a) Humility. Think about it—they bowed **before a child!** This was not **forced** worship like in the book of Daniel—“bow down to the image or you will be thrown into the fiery furnace.” This was **voluntary**—and they traveled a great distance to bow before Christ because they **wanted to!**

(b) Reverence. Humility and reverence go hand-in-hand. Whereas humility is the attitude you have toward **yourself**, reverence is the attitude you have **toward the being, object, or person** you are worshipping.

It is the recognition that the one you are worshipping is **superior** to you—they are **greater** than you—and your proper place is to show them honor and respect.

ii. Actions of worship

Although the **attitudes** of the wise men aren't stated, their **actions** certainly were! What did **they do?**

--They “fell down”—meaning bowed down, either on their knees or face down on the ground

--They worshipped—meaning they showed appreciation and adoration toward Him

--“And when they had opened **their treasures**, they **presented unto Him gifts**; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”

Those of you that are parents, think with me for a moment of buying gifts for your children when they were **really young**—like less than a year old. I won't ask for a show of hands, but I'm sure my wife and I weren't the only ones who **spent less** on our little ones than we did on the older children. Why?

Because they **didn't know the difference!** In fact, half the time they enjoyed the **box and paper** as much—or more—than what was **inside the box!**

We don't see that here, do we? They opened **their treasures**—and **presented gifts that were valuable!** It didn't matter to them whether the young Christ **understood the value** of the gifts because they knew the **value**—and so did God! They presented to Him the **best gifts**—the most valuable gifts—because He was worthy and deserved the best!

You know what else we don't see here? We don't see **music**—and we don't see a focus on the **feelings** of the wise men! Why do I bring that up? Because there are hundreds—if not thousands—of churches that are meeting **right now** that promote the idea that worship is about what makes **people feel good**—instead of what **gives God glory!** **Worship is about God**—not us!

Worship is about **bringing God glory**—not bringing us “gushy” feelings.

And worship is about what we can **give to God**—not what we can **get for ourselves!**

And yet many “Christians”—far too many—want **“feel good” music** more than they want **Biblical preaching!** I hope you come to church because you want to **hear from** God and **worship** God—not to get a certain feeling!

B. Who is being worshipped?

No, this is not a trick question. **Who** is being worshipped? The answer is obvious yet think about how many people **get it wrong.**

--Vs 11 “And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child **with Mary** His mother, and fell down, and **worshipped her...**” Is that what it says? No; they worshipped **Him!**

--It **doesn't say worshipped her**—and it doesn't say **worshipped them both.** It says, “worshipped Him!”

--Notice as we keep reading: “they presented unto **Him** gifts”—**not her or them—Him!**

If there was ever a place in the Bible where God **could have** instructed us of the need to **worship Mary**, this would have been the perfect spot! But He didn't, did He? Why? **Because it is wrong!** And since God did not instruct us to worship Mary—and the shepherds didn't worship Mary—then we shouldn't worship her either!

One more thing I want to consider about the worship of the wise men, and it is this:

C. Why worship a baby?

I think we need to be careful not to read too much into the “**why?**” Why? Because **we aren’t told why!**

What we **do know** is that they came to worship the **King of the Jews!** It **doesn’t say** that they were there to **worship Emmanuel**—God with us—and it doesn’t say they referred **to Him as Jesus**—the One who would save people from their sins! To them He was the **King of the Jews.**

But...if they knew from the book of Daniel that He was the King of the Jews, they would have also known that **God had made Him king—not the Jews!**

Daniel 7:13-14 “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one **like the Son of man** came with the clouds of heaven, and **came to the Ancient of days**, and they brought Him near before Him. ¹⁴ And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

There’s a lot packed in these 2 verses, but the main point is this:

The Ancient of days (God the Father) gives to the Son of man (Jesus; God the Son) an everlasting kingdom! So, at a minimum, their **worship of the king that God chose** demonstrates the reverence they had for God!

Although we may not know exactly **why the wise men** worshipped the young Christ, there is no confusion as to why **we should** worship Him! And that is what I want to close with.

4. The desire of God for us to worship Christ

So why does God want us to worship Christ? Where do you start, right? Only have time to look at two:

A. Because He is God

We see that in the middle of vs 23 of Mt 1 “...and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

--In John 1:1, we see that the **Word was God**—and in vs 14, we read that “the Word was made flesh”

--In John 8:58, Jesus tells the Jews that He is the great “I Am,” the one who appeared to Moses in the burning bush --In John 10:30, Jesus says “I and my Father are one.”

--And in John 20—when the resurrected Jesus shows Himself to Thomas because Thomas wasn’t with the disciples the week before—Jesus **does not correct Thomas** for saying to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

We don’t **just** worship Christ because of **who** He is, though—we should also worship Him for what **He did!** **What** did Jesus do? Did He just come to earth to **show us what God was like?**

Did Jesus just come to earth to **show us how to live** a life that pleases God?

No! The focal point of **what Jesus did** was not His **birth** or His **life**—it was **His death and resurrection!**

Notice Mt 1:21 “...and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall **save His people** from their sins.”

How did Jesus save us from our sins? By being a **baby in a manger?**

No; by being the **Lamb of God** that taketh away the sins of the world! But to **take away sins**—and to **save people from their sins**—He couldn’t just be the Lamb of God—He had **to be slain**; He **had to die!**

And so the Bible tells us we should worship Jesus... B. Because He was slain—for us!

Turn to Revelation 5.

--vs 6 “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a **Lamb as it had been slain,**”

--vs 8 “And when he had taken the book, the four beasts & four & twenty elders **fell down** before the Lamb,”

--vs 9 “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou **wast slain**, and hast **redeemed us to God by thy blood...**”

--In vs 11 we see a multitude “Saying with a loud voice” (vs 12) “**Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!**”

--And in vs 13, we see “...every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth...” giving “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power” unto Him that is seated on the throne—and unto the Lamb.

How long? “for ever and ever.”

God desires that we worship Christ because **He is God**—and because He **was slain for us**. **Rev 1:5b** “Unto Him that loved us, and **washed us from our sins in His own blood,**”

Jesus came to save people from their sins. He was slain to wash us from our sins with His own blood.

Has He **saved you**? He wants to—but you need to come to Him!

--You need to realize you are a sinner and because of your sin you are **disqualified** from heaven.

--And you need to realize that you **cannot get rid** of your sin or **save yourself**.

But that is not enough. You need to **come to Christ** in simple faith and **ask Him to save you**. And He will!

Romans 10:13 “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.”

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

1. First, if you are **not saved**, you need to come to Jesus in repentance and faith and receive Him. He came to save people from their sins—and He died on the cross to do that. But He **cannot** and **will not** save those who do not receive Him. John 1:12 “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power [authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

2. But for those of us who are saved, I have a question: “Is Jesus your King? Do you love Him...and obey Him...and serve Him...and worship Him?”

He was slain for us—we need to give ourselves to Him!