

## What Wise Men Do

Matt. 2:1-11

### Introduction:

1. Today is Dec. 25, 2016. How many of you have the birth of Jesus on your mind?!
2. Probably be fruitless for me to try to talk with you about anything else.
3. People all around the world have the birth of Jesus on their minds too.
  - a. Some are greatly celebrating in a variety of ways.
  - b. Some, on the opposite end of the spectrum, object to celebrating and do so for various reasons.
    - 1) Some of them worship other god's and do not believe in the God of the Bible.
    - 2) Some say that there is no god. Together these may oppose so-called "Christmas" plays in public schools or "nativity scenes" in public places.
    - 3) Others believe in the God of the Bible, but see the celebration of Jesus' birth on this day as marred by pagan worldly traditions and the travesty of human greed.
    - 4) You may be acquainted with some who say it is totally unauthorized in Scripture, but still celebrate it as what they call a "secular holiday."
4. No matter what you think or practice it is my observation that pretty much everyone has heard about the coming of Jesus. You may not believe in Him. You may not even believe in God, but you have heard of God sending Jesus into the world. If you haven't my question is, "What planet are you from?"
5. I am not going to answer all your questions today. I may even raise some that you haven't thought about, but what I would like to do is to read a passage from Matt. 2 and make some observations about what some wise men did and you can make a judgment about whether you would do what they did.
6. Reading of Matt. 2:1-11.

### Discussion:

- I. They searched for the King of the Jews (1-2).
  - A. The NASB transliterates the Greek word "magoi" with the word "magi."
    1. Some English translations indicate that these were "wise men."
    2. The NASB margin says they were "a cast of wise men specializing in astronomy, astrology, and natural science."
    3. We might say they were observers and interpreters of the natural world.
    4. We read about such men in the Book of Daniel. They were associated with the Babylonian culture and seem to have embraced Daniel into their cast, although Daniel was especially different than they because he received information from the God of Israel. (Have they been influenced by Daniel?)
    5. In this case they too seem to have received information from God.
  - B. They came into Jerusalem and asked, "Where is He is who born King of the Jews?"
    1. They said they had seen His star in the east. This star went before them and stood over the place where the child Jesus was.
    2. They said they had come to worship Him.

- C. They were not Jewish and evidently did not know where to find Him.
  - 1. They went to the capital city.
  - 2. They asked Herod the king.
  - 3. He asked “the chief priests and the scribes of the people where the Messiah was to be born.”
    - a. They are seeking the King of the Jews.
    - b. Herod asks where the Messiah was to be born.
    - c. There is obviously an association between the King of the Jews and the Messiah. The OT prophets had predicted the coming of one whom God would anoint (significance of messiah) to be King of the Jews.

II. These wise men recognize prophetic information as the source of authoritative information about the King (4-6).

- A. In this case, the chief priests and the scribes, and Herod, and the wise men all regarding Micah 5:2 as the final word on the place where the Messianic King would be born.
- B. I know that some do not believe in prophecy. They do not believe in the existence of God, let alone that He can predict future events. But that is what these men believed.
- C. Every person has to make a determination about such things for themselves.

III. They rejoiced exceedingly with great joy (7-10).

- A. Apparently this star moved with these wise men and stood over the place where the child was.
- B. This is what caused them to rejoice. (Note that they are not in the stable, but in a house.)
- C. Others had a similar response.
  - 1. Lk. 2:20 tells about some shepherds who came to Bethlehem and found the baby laying in a manger (feed trough).
    - a. They were excited enough to tell others about the child and they “wondered at the things they were told by the shepherds” (2:18-20).
    - b. The shepherds glorified and praised God.
  - 2. Lk. 2:13-14 describes how “a multitude of the heavenly host praised God saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.’”
- D. Now these stand in stark contrast with those who were “Christophobic terrorists” (Matt. 2:16).
  - 1. Herod was troubled when he heard about the birth of a King (3).
  - 2. He attempted to deceive the wise men saying he too wanted to worship the King. When they left without reporting to him he was enraged (16).
  - 3. He sought to destroy the new King (2:13ff) and slaughtered all the males two years old and under in Bethlehem (2:16).
  - 4. But the child escaped by fleeing to Egypt.
- E. I do not know whether you celebrate over His birth or not. Maybe you are more like Herod. But each has his own response. Are you more like the wise men, and the shepherds and the heavenly host or like Herod?

IV. These wise men fell at His feet and worshiped Him (11a).

- A. This is really an odd response.
  - 1. Children had no status in most of ancient society.
  - 2. A newborn could be cast out to die if the head of a Roman household chose that course.
  - 3. Perhaps in a good Jewish household there was more respect for their lives than this, but children were not worshiped.
- B. These wise men put their faces down in a prone position like they would someone with great power or authority, like they would before someone who had the power of life and death over them. They voluntarily humiliated themselves before Him.
  - 1. Men will fight rather than be disrespected.
  - 2. Some have fought to the death after having been “dised” by another.
  - 3. You could understand them bowing down before the Emperor of Rome or even before Herod, but before a child?

V. These wise men proceeded to present gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (11b).

- A. We know the prized nature of gold both in the ancient and the modern world. Frankincense and myrrh we are not so familiar with. In the ancient world these were highly prized. May have been worth more than their weight in gold.
- B. History indicates that for some 5,000 years they were traded in the ancient world.
  - 1. Frankincense was used as incense, perfume and in the treatment of a variety of medical ailments. Cf. French perfume.
  - 2. Myrrh was used as anointing oil.
  - 3. On the silk and incense roads of the ancient world frankincense and myrrh would have been among the special commodities.
  - 4. Isa. 60:6 in a Messianic passage there is a reference to frankincense coming into Israel from foreign sources along with other valuables like gold and

silver

and camels and flocks, and the wealth of the nations.

- C. These wise men brought their treasures and presented them to this child.
- D. You may think they are touched in the head, but this was their way to honor “the King of the Jews.”

Conclusion:

- 1. If I understand who these wise men were they were the scientists of their day. They were the observers of natural things. Are you like them?
- 2. Are you searching for the King?
- 3. Do you recognize prophetic information as authoritative?
- 4. Are you rejoicing with great joy like the wise men, the shepherds and the heavenly host? Or are you more like Herod the “Christophobic terrorist” who was enraged and killed the children 2 years old and less?
- 5. Do you worship Him?

6. Do you present to Him your treasures? Your money, your life, your family???
7. It is your choice. What if He is the King and He has presented Himself in such a powerful way that the entire world may know Him and receive forgiveness through His sacrifice?