*LESSONS WE LEARN FROM WISE MEN  
Matthew 2:1-16

Surely one of the great mysteries is the visit of the Magi or Wise Men. These strange men from some faraway land who brought three fascinating gifts to the new born King are surrounded with mystery and intrigue. We find the account of these mysterious men in...

*Matthew 2:1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." 3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. NIV

Let’s Pray. Father, help us to receive the truth with open hearts.

Two of the mysteries surrendering these men are who they were and where they came from.

The exact identity of the Magi is impossible to determine. The Holy Spirt did not lead Matthew to include that specific information. But we are given enough to come up with several plausible ideas. I believe studying their possible identity helps us to see the significance of their pilgrimage.

They were probably Gentiles who held high positions in a country outside Israel. The title magi was a foreign term not used in Israel. One possibility would be Parthia. Parthia was a large empire located in the area of what is now Iran and Iraq. There was a heavily traveled trade route that ran from that area through Israel to Egypt.

The title magi also indicates that they were scientists who studied the stars.

There are some great lessens we can learn from these wise men and the events that surround their pilgrimage.

TS The first lesson we learn from these wise men is...

*1. A HEART THAT IS OPEN TO GOD CHANGES EVERYTHING.

*Listen to Hebrews 11:6  ...without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.  NIV

These men came to Israel seeking the Messiah because their hearts were open to God. He had made Himself known to them and somehow He had revealed to them that the Messiah had been born. They came following a star or some bright light that looked like a star in the sky.
These men were given a revelation by God about the birth of the Messiah. It might have been in a dream. That is the way God revealed Himself to Abraham when he lived among a pagan people in that same part of the world.

I have heard credible reports of people in our time having dreams where God revealed himself to them and they were led to seek out a believer to finish the full revelation of God. This happened in parts of the world where the Gospel is not allowed to be proclaimed openly.

Another interesting fact that we should keep in mind as we think about how these men came to look for the King of the Jews is that one of the great prophets of the Old Testament lived in the area of Iran and Iraq. The prophet Daniel received and recorded all of the prophecies and revelations that God gave him, while living in that part of the world.

He was also a very high ranking magistrate and advisor or wise man in the Babylonian and Persian Empire. I am sure that Daniel had a far reaching influence in that part of the world.

The point is God wants to reveal Himself to every person on the planet and He will use whatever means necessary. If a person is open to God, He will make himself known to them somehow. God may use a believer like Daniel or a believer like you or me. He may use dreams or a combination of those things.

TS The next lesson we learn from these wise men is...

*2. THE REVELATION OF GOD IS ALWAYS COMPLETED AND CONFIRMED BY SCRIPTURE.

*Look at Matthew 2:4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ (Messiah) was to be born. *5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: 6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."" NIV

It is fascinating that the Magi knew that the Messiah had been born but they didn’t know exactly where and they didn’t know His name. So they went to Jerusalem—the capital city—and asked King Herod for directions instead of going directly to Bethlehem.

(Someone has suggested that this is why the wise men are so famous. They’re the only men in history known to stop and ask for directions! 😊).

It makes sense that they would look in Jerusalem because that is where you would expect to find “the King of the Jews.”

They may have thought that the newborn king was the son of Herod the Great. They probably assumed that everyone knew about the baby and were very surprised that the people in the capital city were totally unaware of the birth of the Messiah.
The details of where they could find the Messiah were given to them from Scripture. God could have taken them directly to Bethlehem but He wanted them to go through Jerusalem and He wanted them to go through the Scriptures.

God always confirms subjective revelation through the objective revelation of the Scripture.

You and I should never believe a revelation that someone says they got from God unless it is confirmed by Scripture.

For example, the revelation that Joseph Smith said he received from God contradicted Scripture therefore, it is false. This is the way we test everything that anyone says about God. Both Mormonism and Islam are built on false teachings about God because it contradicts the Bible.

Now believers are not to act arrogant with this truth but we should show respect and kindness toward Muslims and Mormons. We should also love them enough to point them to Jesus. We should love them so much that they would hear us, not fear us.

Another reason I believe God wanted the Magi to go to Jerusalem was to announce to the king and all the priests and teachers of the law that the Messiah had been born.

One of the saddest facts revealed to us in this passage is that none of the chief priests and teachers of the law made the six mile trip from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to see the Messiah.

Only the Gentile Magi who were true seekers made that trip. They are like many in our world who are open to God and are seeking to know the truth. They only need someone to point them to the Bible and to Jesus.

TS The next lesson we learn from these wise men is...

3. FAITH CHANGES THE WAY WE SEE THE WORLD.

Matthew 2:7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. *As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." 9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

This star has baffled Bible scholars and astronomers for 2,000 years. Without question, this bright light in the sky was the supernatural work of God. No normal star could have done what this star did.

The Magi saw a bright light in the sky and understood its meaning by faith. God always speaks loud enough for a willing ear to hear. The Wise Men comprehended a small bit of revelation and responded with action. They may have traveled as much as a 1000 miles.
on camels in response to God’s revelation. We can understand why they were so ecstatic with joy when their long, hard journey was finally successful.

The religious scholars in Jerusalem had great knowledge from the Scriptures but did not act on any of it. Faith changes the way we see things and it changes the way we act. The Magi were willing to take action. They went on a long journey that forever changed their lives. They didn’t just sit there staring into the heavens.

Are you a seeker or a sitter? To experience God’s salvation and blessing we must take action.

TS Here is one final lesson we learn from these wise men …

*4. WORSHIP MEANS GIVING YOURSELF AND YOUR BEST TO GOD.

*Look at Matthew 2:11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. NIV

You have to wonder why the Magi weren’t turned off when they finally found Jesus. After all, He did not look like a king. Why were they still convinced that He was the King of the Jews in spite of his humble surroundings?

The family was no longer in the stable where Christ had been born. He was not in a palace but the simple home of a carpenter. There was no scepter, no royal clothing, or surroundings.

But the Magi saw the child through the eyes of faith for what he was, the King, the Messiah. In deep faith, they worshipped him. They were not ashamed to fall on their faces before Him because God had revealed to them that He was the Messiah.

Think of the dramatic contrast. Although the Magi met King Herod in his palace surrounded by opulence; they made no effort to worship him. But when they finally found the young King Jesus, these prominent educated men fell on their faces before Him. To this child, they gave the honor due a king. What Herod craved, Jesus received.

They presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The gifts they brought represented a worthy tribute for a king and there’s more to them than meets the eye.

Gold represented the wealth and power of a king. Jesus was and is the King of kings and He will reign for all eternity.

Frankincense was used in the temple for worship. It represents the infant’s deity. He was truly God in a human body.

Myrrh was used to anoint a body and prepare it for burial. John 19:39 tells us that after Jesus died, Nicodemus used about seventy-five pounds of myrrh and other spices to prepare his body for burial. The gift of myrrh is a foreshadowing of his suffering and
death for our sins.

The Challenge:

WE CAN SEE THREE DIFFERENT RESPONSES.

*1 -- King Herod was hostile to the whole idea of the Messiah and tried to kill him.

Matthew 2:16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. NIV

2 -- The Religious Leaders knew exactly where Jesus was to be born, but they were apathetic and didn’t even make the 6-mile journey to Bethlehem.

3 -- The Wise Men were eager to seek the Messiah and did whatever it took to find Him. They received the blessing of meeting the Messiah and received the gift of eternal life.

What’s your response the Christ of Christmas? God’s gift of love. Are you hostile to this whole thing? Are you just apathetic. Are you an eager seeker?

No matter where you’re at this moment, God loves you more than you can ever know. You see, Christmas is really a celebration of an invasion. It’s when God came to earth to identify with us and to die for our sin on the cross. Jesus is our Christmas gift from God.

Will you receive Him, worship Him, and share Him?

Let’s Pray. Father, help us to respond with faith, worship and obedience to the revelation of your Son.