

Lesson 4 - WISE MEN SEEK CHRIST Matthew 2:1-12

(Matt. 2:1) - Matthew states that “*Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea*” as prophesied in the Old Testament as the birthplace of the Messiah (ex. Micah 5:2) and to distinguish it from another Bethlehem of the tribe of Zebulun (Josh. 19:15-16). It is certainly fitting that Christ Who is the Bread of life, the “*living Bread which came down from heaven*” (John 6:51), would be born in Bethlehem which means “house of bread.” A secondary meaning of Bethlehem is “house of flesh,” reminding us of the incarnation of Christ. He Who is by nature God was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16). This was necessary for Him to die as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s elect, His sheep and the church. Christ was born “*in the days of Herod the king*” - This shows how the throne of Judah had deteriorated. Herod (called “the great”) was not of the house of Judah and not even a Jew. He was an Edomite (descended from Esau). He ruled in Judea as a puppet of the Roman empire being appointed king of the Jews in 40 B.C. by Caesar Augustus. All of this indicates the fallen and sinful condition of the people (as well as all of us by nature) when Christ came into the world. He came into a sinful world to save sinners.

“*Behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem*” - These “*wise men*” were not kings, and there is nothing to indicate there were three of them. Some claim there were three because of the three gifts mentioned in *Matthew 2:11*. Also, this does not say that they visited Jesus at the stable on the night of his birth. In fact, they probably came about two years later. How did these wise men hear about Jesus? We can logically trace this back to the time when Judah was captive in Babylon and when the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel prophesied to the people of Judah concerning Christ in the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work (ex. Dan. 9:24-27). Daniel spoke of the wise men (Dan. 2:12-18, 27; 4:18; 5:7) and was given authority over them (Dan. 2:48; 4:9). Undoubtedly, Daniel, who was also labeled one of the wise men spoke to them of the things pertaining to the Lord, salvation, the Gospel, and the promise of the Messiah to come. This knowledge was handed down, and hundreds of years later these wise men sought Christ to worship Him as their Savior and Lord.

(Matt. 2:2) - God providentially sent a star to guide them to Christ. Stars are often used in the Bible to typify God’s preachers who point and guide men to Christ (Rev. 1:19-20). In preaching the Gospel, they speak of Christ Who is the very Wisdom of God and the Wisdom of His people (Prov. 8; 1 Cor. 1:30). They tell people that all who are wise, by revelation from God, seek the Lord Jesus Christ for all of salvation. They who do have been made wise unto salvation by the Word of God, the Gospel, in the power of the Holy Spirit. They have been made wise to their own sinfulness and depravity, wise to the holiness and justice of God. They have been made wise to salvation by God’s free and sovereign grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. They have been made wise to the reality of righteousness which can only be found in the perfection of Christ and that which God has imputed to His people (Rom. 10:1-4). And when they are made wise unto salvation, they believe in and cling to Christ, and they worship Him.

(Matt. 2:3) - Herod was troubled when the wise men told him they were seeking the king of the Jews, a title which he himself had been given by Caesar. Obviously, the king let his trouble known publicly as all Jerusalem became troubled with him.

(Matt. 2:4-6) - Herod gathered the religious elite and asked them “*where Christ should be born.*” They knew enough of the Scripture to tell him that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea, and they quoted Micah 5:2 where it was prophesied. They did not hide any of the prophecy and told Herod that this Messiah would be ruler in Israel. So, Herod

immediately felt threatened by the presence of the wise men from the East. Also, notice how these priests knew the content of the Scriptures, but they did not know Christ (John 5:39-45). This was (and is) so common in every generation. The Bible continues to be a number-one best seller, and people read, study, and memorize it, but they miss Christ and the main message of the Word of God. This shows us that for any to be made wise unto salvation, the truth within the pages of the Bible must be revealed by God to them (Matt. 11:25-30; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17; 1 Cor. 2). We must be born again, else we cannot see (understand and know) the kingdom and word of God (John 3:3-7,19-21). When God reveals Christ to us, He makes us wise enough to seek and find Him.

(Matt. 2:7-8) - Herod had no intention of worshipping Christ. His motive was selfish. He saw this young child as his rival and wanted to kill him. Even in His youth, Christ was hated by His enemies. Herod, like all enemies of Christ, was inspired by Satan who has sought to impede the saving work of Christ but to no avail. Christ said that He would build His church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18; cf. John 6:37-45).

(Matt. 2:9-10) - After hearing Herod, the wise men departed, and the star appeared again to guide them to Christ. Herod did not dissuade these men from seeking their Savior. When God sets His sovereign love and grace upon His chosen people, He will bring them to Christ for all salvation, righteousness, and life. No demon from hell, no king in the earth can stop this because God is not willing that any of His people perish but that they all would come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Like all sinners whom God has determined to save, when they are led to and find Christ in the glory of His Person and the power of His finished, redemptive work, they rejoice *“with exceeding great joy.”* They rejoice in the Lord and glory in Him as the Lord our Righteousness (Gal. 6:14; Php. 3:3).

(Matt. 2:11) - Notice that the wise men came *“into the house,”* not to a stable or a manger. *“They saw the young child,”* not an infant. Some say that Christ could have been as much as two years old at this time. Notice also, when they saw *“the young child with Mary His mother,”* they *“fell down, and worshipped HIM,”* not Mary. Wise men seek, find, believe, rest in, and worship Christ, the Lord of Glory. They do not worship Mary or saints. Christ is the only one who deserves to be worshipped, and to worship anyone else is utter idolatry! Mary was blessed among women, but she was a sinner saved by grace who also worshipped Christ (Luke 1:46-47). She was not then, and is not now, the object of worship or one to whom we pray. There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). The gifts presented by the wise men to the Savior evidenced their faith in and love for Him. There is nothing specifically written that gives meaning to the three gifts - *“gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”* But we do know that gold in the Bible symbolizes the deity of Christ. Frankincense is a white resin burned as incense in worship for a sweet-smelling savor. This could symbolize the sacrifice of Christ by which all of God’s elect and their works are accepted with God. Myrrh was a spice used in embalming and could symbolize the preserving power of Christ Who saves us to the uttermost unto glory.

(Matt. 2:12) - The Lord God sent the wise men a dream warning them not to return to Herod who would have probably killed them. The Lord guided them home by another way. The Lord God guides His people in Christ today by His revealed Word. And by this Word, He will lead us safely to Christ and safely home to be in glory with Christ.