

Park Road Baptist Church – Sunday 3rd January 2021

The Wise Men visit Jesus Matthew 2 v 1-12

This morning we are thinking about the visit of the Magi (or Wise Men) to the infant Jesus and his parents at their home in Bethlehem (which we read about earlier in Matthew 2 v 1-12). Our thoughts are going to focus on three aspects of this bible passage:

1. The wise men searching for Jesus
2. The wise men worshipping Jesus
3. The wise men being changed by Jesus

Searching for Jesus

The wise men were not the kind of people you would normally have expected to be looking for a new-born baby. They appear to have been well-to-do and respected people who were allowed easy access to Herod's palace without too many questions being asked. They must have felt very much at home inside that royal palace but I think they would have felt quite out of place when they were told to scour the back streets of Bethlehem to look for the new-born king.

The wise men were also unlikely seekers for the Messiah because they were not members of God's chosen people the Jews – instead they were Gentiles just like most of us.

Thirdly the wise men were from a dubious back-ground as far as the Jewish authorities were concerned because they were involved in the study of the stars – a practice which was strictly forbidden by Old Testament teaching.

Initially the wise men began their search in Jerusalem expecting to find a new born king in the royal palace. Their arrival caused a lot of disturbance and alarm particularly for King Herod who was immediately concerned about the possibility of a rival to his throne.

Despite all the things working against them, the wise men were helped by God who intervened and helped them in their searching. God initially spoke to the wise men through the star but now he speaks to them again through the words of the prophet Micah chapter 5 verse 2 (which is quoted in verse 6 of our reading from Matthew) – “But you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel”.

Once they had received this new information from God's word, the wise men continue their journey and eventually arrive at Bethlehem where they find Jesus and his mother Mary (there's no mention of Joseph!).

How much are we like the wise men in our search for Jesus?

The wise men were led to Jesus with God's help.

God has given us His word the bible and the gift of His Holy Spirit to lead people (like you and me) to Jesus. God is still leading people to Jesus in 2021 just as he did over 2000 years ago.

The wise men were overjoyed when they finally found Jesus. In the same way, people today can experience a similar joy when they discover His saving love.

Worshipping Jesus

Once the wise men had found Jesus their response was immediate – they bowed down and worshipped him. We can almost sense their wonder and amazement – this child is very special.

After over 1,000 miles of travel and months of searching, they had eventually found their king. The wise men put all their inhibitions to one side and bowed down in awe and reverence and worshipped the Christ-child. They gave the infant Jesus the worship and adoration which was His by right.

The wise men became some of the first people to worship Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Today we continue to follow their example as we offer Him our praise and worship today.

The wise men opened their gifts and presented them to Jesus:

- Gold – an offering for a king at his coronation
- Frankincense – a perfume used by the Jews in the purification of the temple
- Myrrh – an aromatic resin used to anoint a body prior to burial

These were strange gifts for a baby but how appropriate they were for the child we now recognise as the Lord Jesus – God's one and only son.

The wise men gave the infant Jesus their adoration and worship but (unlike us) they did not know or understand God's rescue plan of salvation for us. We do know the full extent of God's love and so we have much more reason to offer God our worship, thanksgiving and praise.

Changed by Jesus

After the wise men had offered their worship and given their gifts, they thought about returning to Jerusalem but God intervened and spoke to them through a dream and warned them not to go back to Herod.

In their initial search for Jesus the wise men had changed direction once before – they were diverted from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Now, for the second time, God changes their direction in a different way. They are to change direction because they have met with Jesus.

It's as if God is saying to them: Don't go back to Herod – Don't go back to your previous way of life – Return to your country by another route – Change the direction of your life.

God is still doing the same today – People are still being changed by God because they have met with Jesus and given Him his rightful place in their life.

Worshipping Jesus completely changed the lives of the wise men – what about you and me?

Like the wise men of old are we searching for Jesus? Are we worshipping Jesus? Are we being changed by Jesus?

As we begin a New Year, God is looking for people and churches who are like the wise men. That is: People who have found Jesus; People who have given Jesus his rightful place in their hearts and lives; People who are being changed by the work of God's Holy Spirit.

Are you – am I – one of these people?

Prayer

Dear Lord, as the star led the wise men to Jesus, so may our lives lead people to you.

As their gifts brought joy to the holy family, may our worship bring joy to you.

As the wise men were welcomed into your presence, so may we welcome all who come seeking for you.

And so may your blessing fill our church fellowship through this coming year, as it filled Bethlehem many years ago.

We ask these things in Jesus name. AMEN