

# The Wise Men

Valleys Family Church Sermon  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 20020

## Intro-

- I wonder how many of you have enjoyed the Where's Wally books?
- I also wonder if you've ever been looking for something and couldn't find it, but then asked for someone else's help (perhaps your wife!) and there it has been all along right under your nose, and yet you could not see it?
- This can be infuriating at the best of times, but all the more so when it is something very important you are looking for.
- When Jesus was born it was perhaps the greatest event in history, and yet for many people it went unnoticed, even though they were in the vicinity.
- However some wise men were not living in the vicinity- they were living many miles away to the East of Israel, and yet they managed to find the child Jesus!
- Who were they, and how did they find Jesus when others failed to, and how did they even know to start looking in the first place?

## Read Matt 2:1-12

### 1. They sought Jesus

- **v2 'Where is He who is born king of the Jews?'**
- So these wise men sought Jesus, but who were they?
- Traditionally on Christmas cards they are depicted as kings (also in the carol 'we three kings' they are described as being kings). However, we are not told in the Bible that they were kings.
- A child was talking all of the time whilst he and his uncle were both watching a nativity play. One of the 3 wise men was about to come in. So his uncle said "Quiet-you're going to miss the king coming in". So the boy tried his best and stayed extremely quiet, until the wise man came in. Then the boy immediately broke the silence again and exclaimed in a horrified voice "That's not Elvis!".
- Perhaps the tradition that the wise men were kings has come from the huge expense of the gifts they brought.
- However, the text says that, rather than being kings, they were actually 'Magi' from the East. The Persian (Iranian) religion of Zoroastrianism had priests called Magis. It is where we get our word magic from.
- Simon the magician in Acts 8 was a sorcerer who practiced magic and though he could buy the ability to give people the Holy Spirit, so Peter had to rebuke him. Simon was called a magus, which is the singular of magi.
- The fact is -this type of person was the last person you would expect to find looking for a Jewish king. These type of people followed all sorts of weird and wonderful superstitions which were ungodly and forbidden in the Bible.
- And yet God got their attention and spoke to them through a sign.
- Has God been speaking to you? Has He spoken through signs to you? The appearance of the star meant something to them- to us God will speak in a way that gets our attention.
- The fact is, although they were probably into some dodgy stuff, they actually turned out to really be wise men because they sought Jesus- and this is the wisest thing anyone can do.
- It doesn't matter what you have been into, or what background you are from, whether you consider yourself to be religious or not- Jesus is for YOU- we have all been made for a relationship with Him- He is the real meaning and goal of our lives.

- Are you seeking Jesus? If you have found Him and become a Christian are you seeking to know Him more and more day by day?
- The magi were from the East- possibly Babylonia- if so, they travelled about 700 miles to get to see Jesus. However, if they were Zoroastrians from Persia (Iran) they would have travelled even further, about 1,300 miles. All of this distance and probably by camel, and then they had to return back home again!
- What length are you willing to go to in order to find and know Jesus in your life? What are the next steps for you to take?
- 'Seek & you will find'-Matt 7:7. Jer 29:13-'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.'

## 2. They bowed the knee to Jesus

- **v11 "And when they had come into the house they saw the young child with Mary His mother and worshipped Him"**
- It took Thomas three and a half years of following Jesus and a resurrection appearance from Jesus before he was willing to bow the knee and worship Jesus, but these pagan magis worshipped as soon as they set eyes on Jesus- they had a revelation from God of the significance of who He was!
- The fact is that Jesus is God in the flesh- God as a human visiting this planet- fully human and fully God at the same time- Emanuel-God with us.
- Because He is God, we are to surrender to Him and worship Him.
- It is one thing to seek Jesus- to seek to know about Him and research about Him. It is an entirely different thing to know Him by surrendering your life to Him, bowing the knee, to make Him your personal King, and to worship Him.
- This was the response of the magi- they wanted to honour Jesus and bow the knee to Him.
- The difference between giving lip service and real worship is that real worship costs us something. A Christian is someone who worships Jesus by surrendering their very lives to Him.
- The wise men did not bring cheap gifts and skimp on their worship of Jesus- they gave the best they could give- very expensive gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.
- These were very costly presents- Jesus' parents were so poor they could only offer the cheapest offering at the temple in Jerusalem for Mary's purification after childbirth- a pair of turtle doves-Lk 2:24. Perhaps Mary, Joseph and Jesus used this gift to live on when fled to Egypt before the massacre of infants.
- What would it truly mean for us to bow the knee to Jesus? What does it mean for us to offer Him a costly sacrifice? Is there something we need to give up, that we are still holding onto?

## 3. They changed their course

- **v12 "Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way"**
- It takes great courage to turn around and change the course you are on in life.
- For the wise men, they had planned to return to tell Herod everything, but due to God warning them in a dream they completely changed their plans and their route home and returned by a different route.
- In order to do this they had to disobey Herod- at the risk of their own lives -Herod was paranoid against conspirators and arranged for his favourite wife and 4 of his own sons to be killed. He was a nasty piece of work you didn't want to mess with!

- However, for these wise men they now had a greater fear of God than of any earthly king and so they allowed God to set their path before them.
- Repentance is the word the Bible uses for a complete turn-around in our lives- where we choose to go God's way rather than our own self-centred way.
- The Bible says that we have all like sheep gone astray, each one turning to his own way and the Lord has laid on Jesus the iniquity (the sins) of us all.
- Jesus died on the cross and bore the punishment for our sins so that we might change the course of our lives by turning around and rather than living for sin, living for Jesus instead.
- Jesus is able to come into our lives by His Holy Spirit and change us from the inside out, empowering us to live lives pleasing to Him.
- Jesus also conquered death on our behalf- He rose again on the third day- proving that if we trust in Him we too shall be raised from the dead and accepted into Heaven when we die.
- Jesus ascended into Heaven and has prepared a place for us- the way we can know this for a reality is to place our trust not in ourselves and our own goodness, but in Jesus and what He did for us on the cross.

### **Summary**

- **They sought Jesus**
- **They bowed the knee to Jesus**
- **They changed their course**

### **Gospel appeal and prayer**

**Nativity part 3.....Song: *Hark the herald.***