

Sermon Series: Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery

Sermon title: *The Wise Men*

Scripture text: Matthew 2:1-12

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

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When we come to stories like this in the Bible, we often want to dig into the details and try to discover all of the interesting and hidden meanings.

- Where exactly were the wise men from?
- How many were there?
- What about the Star? Was it a comet, a supernova, a coming together of Jupiter and Saturn??
- What about the gifts? Why gold, Why frankincense, Why myrrh???? What do they represent?
- What did Mary and Joseph do with these gifts?
- How old was Jesus when the wise men showed up?
.....and on and on the questions go....

But we want to find the plain truth of the text this morning.

We want to know why God put this account here in the book of Matthew and what are we supposed to learn from it???

First, we want to find out:

Who are these strangers?

We don't know very much actually.

You may have heard many things about them from Christmas songs and stories but all we know about them in the Bible, comes from this short account.

We have a name, **MAGI**, which is translated "wise men." And we have that they are **from the East** in verse 1.

Actually, the name tells us a lot about them. This is a Greek word that is borrowed from Persian...the area of Iran today.

This was originally a group of people from the kingdom of the Medes and Persians and probably they also existed in Babylon as well....of a group of sages or wise philosophers, astrologers and astronomers.

They were highly regarded as a priestly class and a group of counselors, which made them quite powerful and respected.

If you remember, in the book of Daniel, the rulers in the book consulted such wise men, enchanters and magicians (somewhat like Pharaoh did in Egypt). And Daniel, was eventually offered a place as chief over them.

We also find these guys showing up in Esther chapter 1, where the King Ahasuerus seeks their counsel.

We know they likely came from the Persian or Babylonian empire and that they were highly regarded, even though their practices were questionable, if not wicked.

And, we know that they were not Jews. They were pagans. Gentiles. As we will see later, that is significant.

So, when these guys show up in Jerusalem out of the blue and start asking around where the 'King of the Jews' who has been born.....it causes quite a stir.

The Jews already had a king whose name was Herod. He was a tyrant who was a friend of Rome and a descendant of Esau, not Jacob- so the Jews feared and hated him.

Notice that Herod rightly understands that the 'King of the Jews' they are looking for is the Messiah, for he gathers the religious leaders in Israel to ask them where the 'CHRIST' is to be born. He connects the dots for us.

Where is the 'King of the Jews'...where is the Christ to be born?

And that's an easy question to answer for them....

BETHLEHEM.

This is a fulfillment of **Micah 5:2-4**, which says:

2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. 3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. 4 And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

Matthew is trying in this text to get a major point across...The Christ is to be born in Bethlehem...and Jesus was born in Bethlehem....and Jesus is the Messiah.

But WHY DID GOD SEND THE WISE MEN AND WHY DID MATTHEW RECORD IT???

Isn't it interesting that one of the groups of people that God brings to BEHOLD Christ are people from another nation?

Herod doesn't go and see. The religious leaders don't go either. Just the wise men from Persia.

Why did they come? What was the purpose?

WORSHIP !

In verse 2 they say, "We've come to worship him."

In verse 10 they 'rejoice exceedingly with great joy'.

In verse 11 they fall down and worship Jesus.

and they offer him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

And all of this is to fulfill the scriptures.

Isaiah 60 says:

60:1 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. 2 For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. 3 And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. 4 Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip. 5 Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. 6 A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young

camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.

That's not the only Old Testament passage that shines light on this story....

Perhaps even the wise men had studied these to know what to look for.

Numbers 24,

“A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.”

Or Psalm 72...

8 May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth! 9 May desert tribes bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust! 10 May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts!

11 May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!

15 Long may he live; may gold of Sheba be given to him!

17 May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed! 18 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. 19 Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory!

Amen and Amen!

Why did God send them?

God sent them from afar to worship Jesus as a kind of first fruits among the nations...

because He's not just the 'King of the Jews' but the king of the nations.

King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And whosoever will may come to this King whether Jew or from the Nations.

In the beginning of Matthew, we see the wise men coming to worship the 'king of the Jews' and in Matthew 27 we see him hanging on a cross, dying for sinners with a plaque above his head that reads:

“This is Jesus. The King of the Jews”.

In the beginning of Matthew, we see the wise men from another nation coming to worship and at the end of Matthew in chapter 28 we see this baby grown up and giving his disciples the great commission: **“Go and make disciples of all nations.”**

What should be our response when we behold this wondrous mystery....when we behold God being born in human flesh to die for sinners....??

We should do as the wise men did!

- We should rejoice exceedingly with great joy!

“Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad! Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name! (Psalm 96,97)

- We should bow down and worship!

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. (Psalm 95)

- We should open our treasure and give an offering!

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!

offer him your gold, frankincense and myrrh....

Might it be fitting for us all to ask God how we might offer up some of our treasures to him as an offering of worship....as a way to say, “Jesus, you are more precious to me than these things...so I offer them up to you and give them away....to show that they mean nothing to me in comparison to you.”

It's not my job to tell you how to do that or who to give to or where to give or what to give....

I want to simply encourage you to worship Jesus.