

2. Wise men still seek Him

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Many people in the world claim to be Christians, but when it comes to the true doctrine of Christianity, they don't want to follow the way of God. They say, "But the loving God will not send me to hell." One great thing they forget is that He is a loving God for sure, but He also is a righteous and holy God who wouldn't tolerate our sins.

It is one thing to hear and know about the Christianity and it is a completely different thing to believe and obey what it says in the Bible.

The wisemen from the East came to seek the new born King to Bethlehem. Today, many people claim to seek the truth, but they tend to settle with false. Because when they find the truth, they have to be accountable to the truth and one true God. But if they are truly wise, they will not settle anything but the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Last week I mentioned that the Gospel of Matthew was written to the Jewish people to tell them about Jesus the long waited Messiah, the King of Jew from the lineage of David the king, the descendent of Abraham. I also mentioned that the word "ful-filled" of the Old Testament was mentioned 12 times throughout the Book.

We are going to find three of the prophecies from the Old Testament would be fulfilled in this chapter 2. We are going to find a portion of Christmas story in the middle of July.

We also find three different types of people who faced the truth about the King of kings Jesus and acted very differently. I believe that we still find the same kinds of people all over the world today.

A. THE WISE MEN – THE OBEDIENT ONES

Matthew 2:1-2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

Misconceptions and legends are plenty about these wise men. They were Magi, Oriental astrologers who studied the stars and sought to understand the times and meanings. They were gentiles who had been especially called of God to come and pay homage to the newborn King. There were not only three, but probably a great company from Babylon areas.

They probably had been alerted to the prophetic significance of their times by the prophecies of Daniel and other Old Testament prophets. The bottom line is that they received the guidance from the Lord and obeyed it.

There has been considerable speculations on this star they saw in the East. Whatever it was, it is significant that God meet them in their own medium. He guides the astrologers by a star. Some people use this verse to justify their excuse for reading horoscope. It is nothing more than just a dumb foolish excuse.

Their experience is a good lesson in finding the will of God:

- 1) They followed the light God gave them.
- 2) They confirmed their steps by the Word of God.
- 3) They obeyed God without question and He led them each step of the way.

Matthew 2:3-4 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

When Herod get troubled in his heart, it usually means that some heads are going to roll. Herod was appointed by the Roman government. If there is another king who was not supported by the Rome, that means it is a insurrection. That translates to a possible war in the land of Israel. It is no wonder why the Israeli people were troubled.

B. THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES

Matthew 2:5-6 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.' "

Sadly, these experts have the right information (quoting from Micah 5:2), but seem personally uninterested in meeting the Messiah for themselves, just like some "Bible scholars" today. On the contrary to the wisemen who traveled a long distance to seek the King of the Jews, these chief priests and scribes would not travel even 5 miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. The wise men were both hearers and doers of the Word!

God bypassed proud Jerusalem and chose humble Bethlehem. King David had come from Bethlehem, and Christ is from David's lineage.

The wisemen went out their ways to find the truth and show their homage to the King of the Jews. I often feel sorry for those who will not go out of their ways to seek God like these chief priests and scribes. When it rains, they don't go to church; when there is some sports games on TV, they don't go to church; when they have a little headache, they don't go to church. It seems that they would find any excuse not to go to church. Am I asking for them to be here? No, a thousand times no! I want them to come to seek God's counsels for their lives, not for Calvary Chapel, nor for me.

C. HEROD THE KING

Matthew 2:7-8 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

Herod did not the Word and the truth. But when he found it, he tried to demolish it. His idea of worshiping this young Child is using a chopping ax.

Herod was used by satan to destroy the Son of God from the beginning. Satan had no idea how God was going to bring the salvation to the mankind as all the prophets of the Old Testaments didn't know. Now that the devil heard that the Son of God came into the world in a helpless new born baby form, he wanted to make sure that He wouldn't be able to grow up to be the Savior of the world.

Herod the Great was a small little fellow, 4 feet 11 inches high and famous for both his magnificent public building projects (the Herodian Fortress south of Bethlehem, the Masada down at the Dead Sea, the Alexandrian Fortress up the Jordan valley midway between Jericho and the sea of Galilee, the city of Caesarea over on the coast, as well as the remains of the Great Wall of Jerusalem), and his ruthless, cruel paranoia.

He felt that his sons and his wife whom he loved, Miriam, were conspiring against him and so he killed some of his sons, he killed his wife, Miriam. Later he regretted murdering his wife, so he built a tower for her. The Roman authorities said it is safer to be Herod's pig than to be his sons.

Herod was not a Jew at all, but an Edomite, and Rome recognized him as a vassal king over Judea. The Jews tempered their great hatred of him with admiration for his building projects, such as the magnificent improvements made to the second temple.

When Herod knew that his death was approaching, he had the most distinguished leaders of Jerusalem arrested on false charges. He ordered that as soon as he died, they should all be killed. Because he knew well no one would mourn his own death, so he was determined that some tears be shed when he died. But he died, his order was not carried out.

D. THE SAVIOR DESTINED TO DEATH FROM HIS BIRTH

Matthew 2:9-11 When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The idea that there were three wise men comes from the fact that there were three gifts. Gold represents royalty and the heavenly kingdom, frankincense representing priesthood and the sweet fellowship with God, and myrrh representing His death for our sins.

More important than their gifts is the fact that they worshiped Jesus. It must have been a curious sight to see these impressive dignitaries bowing before a young child.

The events of this took place over at least a year from Jesus' birth.

Reason 1) Joseph and Mary are living a house, not in a stable at the inn.

Reason 2) Jesus is referred to as a child, an an infant.

Reason 3) Herod murdered all the male children two years and under.

Reason 4) Joseph and Mary offered a pair of turtledoves or pigeons as the sacrifice of the poor, if the wisemen had just give them gold, frankincense and myrrh.

In other word, the nativity scene we are so used to with the three wisemen is wrong.

Matthew 2:12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

Their worship is also manifested in obedience. They are obedient to the heavenly dream and leave without serving as Herod's informants.

Note that they went home by “another way.” Anyone who comes to Christ will go home another way and be a new creature.

2 Cor. 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

E. THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Matthew 2:13-15 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.” When he awoke, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

We cannot help but admire Joseph for his faithfulness in obeying God and caring for both Mary and Jesus.

At first glance, we might wonder how this prophecy from Hosea 11:1 is fulfilled in Jesus. But Matthew makes it clear that even as Israel as a nation came out from Egypt, so does the Son of God.

F. MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

Matthew 2:16-18 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: “A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more.”

This quotation from Jeremiah 31:15 originally referred to the mourning of Israel’s mothers during the conquest and captivity of the nation. But here, Rachel is a picture of Bethlehem’s mothers.

G. THE HOME IN NAZARETH

Matthew 2:19-23 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead.” Then he awoke, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Matthew refers to what “was spoken by the prophets” (v. 23, note the plural) but does not give any specific references. The word “Nazarene” may relate to the Hebrew word “netzer” which means “branch,” another title for Jesus. This is why Matthew wrote “prophets” (plural) since Christ is called “the Branch” in Isa. 11:1, 4:2, Jer. 23:5, 33:15, Zech. 3:8, 6:12. Because He lived in a despised place, Jesus was like a lowly branch, but the Branch would one day blossom with beauty and

great glory.

Zechariah 3:8 'Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, You and your companions who sit before you, For they are a wondrous sign; For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH.

Jesus was from the city of Nazareth, and not a Nazarene through a vow.

H. APPLICATIONS

1) Wisemen and wisewomen still seek Jesus.

No matter how people want to believe about the truth or relative truth or thinking that there is no absolute truth, the truth of God exists, period. We can follow God and be blessed by His promise of eternal life or don't follow God's Son Jesus and take the consequences of our own decision in hell.

If you seek God with all of your hearts, God will meet you where you are as He did to the wisemen.

2) God cares about the relationship we have with Him, not the religion.

You might consider yourself religious, because you come to the church, or give some money to the church, or have several Bibles at home, or you are a good person. That is all fine and dandy, but not to God. It requires personal relationship with Jesus.