



December 6, 2009

Lessons From The Wise Men

As the holiday season approaches it is traditional that many who consider themselves Christians will decorate their homes and churches with scenes depicting the birth of Christ. A central element of the display is the wise men. Matthew gives an account of these men in his writing leaving much room for speculation as to who they were, where they were from and how many of them were there. Famous paintings, holiday decorations, Bible commentaries, famous works of art and children's coloring books depict the visit of the Magi as Christ lies in Mary's arms, or the manger, surrounded by halo shrouded parents, sheep and cattle or other animals. Reading the biblical accounts indicates that Christ may have been as old as two years by the time these visitors found him but for the world at large the event occurred on the night of his birth. Without knowing who these men were, or their names, we can learn a great deal from them. The term "wise men" is appropriate but in this instance we have to think of what this means. Wise men in ancient times, as the Bible speaks of them, often refers to those who are educated to advise kings and other nobility. Some of these in ancient cultures were also holy men, or women, who were dedicated to the wisdom of a pagan religion or cult. These particular wise men may indeed have been educated to serve in some court of a king or other dignitary. The same description can be applied to Daniel and his companions who were brought as captives to the court of Nebuchadnezzar (**Dan 1.1-4**). As the narrative continues we find that God blessed Daniel and revealed many things to him that were to come. Daniel's greatest wisdom was in the fact that he sought to understand the word of God. He knew that the time of the captivity was coming to an end based on his understanding of the writing of the prophet Jeremiah (**Dan 9.2**). The wise men who sought the Christ had come looking for one that I conclude they knew about from reading the scriptures (**Matt 2.2, Num 24.17**). The wise men, looking for one that was to come out of Judah were diligent in their search for the revelation of the Messiah. We are told that they had come from the East to find him (**Matt 2.1**). Some today begin to

search for truth and God but fail to find what they seek because they do not look in the right place. The wise men went to Herod first for information only to find that this was not a proper source for direction. Herod, after being asked about the "king of the Jews" was troubled and had to consult others for knowledge of the prophecies. When the wise men learned where to look they did so, continuing their search until they found the child (**Matt 2.8-11**). Herod on the other hand had never noticed the star and was not aware of what was happening around him (**Matt 2.7**). Today there are many who never look to the scriptures to find out what they really say. It is convenient to accept what one is told and regard it as truth without ever consulting the source of spiritual knowledge that God has provided. The wise men had the intention of worshipping the child, understanding who he was and the purpose for his appearance in the world (**Matt 2.1,11**). We are compelled to worship God through obedience, accepting his authority in all things. God has given us the knowledge and means to learn of him and understand what we should do to be acceptable to the Lord. This desire was strong enough in them that they were willing to undertake a journey and find the truth. The writer of Hebrews exhorts us to be the same way. "***But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.***" (**Heb 11.6**). The wise men exercised diligence in their search and were glad when they found Christ (**Matt 2.10**). Reactions to truth in the human mind do not always bring about rejoicing. Some, confronted with the truth, find it is not what they wanted, or expected, and turn away, never realizing the benefit of acceptance. The wise men were so because they sought God through Christ recognizing what they found based on God's revelation.

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