



# THE WISE MEN AND THE STAR

## MATTHEW 2



### SEPARATE FACT FROM FICTION

One of the first things I want to talk about is the importance of separating fact from fiction when we talk about Christmas.

### Christmas Traditions

To be honest with you, most of the things associated with Christmas are simply pagan traditions. The trees, Santa Claus, the Yule Log, and December 25, are of pagan origin. Now, this is not bad, but it's important for us to know that so you are not shocked when somebody tells you that.

### Pagan Words

We are not doing wrong by enjoying these traditions at Christmas time. It doesn't hurt a thing. We also use pagan words every day. The words January, Sunday, and Monday are all pagan words but we are not sinning when we use them. We can enjoy traditions without harming anyone.

### Church Christmas Plays

Our Christmas plays in church can also be misleading. Angel parts are usually played by little girls with wings. We usually dress three little boys in bathrobes to play the parts of the three Wise Men.

In the final scene, we usually have shepherds, wise men, angels, and animals

kneeling in a manger. This is not wrong, but it is not really Biblical. In the Bible, angels always appear as men. And why do we have Three wise Men? They probably came in a large caravan. And when the Wise Men finally arrived, Jesus was in a house, not in a manger.

Now, the reason I am taking the time to deal with this is so nobody can fool you into thinking the Bible has contradictions. The Bible does not describe it the way we see it in our Christmas programs or on television.

### NINE (9) QUESTIONS I WANT OUR MEMBERS TO BE PREPARED TO ANSWER

1. **When** Was Jesus really born?
2. **Who** were these Wise Men?
3. **How** many of them were there?
4. **Why** do we believe they were men?
5. **Where** did they come from?
6. **What** did they see in the sky?
7. **Where did they see the star?** Was the star in the East or were they in the East when they saw the star?
8. **Did the wise men visit Jesus** in the manger or in house?

## **9. Why did Herod kill little boys who were two years old?**

### **INFORMATION AVAILABLE**

Do you have any idea how much information is available on this subject today? When you go home, go online and "Google" these words. There were 2,270,000 references to the Wise Men; There were 669,000 references to the Star, and 138,000 pictures on this subject.

### **1. WHEN WAS JESUS REALLY BORN?**

#### **(Matthew 2: 1-2)**

1 "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

#### **The True Date**

The Bible says He was born in the days of Herod the King. We know that King Herod died in 4 BC. How could Jesus be born in the days of Herod the King when Herod died four years before Jesus was born. Either the Bible is wrong or our calendar is wrong.

#### **Our Calendar is Wrong**

Our present calendar is wrong. It was not developed until 500 after Christ was born. Our present chronology by which the years are numbered as AD or BC was conceived by the Roman abbot Dionysius Exiguus around 523 AD. Unfortunately, Dionysius made two significant errors in his calculations.

His first mistake was his placement of 1 AD immediately following 1 BC, completely disregarding the mathematically required 0 in between.

Back then (523 AD) in Europe, zero was not considered a number. So, for instance, the year we now call 3 BC, is actually 2 numerically speaking.

Dionysius' second mistake was accepting the statement of Clement of Alexandria that Jesus was born in the 28th year of the reign of the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus.

But Dionysius failed to realize that during the first four years of his reign this Roman ruler was known by his original name Octavianus, until the Roman senate proclaimed him "Augustus."

So, here alone we have an error of four years, but by the time it was realized our chronology was too well entrenched to be changed. Jesus WAS born during the reign of Herod the King just like the Bible says. Jesus was born approximately in 6-5 BC.

#### **Cyrenius of Syria**

Luke, who was a medical doctor, was careful to point out that Jesus was born when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria (Luke 2:2).

Skeptics will tell you this couldn't be true because Cyrenius ruled over Syria AFTER Jesus was born. The fact is, Cyrenius served two terms. He served his first term before Christ was born and he served the other term after Christ was born.

Luke made it clear that the census

was taken during Cyrenius' FIRST TERM.

## 2. WHO WERE THESE WISE MEN?

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? "

The word translated Wise Men is "Magi." Magi is the plural word for "Magus." The word "magician" comes from this word. So does the word "Magistrate."

Those men were probably high-ranking government officials. Daniel had been Chief of the Wise Men in Babylon and in Persia. (Read the book of Daniel). In Daniel 9:25, the prophet gives the exact date of the First coming of Christ.

## 3. HOW MANY WISE MEN WERE THERE?

### (Matthew 2:3)

" When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."

Do you really think three men showing up would trouble a city that was crowded with people that time of the year? We believe these men came to Jerusalem in a large caravan.

## 4. WHERE DID THE WISE MEN COME FROM?

Did they come from the East? Did they come from Iraq? Did they come from Iran? Some scholars even believe one of the Wise Men came from China.

## Liu Shang



Chinese Christians cite evidence about Liu Shang, the chief astrologer during the Han dynasty in China at the time that Jesus was

born. According to Chinese tradition, Liu Shang discovered a new star the Chinese called the "king star" - which was associated with the birth of a new king.

Liu Shang disappeared from China's imperial court for two years shortly after this star was discovered and they believe Liu Shang perhaps traveled the Silk Road from China to Bethlehem.

## Iran

Your pastor believes the Wise Men came from Iran (Persia). How did they know about the birth of Jesus Christ?

- Remember the Jews had spent seventy years as captives in Babylon.
- The prophet Daniel preached in Babylon and in Daniel 9:25, Daniel gave us a hint as to the time of Christ's birth.
- Also Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24:17 mentions a star out of Jacob. These wise men could even have been Jews who had remained in Babylon after others returned home.

## Wise Women?

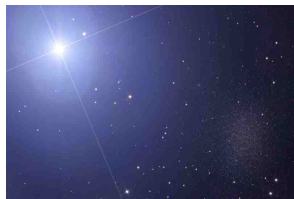
Reuters had an article last year about the Church of England changing their

prayer book to suggest that at least one of the Wise persons was a woman.

The Bible says Wise Men! However, if they had been women things would have been much different.

- They would have asked directions;
- They would have arrived on time;
- They would have helped deliver the baby;
- They would have cleaned the stable;
- They would have brought practical gifts;
- and they would made a casserole.

## 5. WHAT DID THE WISE MEN SEE?



(Matt. 2:2) "For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. Did they really see anything

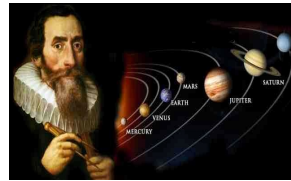
or is this all just tradition? What did they see?

- They could have seen a comet.
- They could have seen a meteor.
- They could have seen a nova.
- They could have seen a conjunction of more than one star. I think that's what they saw.

## Planetarium

It is possible in a planetarium to turn the heavens forward and backward to see where the heavenly bodies were at any particular time. There is also a computer program called Starry Night Pro available that will enable you to do the same thing at home on your own PC.

## Johannes Kepler



What did those Wise Men see? Johannes Kepler was the Scientist who discovered the laws of planetary motion. J. Kepler was also a Bible-believing Christian.

## Conjunction

In the 1600's Kepler discovered that there was a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, in the Constellation Pieces, three times the year Christ was born.

- It is possible that the Wise Men started out when the star first appeared.
- **The second time** it appeared, they were well on their way.
- **The third time** it appeared, they looked South from Jerusalem where it stood over Bethlehem.

## 6. WHERE DID THE WISE MEN SEE THE STAR?

### (Matthew 2:2)

"Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship

him. "

Were these men in the East when they saw the star? Or did they see the Star while looking towards the East? We believe the Wise Men were in the East and saw the star looking towards the West. Had they seen the star in the East and followed it, they would have gone to India and or China.

### **7. DID THE WISE MEN SEE JESUS IN A STABLE OR IN A HOUSE?**

(Matt. 2:11) "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him."

A long time had passed between the birth of Jesus and the visit of the wise men. When the Wise Men came, Jesus was out of the manger and in a house!

### **8. WHY DID HEROD KILL LITTLE BOYS WHO WERE TWO YEARS OLD?**

**(Matt. 2:16-17)**

"Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men."

Herod inquired diligently. This means he questioned the Wise Men carefully. Why did he do this? Herod was trying to determine how old the child would be by now, for you see, quite some time had

passed between the time the Magi saw the star and the time they finally arrived.

Herod finally determined the child would be two years old or less. So, he murdered all of the male children that age in the area under two years old.

Bethlehem was South of Jerusalem. Rama was about as far North of Jerusalem as Bethlehem was South. If you drew a line from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and used that line as a radius, the circle would include Rama in the North and Bethlehem in the South. Herod was determined to kill this new-born king.

### **A War on God**



Satan is at war with God. He has been from the very beginning. The Bible says that Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Satan tried to kill baby Moses thru Pharaoh. Satan tried to kill baby Jesus thru King Herod. Satan is killing Christians in Muslim countries today. Satan would kill you if he could, but since he can't, he will try to persuade you to kill yourself.

In our country, Satan is fighting us with the ACLU, People for the American Way, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Hollywood, public schools, and the Media.

## **BRIEFLY CONSIDER THE GIFTS BROUGHT BY THE WISE MEN**

### **1. Gold**

Gold is for Kings. Jesus died for our sins and will one day reign as King over all the earth.

#### **(Isaiah 11:1-11)**

1. And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2. And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

3. And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: 4. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

5. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. 6. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. 7. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. 9. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

### **2. Frankincense**

Frankincense was used in the incense in the temple when the priest prayed for the people. Jesus came to be our faithful High Priest. He represents us before the throne of God daily.

#### **(Heb. 2:17-18)**

17. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."

### **3. Myrrh**



Frankincense and Myrrh were both used to prepare a body for burial. An interesting article appeared on page one, in the Florida Baptist Witness, December 21,

2000. This timely article gave us the value of the gifts brought by the wise men.

Frankincense would cost \$500 a pound at today's prices. Myrrh would cost \$4,000 a pound. Gold is now \$800 per ounce.

The Bible said that Nicodemus gave one-hundred pounds of myrrh to help prepare the body of Jesus for burial after His crucifixion. See John 19.

## SUMMARY

This morning, we've been talking about the coming of Christ to this earth.

He came to earth to die for your sins. When He returns for His church, He is going to establish a kingdom on earth. But to live with Him in His kingdom, you must have your sins forgiven. You can't get there without forgiveness.

The Good News is that forgiveness is available to all, but it is not automatic. If you are willing to turn from your sins and God's forgiveness, you can live with Him in His Kingdom, and after that, live with Him in heaven for all eternity.



Based on what you have heard, is there any good reason why you can't repent of your sins and trust Jesus as your Savior today? Today would be a good time for you to offer Him a Gift. The best gift you could possibly give is your life.

Today would be a good time for you to follow the example of the Wise Men. Fall down and worship him.

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