

True Wisdom To Be Learned From The Wise Men.

Text: Matt 2:1-12

Suggested Hymns:
Others

46, 43, 47, 40, 45

- 1) They Followed The Guide From Heaven
- 2) They Were Not Influenced By The Unbelief Of
- 3) When They Found Christ,
They Worshiped And Honoured Him

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 2:1-12, ¹ *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, ² 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.”*

³ *When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ 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. ⁵ So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: ⁶ ‘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.’”*

⁷ *Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. ⁸ 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.” ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. ¹¹ 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.*

¹² *Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The purpose of this Gospel is to impress on us the fact that the Gentiles also have a part in Christ. That the Son of God was to be the Saviour of the Jews, there could be no question. He had been promised to the chosen people of God for a period of two thousand years.

And when the time was fulfilled and He was made manifest in the flesh, the Jews were the first to be notified that the Saviour has come. On the plains of Bethlehem the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, who were Jews, and brought them the good tidings of great joy that to them was born, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

Scarcely, however, had the Jews been made acquainted with this joyful news, when the Lord God also informed the Gentiles that a Saviour had come for them. And while the good tidings were brought to the Jews on the very spot, in the immediate neighbourhood of Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, the news of the Saviour's birth was conveyed to the Gentiles in the far East, far away from the scene.

While the Jews received their information by an angel from heaven announcing the Saviour's birth, and by the multitudes of the heavenly host singing songs of praises upon earth, the Gentiles saw in the heavens a wonderful star. While the Jewish representatives, to whom God communicated the great event, were plain shepherds, the Gentile representatives were men of wealth and learning.

Now, since we are descendants of Gentile nations and our heathen ancestors were converted from heathenism and brought to the faith of the Son of God, we should thank God for His great mercy shown to us!

A special festival, the festival of Epiphany, which we are celebrating today, was arranged in the church to commemorate this blessed fact and to give us an occasion to offer up praise and thanksgiving for the inestimable blessing that we have been rescued from heathenism by the wonderful Child in the manger, that we also have a share in the Christ-child, that He is our Saviour as well as the Saviour of the Jews, and that we have found Him, recognised in Him our Saviour, and have been made members of the Christian church.

Our Gospel, however, also imparts valuable instruction. Scriptures says, *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning,”*¹ and there is something to be learned from the Wise Men in our Gospel.

Let us consider with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, the *True Wisdom To Be Learned From The Wise Men*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. They Followed The Guide From Heaven.

Our text begins, *¹ 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, ² 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.”*

So these wise men had a guide from heaven, and they followed that guide, making no delay and undertaking a long and expensive journey to find Christ. But we must not think that that wonderful star in itself was their guide. The science of astronomy does not teach the way to heaven. Yes, *¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork,*² but where does the word of God say that man should lift up his eyes to heaven and read the Gospel in the stars? No; the Gospel is not revealed by the works of nature, but by God Himself in His divine Word.

Those wise men, therefore, must have had some divine revelation concerning that star, or they never would have comprehended its meaning.

Another false notion concerning the star of Bethlehem is, that it was something in the ordinary course of nature. Astronomers have found that about the time when those wise men journeyed to Jerusalem, there was a conjunction of three very bright stars, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn; a conjunction which occurs only once in eight centuries. And now it is claimed that the star which those wise men saw was this conjunction of stars. How absurd!

Could that conjunction guide them from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, and then remain in a fixed position over where the young Child was? Is not Bethlehem south of Jerusalem and do not the ordinary stars move from east to west and stand so high above us that they always seem to go with us, and never stop over and above a certain place?

No; we must not seek to explain away miracles. There may have been conjunctions of stars at the same time, but they certainly had nothing to do with this star. This star was a special light placed by the Lord God for this special purpose in the lower regions of the atmosphere.

As mentioned, the guide which the Wise Men really followed was the divine revelation concerning that star. And now, when they came to Jerusalem, we are told that Herod *“gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: ⁶ ‘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.’”*

And when Herod had told them this and had sent them to Bethlehem, we are informed, *“⁹ 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. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.”*

What was it, then, that really guided and led these Wise Men to Christ? What was their true guide to heaven? It was the Word of God, the word of divine revelation spoken by the prophet. That was the guide from heaven whom they followed. And how wise were they to follow that guide!

Had they remained in the East and paid no attention to the wonderful star, and had they not followed the directions given by the Word of God in the writings of the prophet, they never would have come to Christ; they would have remained in darkness, in superstition, and condemnation.

See, then, here is true wisdom. Follow the guide from heaven. That guide is the divine Word. But you must not wait for a special divine revelation in a dream or vision. You have no promise for that.

God may send you a star in the shape of great joy or great sorrow, or in some other way give you an indication that He longs and yearns to save you in particular. But then you must place your confidence in the written Word of God, and heed the Word of God. Let the Word of God perform upon you its mission on this earth.

Let the word of God convince you that you are a lost and condemned sinner, and persuade you that you have been redeemed from sin and death by the Lord Jesus, by His painful suffering and bitter death on the cross. Let the Word of God guide you through this vale of tears to the heavenly mansions. That is true wisdom, that is making a profitable use of your time upon earth, so that you may get to a blessed hereafter.

2. They Were Not Influenced By The Unbelief Of Others.

The Wise Men showed true wisdom in another way. They were not influenced by the unbelief of others. We read, “³ *When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*” Now imagine how these Wise Men must have felt. They had come to Jerusalem, expecting to find every face beaming with joy, everybody speaking of the new-born King, and the whole city wild with excitement. But what do they find?

All is quiet. No one seems to care for that King on whose account they had come from so far a way. Yes, when the purpose of their visit is made known, Herod and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem are alarmed. And then again, such is the indifference displayed by the inhabitants, not a single one of them offers to go along to Bethlehem. Could these people more plainly show that they did not believe in that new-born King?

But what do we find the wise men doing? Do they say within themselves, *‘Ah, we have been deceived. We have come here in vain; there is no new-born King of the Jews, because if there was, would not His own people know about it? Would not the distinguished men, the learned and prominent, come with us and go to Bethlehem?’*

No; the Wise Men were not disturbed in the least. They were not influenced by the unbelief of others. They simply believed what God had told them, and though not a soul seemed to share their faith, they proceeded to Bethlehem at once.

Look here is true wisdom. You must not be disturbed by the unbelief of others. If you allow yourselves to be influenced by the adverse attitude which the majority of people assume toward Christ, then you will reject Christ, reject the Word of God, and be an unbeliever. And is not this the greatest folly to think that truth is to be found with the majority?

Have not the most absurd theories been advanced by the philosophers of this world, and almost universally accepted, until they were out of date, and had to make room for other theories equally foolish?

And why do you expect the majority, and especially the great people of this world, the rich and distinguished, to follow Christ? Remember what Jesus says in Matthew 7:13, *for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.*

Likewise we read in 1 Corinthians 1:26, ²⁶ *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.* If, therefore, you want to be truly wise and prudent, you must not seek your salvation in great Jerusalem, that is, not with the masses, but in Bethlehem, in the lowly manger.

You must not seek your salvation with the scribes and chief priests, that is, with the learned, rich, and great, but with Mary and Joseph, with those who humbly profess their faith in Jesus the Saviour.

3. When They Found Christ, They Worshiped And Honoured Him.

There is one more point showing the true wisdom of the wise men. When they had found Christ, they worshiped Him. We are told, ¹¹ *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 wise men had believed in Christ all along. They believed in Him as soon as they were persuaded by the divine revelation that the star which they saw in the East, was the star of the new-born King of the Jews.

We must not think that their faith in Christ did not begin until their eyes saw Him in person. But now when they did see Him for whose sake they had come all the way from the far East, what did they see? Did they find what they surely must have expected? Did they find a royal family surrounded with all the luxury and comfort of Oriental splendour and ease?

Did they find a magnificent palace, guarded by sentries in gorgeous attire to protect the approach to the great Prince and King? No; there is a lowly house, and the occupants are as poor as they can be, and the Child is a young Child like

any other child. Must not their faith have received a fatal shock at the sight of all this poverty and lowliness?

Yet they were wise men, indeed. They knew that the Word of God could not deceive them. And did not the wonderful star remain over above the Child? So they boldly overcame all adverse sentiments, fell down upon their knees, worshiped the Child, and honoured Him with gifts.

They gave Him gold, and we can well conceive how greatly the Child needed the gold for His impending flight to Egypt. But frankincense and myrrh were not considered especially valuable. There must be a special meaning to these two latter gifts. Frankincense was burned at the sacrifices to honour the deity, and myrrh was used in embalming a corpse.

It seems, then, that by presenting these two gifts the Wise Men confessed their faith that this Child was both God and man.

Now, if we want to be wise and prudent like the wise men, we must see that we keep the faith when trials and afflictions come, when things do not turn out according to our wishes and expectations, when our faith receives a shock.

Having found Christ, you must hold on to Him. It will never benefit you to believe in Christ for a while, and then to turn away from Him. Only the person who endures to the end shall be saved. O be not ashamed, then, of Christ and of His Gospel! Confess Him before men, and He will confess you also before His Father in heaven.³

Take no notice of the scorn of the children of this world. Say before all people that you believe that Jesus is both God and man, that He is your Saviour and Redeemer, your Sovereign and King, whom you worship, and whom you serve as long as you are living upon this earth.

The wise men honoured Jesus and worshiped Him when He was in lowliness and poverty; how much the more should you worship and honour Him now, since He is exalted above the heavens and sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty!

May the Lord, then, grant to us all, His grace to apply our hearts to true wisdom and to imitate the example of the wise men, to the glory of His holy name and to the salvation of our souls! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Romans 15:4

² Psalm 19:1

³ Matt 10:32