

## THE WISE STILL SEEK AFTER HIM

**Text: Matthew 2:1-12**

**Key Word:** Wise

**Key Thought:** Those with True Wisdom Still Seek after God

The Biblical story of the three wise men (**Magi - madji**) has inspired believers throughout the world. Magi were **priests in Zoroastrianism** (which began earlier than 2000 B.C.) and the earlier religions of the western Iranians. They celebrated Ahura Mazda (which means “**Wise Lord**”) and his good essence that they believed ran through all things. **Their prayers were said facing the sun, fire or other source of light representing Ahura Mazda's divine light and energy.**

In about the 8th century the names of three Magi became known most commonly as Balthasar (baltesar), Melchior (malcure), and Gaspar (or Casper). According to Western church tradition, **Balthasar** is often represented as a **king of Arabia or sometimes Ethiopia**, **Melchior** as a **king of Persia**, and **Gaspar** as a **king of India**.

“**Balthasar**” is a Phoenician name that means “**Baal protects the King**” is an alternate form of the Babylonian king Belshazzar, mentioned in the Book of Daniel 5.

The Eastern church celebrates the day as Christmas on December 25<sup>th</sup> each year although that was definitely not the correct date. The word “**Christmas**” gets its name from “**the mass of Christ.**” The date was followed after the Roman Emperor Constantine introduced it in 336 A.D. The Western church celebrates it as the Epiphany (manifestation) on Jan 6<sup>th</sup> each year. The Eastern tradition believes there were 12 Magi while the Western church believes there were three as noted by the three gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh given to the Christ child.

The Adoration of the Magi—i.e., their homage to the infant Jesus—early in time became one of the most popular themes in Christian art, the first extant painting on the subject being the fresco in the Priscilla Catacomb of Rome dating from the 2nd century.

**The Thought Recently Came to My Mind Whether There Are Wise Christian Men and Women in Our World Today. If So, and I’m Sure There Are, How Can We Differentiate Them Today from those with Secular Wisdom ?**

## I. THEY WILL PAY THE PRICE

### A. They will travel the distance

The longer I serve God, the more I realize that there IS a price to pay to seek after God. Lets be honest, there is nothing that is free in this world. People who demand things for free are generally self-centered and immature and often disrespectful when they don't get what they believe they are entitled to. I encourage people to appreciate the many blessings we have which has taken the courageous lives of many men and women before us.

Free education, free health care, free delivery AND free advice comes with a high price tag in reality. **The Magi traveled a great distance in order to worship the king of the Jews.** Just think, these star gazers were from at least three different parts of the world and yet arrived together at Jerusalem before taking the final 6 miles together to arrive in Bethlehem in Judea.

Anyone traveling this distance was susceptible to being robbed especially through the mountainous passes in Judea. They would easily be recognized for being rich. There is no mention that they traveled with a written edict to protect them. They placed their lives on the line to honour the Christ child.

Anyone who is wanting to serve Jesus, the Messiah, cannot do so WITHOUT sacrificing.

*“And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*

*28. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower.*

*Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?*

*29. For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you,*

*30. saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'*

*31. “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?*

*32. If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.*

*33. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.*

*Luke 14:27-33*

## I. THEY WILL PAY THE PRICE (Contd.)

### B. They will Offer a Meaningful Gift

The Biblical story makes it clear that there were 3 distinct gifts. There was gold, frankincense and myrrh (Matthew 2:11). If you're like Sharon and I, you take time to decide what gifts you choose for someone's birthday, anniversary, or graduation etc. This definitely took place with these meaningful gifts.

**1. Gold** - Gold, of course, was a valuable currency. Tradition says that the white haired Melchior wore a gold cloak and brought gold as a gift. **This would recognize that Jesus was royalty.** He was the king of the Jews from the lineage of King David.

The Queen of Sheba brought 120 talents of gold to King Solomon (I Kings 10:10). The Bible says that he received **666 talents** of gold each year (I Kings 10:14). A talent was equal to the weight of an average man at that time. As a unit of currency, a talent was worth about 6,000 denarii. A denarius was the usual payment for a day's labour. At one denarius per day, a single talent was worth 16 years of labor. Silver was much less in value at that time.

**2. Frankincense** is a valuable perfume and used as incense in the temple linking it to prayer. It is often used today to burn and bring calmness and a sense of peace. It is one of the twelve oils mentioned in the Bible. There was a time when it was considered a valuable remedy for antiseptic and inflammation problems such as asthma, arthritis, toothaches and leprosy. Many scholars suggest that it symbolizes the **Lord's divinity.**

**3. Myrrh** is a precious ointment often used in the burial process. **It symbolizes suffering.** Tradition says that Balthazar (baltesar) was a black skinned man (with or without a black beard) with a purple robe. Both Frankincense and Myrrh were a sap from a tree. They were worth as much as gold. Myrrh was a reddish-brown sap from Northern Africa. Researchers at the University of Florence have proven that it acts on the brain's opioid receptors which reduces pain.

“A gift or a present is an item given to someone without the expectation of payment or anything in return. An item is not a gift if that item is already owned by the one to whom it is given. Although gift-giving might involve an expectation of reciprocity, a gift is meant to be free.”

There are 150 baby names that remind us about the precious gifts of our children that God has granted to us. The name “**Ivan**” means “*God's gracious and glorious gift.*” “**Matthew**” means “*a reward from God.*” “**Dorothy**” means “*Gift of God.*”

## II. THEY WILL BOTH SEE GOD'S SIGNS AND HEAR GOD'S VOICE

*“Where is the one who is born king of the Jews? We saw **his star** when it rose and have come to worship him . . .*

*7. Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star appeared . . .*

*9. After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was,*

*10. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.”*

*Matthew 2:2,7,9,10*

The Scriptures remind us that God uses the heavens to declare His glory.

*“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

*2. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.*

*3. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.*

*4. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world;”*

*Psalms 19:1-4*

There is no doubt that God is still speaking forth through His creation. Do you see His wonders in the heavens above and hear His voice warning of the judgement to come?

*In the last days . . .*

*19. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.*

*20. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.*

*Acts 2:17,19,20*

## II. THEY WILL BOTH SEE GOD'S SIGNS AND HEAR GOD'S VOICE (Contd.)

### A. Herod Was Puzzled and Brought Fear among the People

Herod the Great couldn't understand God's signs. It brought him fear. He passed that fear onto those in Jerusalem. He lied about wanting to worship the new king. He was challenged. He did not want to have his kingship challenged even by a baby. He wanted to know the exact time the star appeared in the sky. It gave him a time period to know what baby boys he would have to kill to prevent any challenge to his throne.

Those who are wise today still seek after the King of kings to worship. It is a joyful time not one filled with fear. It doesn't exalt us. It exalts God and Him alone. The signs are all around us. We don't need the rocks to cry out and praise the Lord.

### B. The Magi were Overjoyed

The closer they got to Jesus the more exuberant they became. It proved they had rightly understood the signs of their time. Those who properly interpret God's signs and hear His voice today are also being filled with joy not fear. They are not deceived by those who hate God and wish to annihilate His message of peace and hope.

*"And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route."*

*Matthew 2:12*

These wise men followed the Star of Wonder, Star of Light, Star of Royal, Beauty Bright. Are you wise today? Do you still seek after God? Are you increasing in your joyfulness knowing that you will soon see God? We are in the 4<sup>th</sup> day (middle) of Hanukkah (Dec 10-18/2020). God's light is shining forth and will not be dimmed nor will His fire be quenched.

C:\My Documents\WPWin(2020)\Sermons.2020\Special Days\Matthew 12\_1.12.wpd

Date: Dec 13/20

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: What Child is This?

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B. They will Offer a Meaningful Gift - *Matthew 2:11*

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2. Frankincense Many scholars suggest that it symbolizes the Lord's divinity.
3. Myrrh - It symbolizes suffering.

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*Matthew 2:2,7,9,10; Psalm 19:1-4; Acts 2:17,19,20*

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B. The Magi were Overjoyed - *Matthew 2:12*