

Recap
Who Do You Say I Am?
The Magi
Lesson 6 Matthew 2.1-12
122224

In the familiar Christmas story, we often picture three kings riding camels, following a star to worship the newborn Jesus. But the reality of the Magi's journey is far more profound and holds deeper spiritual significance than many realize.

Who were these mysterious visitors from the East? Contrary to popular belief, they weren't kings, nor were there necessarily three of them. The Magi were actually a society of king-advisors and king-makers from Persia, renowned for their wisdom, scientific knowledge, and spiritual practices. They were men of high position and influence, traveling in large caravans befitting their status.

But what compelled these learned men to embark on a grueling 750-mile journey to worship a child they had never seen? The answer lies in a combination of ancient prophecy and divine revelation.

The Magi were likely familiar with Old Testament scriptures, brought to Persia by exiled Jewish scholars. Among these prophecies was Balaam's declaration: "A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17). This foretold the coming of an ultimate king who would rule the world and bring blessing to all nations.

When a unique star appeared in the sky, the Magi recognized it as the fulfillment of this prophecy. They set out for Jerusalem, expecting to find a city rejoicing over the birth of their long-awaited Messiah. Instead, they encountered confusion and, in King Herod, disturbing hostility.

It's a poignant reminder that sometimes those who should be most attuned to God's work can be the least aware of it. The religious leaders in Jerusalem knew the prophecies but failed to recognize their fulfillment. Meanwhile,

these foreigners from a distant land were willing to risk everything to seek out and worship the newborn king.

The journey of the Magi challenges us to examine our own spiritual seeking. Are we content with head knowledge, or are we willing to embark on a journey of faith, no matter the cost? Their story reminds us that true wisdom leads to worship, and that sometimes those who seem furthest from God can be the ones most eager to find Him.

As the Magi followed the star to Bethlehem, they experienced a joy that surpassed all their previous knowledge and achievements. When they finally encountered Jesus - not as a newborn, but as a young child in a house - they responded with profound worship. They bowed down before Him and presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

These weren't random presents, but deeply symbolic offerings:

- Gold: Fit for a king, acknowledging Jesus' royal status
- Frankincense: Used in worship, recognizing His divine nature
- Myrrh: An embalming spice, foreshadowing His sacrificial death

The Magi's worship is all the more remarkable because they saw no miracles, heard no teachings. They simply encountered a child and His mother, yet recognized in that moment the fulfillment of all their seeking.

Their story serves as a powerful metaphor for the human condition. Like the Irish rock band U2 sang, many of us go through life with the nagging feeling that "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." We chase after created things, trying to fill a God-shaped void in our hearts. But as St. Augustine famously said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

The Magi's journey reminds us that true fulfillment, wisdom, and purpose are found only in Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Paul would later write, Christ himself "has become for us wisdom from God" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

But the story of the Magi is more than just a personal spiritual journey. It points to the universal scope of Christ's mission. In the Gospel of Matthew,

written primarily for a Jewish audience, it's significant that the first worshippers of Jesus are Gentiles from a far-off land. This foreshadows the Great Commission at the end of Matthew, where Jesus commands His followers to "go and make disciples of all nations."

The message is clear: Jesus is not just a Jewish Messiah or a Western Savior. He is, as John's Gospel declares, "the Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14). He is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

This universal scope of salvation is the heart of the Christmas message. God's love extends to every nation, tribe, and tongue. Just as He providentially guided the Magi to worship the Christ child, He is still at work today, drawing people from every corner of the globe to Himself.

As we reflect on the journey of the Magi, we're challenged to consider our own spiritual pilgrimage. Are we actively seeking God, willing to follow His leading even when it takes us out of our comfort zone? Are we open to finding Him in unexpected places and recognizing His work in the lives of those who might seem far from Him?

Moreover, the Magi's story compels us to look outward. Just as they traveled far to worship Jesus, we're called to go into all the world with the good news of God's love. Whether it's supporting missionaries in far-off lands or sharing Christ's love with our neighbors, we all have a part to play in God's global mission.

This Christmas, may we recapture the wonder and seeking spirit of the Magi. May we be willing to embark on our own journey of faith, following the light of Christ wherever it may lead. And may we, like those wise men of old, find our ultimate fulfillment and joy in worshipping Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

For in Him, we truly find what our hearts have always been looking for.

1. What surprised you most about the true story of the Magi? How does this differ from popular depictions?

2. The sermon mentions that "it is a miracle when anyone truly seeks after Jesus Christ." What does this mean to you? How have you experienced God's initiative in your own faith journey?
3. The Magi were guided by both Scripture and a supernatural sign. How have you experienced God's guidance through His Word and through circumstances in your life?
4. Discuss the significance of the gifts the Magi brought (gold, frankincense, and myrrh). How do these gifts point to Jesus' identity and mission?
5. The sermon draws a parallel between the Magi's search and the U2 song "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." Before finding Christ, how did this sentiment resonate in your own life?
6. Matthew's gospel begins and ends with a focus on all nations. How does this shape our understanding of Jesus' mission and our role as His followers?