

Dear Wise Christians,

(Pastor holds up a wiseman from the manger set in church.) The wisemen are very prominent at Christmas. We always see them at the stable worshipping at the manger.

We know from Matthew 2:11 that the Wisemen did not come in time to see Jesus in the stable. They came to the house where Mary and Joseph were living in Bethlehem. The distance that they would have traveled from Babylonia or Persia suggests that it could have been more than a year after Christmas that they arrived in Judea.

It may be good that we keep them with our manger sets, because then we won't forget what we do know about them. We don't know much about these men, but we know about their mission and what they accomplished. We see believers searching for Christ and then worshipping him.

The Holy Spirit also has a goal. In this event **The Glory of the Christ-child is Revealed**. That is important for you and me as we exit Christmas and head toward Easter. We could also say this is important as we leave the Old Year of 2018 and enter New Year of 2019.

1. By the star

Do you see the glory of Christ? In this account the star is probably the easiest way to see his glory.

A. Until the invention of modern navigation systems, sailors used the stars to navigate safely through the seas and oceans. However, this star is different. It appears in the sky and marks the birth of the Messianic King, the long-awaited Savior.

1. This is an act of God. The Scriptures tell us that God is Almighty and he controls nature. We see that with Jesus, the Son of God. In Mark, chapter 4, Jesus commanded the winds and the waves in a violent storm, "**Be still.**" Immediately the winds and the waves became calm.

2. In Matthew's telling of this event there are two supernatural things that happen. The star appears at the time of Jesus' birth and later it leads them to the exact house where Jesus and his family are living.

B. When we understand this, we see the glory of Christ.

1. These miracles tell us that this child at the house is no ordinary child.

There were other babies and toddlers in Bethlehem at this time. However, God supernaturally put a star over Jesus' house. God the Father was indicating that Jesus was the Messiah King that had long been promised. The wisemen were led by God, the Holy Spirit to understand this.

2. These miracles help us to understand the miracles that Jesus performed in his ministry were no accident. Nor are they the work of the devil as, some of the Jews suggested. Very clearly the star's function is a display of the power of Almighty God. The miracles of Jesus are a display of the power of the Almighty, Son of God.

C. We want to understand the significance of the star. We need miracles in our life. We especially need salvation from evil and from death in this dark world. The presence of the star reminds us of the power of the Almighty God. He can help us. The Almighty power of Jesus reminds us that he is more than strong enough to save us from sin and death. We have a God and Savior who has worked miracles and continues to work miracles for us. This is the glory of Christ.

2. By the Word

The star helps us to see the glory of the Christ-child. We can still see his glory today in the word of God in Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures prophesy about the Christ-child.

A. The Scriptures foretell of the Christ-child's coming.

1. When the Magi arrive in Jerusalem looking for Jesus, King Herod consults with the religious leaders. These men had knowledge of Scripture. They promptly informed Herod of Micah's prophecy (5:2). The Messianic King was to be born in Bethlehem.

2. The prophecy had more in it. **"...for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."** The Savior would be a ruler. He would govern the people. However, he would be a gentle and kind ruler because he would "shepherd" the people. A good shepherd in those days would care for and feed his flock. This picture fits Jesus. He feeds us with his word. He teaches us about God's love and his kingdom. Jesus also cares and protects us, because the devil is like a roaring lion looking for sheep to devour.

King Herod also serves as an example of why we need a Savior.

B. People need the Christ-child.

1. King Herod who lived and ruled in Palestine had heard of the Scriptures. But he was a man of world and he didn't apply the Scriptures to himself. Herod was lost in spiritual darkness. The only thing he cared about was his kingdom and his wealth. He was willing to kill anybody who got in his way. The people of Jerusalem were disturbed because the news of a newborn king meant Herod would be out for blood.

2. Strangely when the wisemen and you and I go looking for Jesus, we are looking for blood. However, we are looking for a completely different reason. Why do the wisemen travel thousands of miles? Why will you accumulate thousands of miles over the years traveling to a church building like this? We want to hear the good news. When we are spiritually lost, when we get materialistic, the blood of Jesus, God's Son covers everyone of our sins. Otherwise, even though we are much nicer people than Herod, we would be lost forever in spiritual darkness and suffering. That Christ-child would grow into a man. Through his sufferings and death at the cross, he would make us citizens of God's Kingdom which will never perish.

C. In the new year I hope you will make many journeys into the pages of Scripture. Here we see the glory of the Christ-child. Under the covers of this book is the story of our salvation. This book will help us to make our journey from the manger in Bethlehem to the empty tomb near Calvary to the mountain where Jesus ascended in glory into heaven. You will see plenty of darkness in the pages of the secular news. Make sure that you see the light of the glory of Christ in the pages of Scripture. You will be refreshed.

3. By the worshiping Magi

The glory of Christ is revealed in the worship of the magi. They honored Jesus as their Savior King by giving him precious gifts. They honored him as King by obeying the warning in the dream. We are told they returned to their homeland by another route. They were the first Gentiles to worship Jesus, but not the last. You and I worship Jesus today and reveal his glory.

A. We show our faith in Jesus when we bring our gifts. It is true that we are not earthly kings who can bring lavish gifts. However, St. Paul reminds us what makes gifts acceptable to God is a willing heart. In 2 Corinthians 8:12 he writes, **“For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.”**

When we talk in the church about giving gifts to the Lord, we often stress the importance of the gift for the spread of the good news about Jesus. I also usually say something about the fact that it is a part of our worship of Jesus. It can also be emphasized that when you bring a gift to Jesus you are revealing his glory. You are witnessing to the world, "*Jesus is important to me because I am worshipping him and bringing my gifts to him.*" Your family and neighbors are aware that churches collect offerings. They may not know when or how much you give, but if you go regularly to church, they are certain that care enough about Christ to bring gifts. This glorifies Jesus.

B. We also glorify Jesus when we obey the Lord's commands as the wisemen did. The people of the world care very much about material things and befriend those who have wealth. The wisemen chose not to obey or befriend Herod. They may have been un-welcome in Palestine after they turned their backs on Herod. However, they chose a relationship with the Messiah King over a worldly tyrant.

We too want to remain in our relationship with Jesus and have the spiritual and eternal wealth. This is better than obeying and befriending the wealthy and powerful in this life. We may lose money and privilege, however in obeying Jesus, we are doing the right thing and glorifying our Savior.

Conclusion: After Christmas there can sometimes be a letdown, emotionally.

After the good news of Christ being born at Bethlehem and angels singing, we get back to government shutdowns, traffic congestion and long waits at the doctor's office.

I believe that the Holy Spirit by revealing the glory of the Christ-child in the visit of the Magi is reminding us that there is more to the story of Christ than the Son of God lying in the manger. There is so much more. Seeing Jesus revealed as the one who came to work miracles and carry a cross and conquer death is exciting and wonderful. Like the wisemen we journey, we journey through Epiphany to Lent. We journey through Lent to Easter and beyond. Look forward to coming to church and seeing Christ revealed as your Savior! Amen.

THE GOSPEL - Matthew 2:1-12
(NIV 2011)

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi[a] from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

6 “‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’[b]”

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

8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

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. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Footnotes: Matthew 2:1 Traditionally wise men
Matthew 2:6 Micah 5:2,4