

The Wise Men (1)
Sermon – December 25, 2018
Matthew 2:1

The Wise Men are popular figures of the Christmas story. The only problem is that many legends have developed around their story and, by today, they are surrounded by a variety of fictional imagination. Were they Magi, Wise Men or Kings?

They came from the East to look for Him, probably from an area which is now in Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia or Yemen. Although they are often called the 'Three Kings', the Bible does not say how many there were, or that they were kings. One theory is that they might have been Kings of Yemen, as during this time the Kings of Yemen were Jews.

They were certainly men of great learning. The word Magi comes from the Greek word **magos** from where the English word 'magic' comes from. Magos itself comes from the old Persian word **Magupati**. This was the title given to priests.

They had seen an unusual new star in the sky, and knew that it told of the birth of a special king in Israel. No one really knows what the new star in the sky was, and there are many theories including comets, supernovas, a conjunction of planets or something supernatural.

Since in the Bible we read about three different gifts, people concluded that apparently there were three Wise Men. The gospel, however, does not say there were three of them...or five or ten.

The gifts are also all things that come from east of Israel in Arabia. The idea of kings came from the expensive gifts that were given to Jesus- one king for each gift.

In the 8th century, people also granted them names: Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar.

The truth is: we really do not know who they were, but in heaven we can ask them and I am sure they will share with us their true story.

Let us follow now these Wise Men on their journey.

The Bible describes their journey in three parts:

Part 1: From their home to Jerusalem

Part 2: From Jerusalem to Bethlehem

Part 3: From Bethlehem back to their home.

Today we will focus only on Part 1.

In Babylon, Persia and India, many studied the stars. The idea that heavenly signs marked the births and deaths of great leaders was widely accepted.

It is likely that, at the first Christmas, these scholars came from Babylon (in modern day Iraq), where many Jews had remained following their imprisonment. The Jews must have spoken often of God's words and the hope of Israel, that a king would be born amongst their people as Isaiah described:

*For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onwards and for evermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. Isaiah 9:6-7*

He would bring good blessings to all the people of the world.

They were extremely excited about finding this unusual star in the sky.

These Wise Men decided to follow the star and to find the newborn King whose birth was written in the sky.

But why were they searching for King Jesus – is the question? Why were they driven to take this great journey?

They must have heard from Jews that God would be sending the world's Messiah, who would bring healing, peace and joy. They took this news seriously into their hearts, because humans always need more healing, peace and joy. When God gave the sign in the sky, the Wise Men set out to follow the star, which was leading them day and night.

They had a very long journey, both physically and spiritually. They still believed the answers were in the stars. They were very far from knowing the real God. But from this far off distance, they could still be able to find the living and loving God.

This story is telling us that today those who are searching for God can surely find Him. This is our message for today. Despite the spiritual distance we must travel, even the disbelievers and the unknowing can find Jesus, the Messiah of the world. Some still believe in fortune, some still want to knock on wood to have luck, some visit the fortune tellers not knowing how seriously they hurt God with their actions.

Just start to search for the Living God from where you are. Have the urge to know more about Him, ask questions, be open for God's answers, communicate with His signs, and God will guide

you to find the real answers. God will guide you to find Jesus, who brought healing, peace and joy to the world.

These men travelled day and night for more than thousand miles and still they did not stop, nor did they turned back.

If you start today to find Jesus, your journey will be interesting, but less and less difficult. Do not stop. Do not turn back.

The star led them all the way to the Land of Israel.

If you will allow God to lead you, you will be able to find Jesus, and in Jesus your Saviour whom you need the most. Amen