

ST.PETER'S MILTON. Sunday 3 January 2021

Theme: THE WISE MEN'S SEARCH. EPIPHANY

Bible Readings:

Ephesians 3v1-12. The Open Secret. You too – Gentiles.

Matthew 2v10-12 The Visit of the Wise Men.

Hymn 41 As with gladness men of old

Hymn 537 We Three Kings.... Gifts for Jesus.

Collect: *Creator of the heavens, who led the Magi by a star to worship the Christ-Child, Guide and sustain us that we may find our journey's end in Jesus Christ our Lord!*

Introduction: I wonder if you have made any New Year Resolutions? Often people sign up to a Gym but drop out after a week, or a diet programme etc.

My Resolutions? Drink more, a family wedding, finish 2 books. I wonder about the Wise Men in our story today. Did they make any resolutions? Follow that star.

In their special journey and in ours, there may well be various stages or phases on the journey through life. Would like to suggest 3 phases and one major application.

1. THE STAR. A special, supernatural sign. Before Christmas there was a combination of Saturn and Jupiter (too cloudy to be seen here!). Could it have been something like that? An unusual or strange sign in the heavens caused them to start a journey. This journey took time, money and preparation. Some suggest there may have been as many as 100 in the travelling party, as it caused a huge disturbance when they arrived in Jerusalem. Some also suggest that these Magi may have come from Persia and be descendants of those who may have been trained with Daniel and his 3 companions in Babylon! After all they needed skill to interpret the signs of the times.

Today, maybe our current world situation could be causing some to start a spiritual journey, asking deeper questions about the meaning

and purpose of life. After the first lockdown there were some signs of greater interest in prayer and looking into Online Services. What about us? Have we asked some of the deeper questions?

- Is the end of the world nearer?
- Is there any hope beyond death?
- Will Jesus return soon?

This first stage of the journey was long and required patience and perseverance over many miles and months, perhaps up to 2 years. We need to keep going. Asking questions is good...

2. THE SCRIPTURES. The party arrives in Jerusalem and the first question recorded in the New Testament is all about Jesus. 'Where is the one born to be King of the Jewish people?' A great question. Dorothy Sayers wrote a radio play with this title and aired from 21 December 1941 – October 1942 '**The Man Born to be King**' Twelve Cycle of the Life of Christ (note: *Born to be King* is title of a Kung Fu film from Hong Kong!). 'We saw his star in the East and have come to worship Him'. Eventually, they are pointed to the Scriptures which prophecy Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah, a ruler or shepherd (Micah 5v2). It is always good to Search the Scriptures to find the truth about God and His Son Jesus. You may remember so many of the prophecies of Isaiah point to the character and mission of the Messiah eg. 7:14; 9:2,6,7; 11; 53;61... Indeed 60:3 'Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.' Perhaps this prophecy suggested that the visitors were kings?

For us, our spiritual search needs the input of the scriptures in a relevant and engaging way. It is written that in Berea (Northern Greece) some of those who heard the apostle Paul speak 'searched the scriptures daily to see if these things were so'. Can I suggest that you prayerfully ask God to help you read, study and learn from the Scriptures even more this year. In particular ask yourself, how does this passage point me to Jesus? The wise men's search was helped by their exposure to Scripture. Ours will too.

3. THE SAVIOUR. After the providential diversion to Jerusalem and the palace of King Herod, they get back on track when they see

the star again which led them and stopped over the place where the child was. Some say, that this reminds us that God gives us **SECOND CHANCES** after we make mistakes. Indeed, He does and as often as we need to return to Him after make a wrong choice or taking a wrong path. God is waiting to lead us on towards His Son. Note that Matthew's account does not talk about a baby but a child and it is about a house not a manger or a stable now. So, Joseph and Mary probably stayed on in Bethlehem with relatives or even in their own home for many months (up to 24months). Jesus would have been a toddler now, probably walking and maybe even talking? However, it is the actions of the Wise Men and their gifts which point us to the character of this Child.

- They bow down and worship Him. Kings bowing to another King, the King of the Universe.
- Gifts which are both **Practical and Prophetic**. As refugees, they were ready cash for their needs
- **Gold for a King**. Possibly a chest with pieces of gold
- **Frankincense for a Priest**. Incense of prayer, Mediator between God and man
- **Myrrh for a Saviour**. Perfume, embalming lotion, points forward to Sacrifice, death and salvation.

The journey of the Wise Men was complete when they found the **Saviour of the World, the King of the Universe, the High Priest for All Nations** in Jesus, God's Son.

As you read on, you will note that they are warned about Herod's murderous intentions and so take another route back to the East. Our meeting with the Saviour may indeed change our plans and priorities in life. We all need guidance and wisdom each day. God will give it if we ask Him.

Conclusion and Application:

1. Has God been trying to attract your attention through some special sign or event in your life? Like the wise men, are you 'following a star' on a spiritual journey? Or do you know someone who is and has loads of questions? Online Alpha could be a help? LCC Sundays at 6pm, start next week.

2. How well do you know the Scriptures? Would you like to know more? Bible Society 6 week Bible Course is available online or by DVD. If interested, let Simon know.
3. Bow down and worship Jesus. There can be no better thing to do to bring purpose and meaning in your life. Why not use a Hymn book as a prayer book to help you reflect on the life and ministry of Jesus?
Eg. What a friend we have in Jesus
How great Thou art
Jesus, lover of my soul,
My Jesus, my Saviour...

St. Peter's Weekly Prayer Group. (40mins)

Wednesdays 10am Morning Prayer. Psalm and One other Bible Reading. Prayer for ourselves, Weston, the Church and the Nation...

Send an email to simonholloway55@yahoo.co.uk and he will send you an email with a ZOOM link.

Or send a text to 07986274393