

20:20 Vision Ministries—Devotions by Roger Browning Week 52 (December 23-29, 2018)

Matthew tells about the visit of the Wise Men (Magi). Their story will be the focus of our study this week.

Sunday, December 23 (read Matthew 2:1-2)

“We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.” (Matthew 2:2b)

We are used to seeing the Wise Men arrive at the manger in Bethlehem immediately after the birth of Jesus—at least, that scene is portrayed in our Christmas plays. As we will see later this week, they actually do not arrive until several months (maybe a year or more) following His birth. They come from the land of the east seeking the Messiah (v. 1-2). Almost 600 years earlier, God had allowed His child, Daniel, to be carried into captivity to Babylon and later, to Assyria. There he was promoted to chief among the Magi (Daniel 2:48). Apparently, he had taught them about the coming Jewish Messiah, because their descendants are still seeking Him six centuries later. What a marvelous glimpse into the foreknowledge of God! He has a plan that goes way beyond our sight and knowledge (see Romans 8:28).

Monday, December 24 (read Matthew 2:3-6)

When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. (Matthew 2:4)

Rome had appointed Herod “the Great” to be king of the Jews in 40 B.C. Although he is not a Jew, he proudly carries this man-made title. The thought of another King in Jerusalem irritates Herod so much that the whole city is disturbed (v. 3). Calling the religious leaders together, he inquires as to the location of the birth of the Messiah (v. 4). They quote from Micah 5:2 and inform him that Bethlehem is to be the birthplace of their Savior (v. 6). The name Bethlehem means “house of bread”. It is typical of God to send the **Bread of Life** (see John 6:35) into our world in the “house of bread.” God’s Word is accurate down to the smallest detail. How can anyone still have doubts?

Tuesday, December 25 (read Matthew 2:7-8)

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. (Matthew 2:7)

Herod secretly calls for the Magi and questions the exact time the star they were following appeared (v. 7). He sends them to **Bethlehem** under the pretense of wanting to worship Him (v. 8). This brings us to an important concept. These Magi are astrologers who have believed the prophecies of Daniel written almost 600 years earlier. By following the star they saw in the east, these astrologers walk in obedience to all that they know about the coming Messiah. As a result, God reveals His Son to them! I believe that **anyone** who walks in obedience to all the knowledge that he/she has will be shown the Truth of salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord. This wonderful truth levels the playing field for all of us, regardless of current knowledge. Praise His wonderful Name!

Wednesday, December 26 (read Matthew 2:9-12)

And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. (Matthew 2:12)

The star that brought the Magi westward to Jerusalem suddenly reappears over the place where Jesus is (v. 9). They are overjoyed and follow the light to the **house** where our Lord (perhaps one year old) is now living with His parents (v. 10-11). The fact that most people think the Wise Men came to the manger shows how little attention they pay to the details of the Christmas story. I read this hundreds of times before I saw the word "**house**" (in all versions). Upon finding the Savior, they present gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Because there were three different gifts, most people think there were three Wise Men. Actually, there probably were many Magi who made the trip from the east. God warns them in a dream not to go back to Herod, so they depart to their own country using another route (v. 12).

Thursday, December 27 (read Matthew 2:1-12)

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. (Matthew 2:10)

Now that we know the story, I want to use the entire passage to teach five Biblical truths: 1) Wise men (and women) still seek Him (smart alecks do not); 2) Those who seek Him will find Him; 3) Those who find Him will worship Him; 4) Those who worship Him gladly give gifts to Him; 5) Those who worship Him and give gifts to Him go home different than they came! God's Word says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). Are you seeking Him with all your heart or are you just giving lip service to your worship? Do you gladly give Him the "first-fruits" (Exodus 23:19) of your labor or do you place your leftovers before Him? When you complete your time of worship, do you go home a different person? In other words, do you meet the standards of a wise man/woman? If not, start today to trust Him with all your heart!

Friday, December 28 (read Matthew 2:13-15)

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and His mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill Him." (Matthew 2:13)

Joseph and Mary are too poor to afford a lamb when they present God's Son at the temple (see Luke 2:24). After receiving the gifts from the Wise Men, however, they are suddenly well off. God never gives us wealth unless He has a plan for the use of it. In today's text, we see that Joseph is warned in a dream to flee to Egypt (v. 13). How do you think this poor couple could have obeyed the dream if God had not provided for them? The young parents leave at once (v. 14-15), unaware that they are fulfilling God's infallible Word from Hosea 11:1. Praise Him today for His marvelous plan for **your** life and His generous provisions that make **your** journey possible!

Saturday, December 29 (read Matthew 2:16-23)

So he got up, took the child and His mother and went to the land of Israel. (Matthew 2:21)

Herod, the reigning "king of the Jews," realizes that the Wise Men have outwitted him, so he issues a cruel order to kill all the **boys** in Bethlehem and the surrounding vicinity who are two years old or younger (v. 16). God has already removed His Son from the area (v. 13-15), so Herod's plan fails. The king dies when Jesus is very young, allowing His family to move back to the land of Israel (v. 19-21). God leads Joseph to the town of Nazareth to fulfill another prophecy (v. 22-23). I will close with some food for thought that I received in a dream. The first time that the murder of babies was headline news was when Moses, the receiver of the Law was born (Exodus 2:1-10). The second time was when Jesus, the Giver of grace and truth was born (today's text). Could it be that the antichrist has been born since Roe vs. Wade (the court case that began the most brutal murder of unborn babies) became the law of the land in 1973? I was just thinking!