

Wisdom & the Birth of Jesus

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Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him...After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh (Mat 2:1-2, 9-11)

When Jesus was born, wise men from the east came to worship Him. They were astrologers, astronomers, magicians, and or interpreters of dreams. They were considered the intellectual elites of their day. They had studied the Jewish religion. They were aware of a specific prophecy concerning the birth of a ruler (Micah 5:2). They had followed a bright star to the city of Jerusalem. After inquiring about the child, the king of the Jews, the wise men traveled to the little town of Bethlehem and worshipped Jesus.

Events surrounding the birth of Jesus are on the minds of many people this time of year. Everyone is at least vaguely familiar with the story; yet, few recognize its meaning. The child born was no ordinary child. He came to offer the human family what He alone could give: salvation from sin. In this article, we will focus on what the wise men teach us about worldly wisdom and our need for Jesus.

Worldly Wisdom

1. Wisdom of the world is always dated. Have you noticed how what is in vogue today, will be passé tomorrow? In their time, the wise men were on the cutting edge of science and education. When they spoke, people listened. As shown here, they could get an audience with political leaders without invitation. Yet, by today's science, they look primitive.

Worldly wisdom can quickly become dated within a generation. Elites always look outdated to their grandchildren. Paul stated that worldly wisdom and the rulers of the world pass away: conventional wisdom and the elites pass away (1 Cor. 2:6). Therefore, the world needs something more than what today's elites and their wisdom have to offer. The world needs something that transcends time and human intellect. The world needs Jesus.

2. Wisdom of the world is not always entirely wrong. We want to be careful in critiquing worldly wisdom. It has certain benefits. After all, the understanding of the wise men led them to Jesus.

The Bible teaches that humans possess a general awareness of the Creator. Paul explained this in his letter to the saints at Rome (Rom. 1:18-25). We can see evidence of God's

existence in the natural world. Through our experiences and observations, we can conclude we have a Creator.

There is also a sense, longing, and or desire for God within our being. People often speak about feeling that they are part of something bigger than themselves, or that they want to be part of something bigger than themselves. We yearn for deep spiritual, divine connection. Articulating this sense is difficult; yet, we all have it and attempt to fill it. Solomon wrote that we have been endowed with eternity in our hearts (Eccl. 3:11).

This common wisdom is important, but incomplete without God's Son, Jesus. Only Jesus can fulfill the need we acknowledge. Simply trying to be a good person or express our awareness through vocation is not enough to satisfy our need for God. We need grace. We need Jesus.

3. All wisdom points to Jesus. When the wise men finally arrived in Bethlehem, they worshipped Jesus. They offered highly valuable gifts to Him. This is truly astounding. Why did these men worship this child? Perhaps we have traveled a great distance to see a newborn child and brought a small gift. That is not what was happening when the wise men went to see Jesus. Something much more profound was unfolding. Everything these men had hoped to find through their wisdom was revealed in Jesus.

In first Corinthians, Paul wrote, "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:22-24). Paul identifies two different cultures who were confronted by the cross of Jesus: the Jews and the Greeks.

The Jews were looking for a miraculous sign: power. Their conception of the Messiah was about power. On the other hand, the Greeks hoped to find meaning through worldly wisdom. The cross of Jesus confronted both cultures. And, some people from both cultures obeyed Jesus. The cross of Jesus offered true power and true wisdom.

The point of what Paul writes is this: wisdom finds its completion in Jesus. All aspirations of the human heart can only be fulfilled through Jesus. The wise men illustrate the power of Jesus to fill our hearts. The wise men were not wise because of their education. They were wise because they worshipped Jesus. Are we as wise as these men?

Conclusion

There is much that we can learn in the world. Yet, we must be cautious with worldly wisdom. There will come a day when someone will look back on us and wonder, “What were they thinking!?!” We and our wisdom will pass away. All we learned and accomplished in life will be for nothing if we have not been led to Jesus.

Thankfully, we do not need astronomy to find Jesus. We can open our Bibles and read about His birth. The birth of Jesus means we have a God who loves us. We have a God whose love for us was proven by Him becoming one of us. God became human. God came in the form of Jesus to save us from our sins. Therefore, Jesus deserves gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Jesus deserves worship, praise, and adoration. Jesus deserves everything we are and everything we have.