

KESSID SERMON NOTES



Sermon
"Christmas Eve"

Date
12-22-18 & 12-23-18

Speaker
Pastor Danny Clinton

How strange the "Nativity Scene" must look to someone who doesn't understand it.

- It usually shows Mary and Joseph looking after their baby lying on a trough filled with hay. Shepherds, three "kings," animals, and a star...
- In so many ways, the nativity scene points beyond itself, signifying there is much more to the story it depicts.

Today's message will focus on one part of the story that is rather mysterious, highly unusual, but also deeply compelling:

- The arrival of the "wise men," also known as the "Magi."

(Vs) Matt. 2:9b-11 – "And behold the star that they had seen..."

- Their association with Christ's birth almost seems out of place. Only Matthew's Gospel even mentions their visit.
- He gives no explanation or background to the Magi, yet there is a clear significance to their presence.

We can also see from Matthew that several aspects of the Magi within our traditional nativity scene folklore are incorrect.

- First, The Magi were not kings. The word "Magi" refers to pagan astrologers from the East, who sought knowledge from the stars and planets, and interpreted dreams.
- Second, The Magi did not join the shepherds to visit Jesus on the day of His birth. They came on a separate occasion.
- Finally, The Bible never specifies that there were only three Magi. We know their caravan was large, because all of Jerusalem knew when they entered town (Matt 2:3) but we do not know exactly how many there were.

So, what does the Bible say?

- The only other book in the Bible to mention "Magi" is Daniel. About 600 years before Christ.
- They appeared in King Nebuchadnezzar's court when he called his spiritual advisors to decipher his mysterious dream.

(Vs) Dan. 2:1-3 (NIV) – “In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled, and he could not sleep. ² So the king summoned the magicians, enchanter, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, ³ he said to them, ‘I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means.’”

- In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, those called “astrologers” above are the Magi.

As we know, because of God, it was only Daniel who could decipher the King's dream.

- Because of this, Daniel was placed over the pagan mystics of Babylon, surely becoming a teacher and mentor to many of them.
- **Interesting Thought:** “Some of the ‘wise men’ in Daniel's charge were the predecessors of the Magi we see hundreds of years later in the Gospel of Matthew, traveling from the East to worship Jesus.”

Over his lifetime, Daniel gave many and important prophecies.

- Including when the King of Kings would be born.
- So when all those years later, when the Magi arrived in Judea, they started at the most logical place; they went to the King's palace.

(Vs) Matt. 2:1-3 – “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.” ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him...”

- Eventually they found the child...(Vs) Matt. 2:9-12 “After listening to the King, they went on their way...”

In telling us this story, Matthew illustrated a pattern that would repeat throughout the life and ministry of the Messiah.

- He was unwanted - (Vs) John 1:11 – “He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him.”
- He was without honor in His own country - (Vs) Luke 4:24 – And He said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in His hometown.”
- He was rejected - (Vs) Matt. 21:42 – ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone...’

Matthew also expected his readers to catch the striking irony...

“Gentile astrologers discovered the Jewish King by following a star, but the scholars of Israel failed to discern their King while possessing the Scriptures.”

- Pagan Magi (lost and searching people) came to worship the Messiah, while Jerusalem royalty (good people with answers) wanted to kill Him.
- Mathew's words are meant to be full of contrast, sharp, startling and prophetic.
- These Magi left everything behind and traveled to a distant land to find the One foretold by Daniel and the prophets of old.

- Their gifts recognized Him as God, as King, and as Heaven's indescribable gift to us.
- Their story takes us beyond the traditional Nativity Scene into the real Christmas story.
- The story of God drawing men and women from "far off" to be brought near through the blood of Christ.

You may think of yourself as an unlikely candidate to receive God's mercy and love...

- Maybe you feel "far away" from God. If that is the case, the story of the Magi should resonate in your heart...

"The message we find in the story of the Magi, is that God is still drawing men and women from afar to be brought near to Christ."

- The door has been open wide, and salvation is available, and not only to those who seem all put together but to anyone who will call upon the name of Jesus.

(Vs) Eph. 2:13 – "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."