

St John Church of Christ

December 22, 2019

Order of Worship

Worship Leader: Jerry

Gathering Song: No. 1018 Joy to the World (1st & 4th verses)

Welcome: Tom

Scripture Reading: Chris

Luke 1:26-37

Songs

No. 998 What Child Is This? (1st Verse)

No. 1028 O Holy Night! (1st verse)

No. 1012 Go Tell It on the Mountain

No. 995 It Came upon the Midnight Clear (1st verse)

No. 996 On Little Town of Bethlehem (1st verse)

Prayer: Orrin

Song No. 997 O Come, All Ye Faithful

Communion: Richard

assisted by

Fred, Joe, Ben

Songs

Song: No. 1003 Silent Night! Holy Night!

Song No. 1017 Away in a Manger (Jayce to lead 1st verse)

(Children may go to Bible Hour during the singing of the last verse)

Lesson: Wisemen Still Seek Him

Matthew 2:1 - 18

Song No. 922 Jesus Paid It All (1st verse)

Prayer: Teddy

(CCLI #244012t9)



We have more questions than answers concerning who the wise men were who came to visit the little boy Jesus. First, most of the nativity sets are wrong. The shepherds visited the baby Jesus on the night he was born (Luke 2), but the wise men followed one or two years later (Matthew 2). Apparently, Joseph and Mary felt their son, the child of God, needed to grow up in the city of David, close to the capital Jerusalem. It may be Joseph set up a new carpenter shop in Bethlehem, and that's where the wise men from the east found the child.

Who were these men? Matthew's Greek Bible calls them "Magi." Many English Bibles use that same word ("Magi from the east," NIV) and leave it to us to use a Bible dictionary to define it. John

Wycliffe was the first to translate the Bible into English (1382), and he couldn't decide what to call them. He translated *Magi* as "kyn-gis, or wijs men." A few years later, Wycliffe's student, John Purvey, revised the translation and called them "astromyenes" (astronomers). The modern *Today's English Version* does the same thing and calls them "men who studied the stars."

But that raises even more questions. "Were they astrologers?" Since they probably came from Babylonia, what would cause them to travel nearly 1,000 miles? Is it possible they, like the prophet Balaam (the man with the famous talking donkey, Numbers 22), Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, and Melchizedek were worshipers

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of God too?

With so many questions, it didn't take long for people to start making up answers and creating stories about these wise men. Tertullian (155 - 220 A.D.) was the first to imply they were kings. He based his assumption on Psalm 72:10 - 11,

May the kings of Tarshish
and of the coastlands
render him tribute;

may the kings of Sheba
and Seba
bring gifts!

May all kings fall down
before him,
all nations serve him!

Later, Origen (184 - 253 A.D.) made a reasonable assumption that, since there were three gifts, there must have been three kings.

The Bible says they came "from the east." Justin and Tertullian claimed this referred to Arabia, Jerome and Augustine said Babylon, and Clement of Alexandria and John Chrysostom claimed the magi were from Persia (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*). The gifts of frankincense and myrrh point to Arabia, but the Persians and Babylon were famous for their astrologers.

Bede, a famous English monk (672 - 735 A.D.), suggested the "three wise men" represented the three parts of the known world: Asia, Africa, and Europe and were descended from the three sons of Noah. He continued his speculations by saying they represented all three age groups - Melchior with a gray beard, Balthazar with a dark beard (and possibly dark skin), and Gaspar was young and beardless.

They gave three gifts. Irenaeus (born 130 A.D.) claimed Melchior gave gold, which is appropriate for a king; Gaspar gave incense, which is used in worship; and Balthazar gave myrrh foreshadowing Christ's death.

All of this is interesting but purely speculative. We don't know anything more than what Matthew tells us, and that should be enough. Next week I'll write about the little drummer boy, the dancing cattle, and ... or not.



News and Notes



Wednesday Bible Studies

With Christmas and New Year's Day falling on Wednesdays this year, we are adjourning our regular programs for the next two weeks. Start making plans to be with us as we resume on January 8, 2020. Happy New Year!

For Your Prayers

Happy holidays everyone. There is so much to be thankful for!

Let's remember those who are traveling, and those who are by themselves at this festive time of year. It is also a sad time for many who have lost loved ones during this season in prior years. Let's pray for them - and, perhaps, try to reach out and share our love.

More About Us

Meeting Times

- **Sundays**
 - ◇ Leisure Homestead 9:30
 - ◇ Bible Study for All Ages 10:00
 - ◇ Worship 11:00
- **Wednesdays**
 - ◇ Community Bible Study 2:00 p.m.
 - ◇ Dinner & Devo 6:30
 - ◇ Bible Classes 7:00
- **Every Other Monday**
 - ◇ Ladies' Bible Class 7:00 P.M.

Elders

- Richard Brensing
- Teddy Gingrich
- Terry Sallee
- George Shelton
- Tom Turner

Deacons

- Jerry Kinnamon
- Chris Mansel
- Orrin Feril

Some Things to Think About

"When we die, we leave behind us all we have, and we take with us all we are." - Unknown

Albert Schweitzer said, "Anything you have that you cannot give away, you do not really own; it owns you."

"Do not pray for easy lives," said Phillips Brooks. "Pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks."

Live a good and honorable life, then when you get older and think back, you'll enjoy it a second time.