

The Monster Magi and Messiah, Part 2: Wise Men Still Seek Him
Desert Light Christian Church, December 21, 2014



Every year, every pastor has a choice to make. Christmas sermons. Hey pastor, have you ever dug up old ones you hope they forgot so that when you preach them, they won't know that you're regurgitating old material? Do you borrow another from someone else? Yet also you put the nose to the grindstone and try and come up with another one, fresh and new. The exciting part is, Jesus is inexhaustible. The amazing meaning of the incarnation (that means becoming flesh) of the Son of God is something one could never fully explore. But alas, it still begs some creative thinking, deeper digging, and listening around.



Pastor, you pray that one more Christmas season, by the Holy Spirit, God's people once again marvel at, revere, and love the reality that God came, was an embryo, zygote, a fetus, unborn baby, infant, toddler, child, adolescent, and finally adult male. In my search for material this year I heard a radio evangelist mention something about a monster, magi, and a Messiah. Herod was flesh and blood satanic opposition to Jesus' coming. The Magi, most likely disciples of the prophet Daniel's society of magi confirmed that Jesus' coming wasn't a historical accident but a precisely planned and prophesied act of God in human history.

Christmas is summed up in one verse, Galatians 4:4-5, ***“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those that were under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons.”*** That did it. Part of God's fullness of time included a monster and magi into the story of His Son. Last week we covered the monster, this week, the magi.

The Messiah makes for a merry Christmas. You and I like the Magi, simply have to **seek Jesus and worship Him!**



Wise men still seek Him. The wise men, or Magi from the Greek word *magoi* were seeking and found Jesus. Today, if one is wise, they'll seek after Jesus and according to Jeremiah 29:13, they will find Him.



Traditions assumed there were 3 three Magi since they brought 3 gifts. Magi were Persian priests, counselors, and cabinet members of the state. Over time, people exaggerated the traditions about the Magi. By the 3rd century A.D., they're kings. A 14th century Armenian tradition names them as Balthasar, King of Arabia; Melchior, King of Persia; and Gaspar (a popular name today among Romanian gypsies), King of India.

As far back as Daniel's time, the ancient magi were known as experts in interpreting dreams, Darius the Great put them over the religion of Persia according to Heroditus. They were political counselors through Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian periods who chose and elected kings. Daniel the Hebrew prophet was one of them. He became Rab-mag or translated, ***“chief of the magicians”*** (Daniel 4:9; 5:11), Chief Magi

administrator in two empires: Babylon and Persia. Daniel's rise to supremacy provoked jealous plots among the old established and corrupt magi and led to them having Daniel, a newcomer who had great integrity and worshiped Israel's God rather than their pantheon of gods, thrown into the lion's den. God saved Daniel and the King of Persia saw God's protection and threw the corrupt magi into the lions' den and the lions feasted on them immediately. This cleaned out the corrupt Magi from the empire and allowed Daniel to train and lead the magi and make his own Daniel school of magi after his own and God's leading. Daniel's vision of "The Prince" (to be announced by a "star") stayed with the Magi 5 centuries later. As the chief, he surely instructed other Magi regarding his God, God's word, and God's future purposes. The later magi who were Daniels' legacy and followed his steps saw from his written prophecies Daniel not only accurately but exactly predicted Alexander, Hanukkah, the time of Jesus' coming, and surely those who followed after him knew all of this. But he had other revelations he wasn't allowed to write down (Daniel 12:4). Was the star, not written of, passed on orally by his disciples through 5 centuries? There isn't any reason to say no.

Magi, whose political influence allowed them to be Persian-Parthian "king makers" entered Jerusalem in the latter days of Herod seeking Jesus. During Herod's lifetime, Parthians slaughtered Crassus' Roman legions at Carrhae; Rome's 1st defeat in 55 bc. It was a memory of trauma in the Roman psyche. The Parthians invaded in the time of Herod's father in 40 BC, Antipater, and Antipater retreated. By Jesus' birth however, the once scary Parthian kingdom was racked by internal dissension. Phraates IV, an unpopular and aging king, had once been deposed then restored. It's not unreasonable to think Persian Magi were maneuvering to choose his successor.

Could it be that from Daniel's messianic prophecies of a kingdom and Jewish king they may have sought for Him to be their political king? But after encountering Jesus, it's obvious they didn't purpose to put Him on their throne as they understood Jesus was the Son of God and savior. The Magi installed a man named Phraataces as the new ruler of Parthia.

The Magi most likely didn't come with just 3 camels as usually pictured. Anyone of such rank travelling with such wealth, would have had a powerful escort. According to Matthew 2:3, ***"When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him"*** they didn't enter Jerusalem unnoticed, everybody knew they had arrived and worried as representatives from a powerful country they might come demanding subjection. They probably entered with traditional eastern pomp. After finding the babe and presenting their gifts, the Magi didn't return through Jerusalem but, ***"warned in a dream"*** departed, ignoring Herod.

6 centuries before Christ, Daniel had several Messianic prophecies and precise predictions of Gentile world history. If one measures Daniel's prophecy of 70 weeks from the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus' decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem of March 14, 445 B.C., the Angel Gabriel told him the precise day that Jesus would present Himself as King to Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25).

[1] Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east.

Wise men is an accurate translation of, *magoi*, or magi in some English translations. Wisdom's reputation was that it came from the east (1 Kings 4:30). At one time, wisdom was a treasured virtue and value. Today, wisdom is a lost island in the Sea of Information.

In today's information culture, too often data is treasured, but does today's western culture even understand wisdom? In James 1:5 God guarantees it to whomever asks. If anyone really wants it, it starts by fearing God (Proverbs 9:10). But to the one who truly wants wisdom it is a lifestyle of seeking it (Proverbs 2:4). It's worth more than wealth, because with it, a person generates wealth (Proverbs 3:14, 8:11, 16:16). Wisdom came from the east, but so did war, making Herod worried. At this time Herod and Jerusalem were vulnerable. Herod asked when they came... **to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?"** This was an insulting snub to Herod who gave *himself* the title, "King of the Jews," but due to weakness in Rome and Rome's fear of Parthia he had to be friendly. **For we saw his star.**

YOU WILL SEEK ME AND
FIND ME WHEN YOU SEEK
ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART.
Jeremiah 29:13

How did they know which star was His? These men's basic education made them know the stars like a Google map can tell you how to get to Central ave. **when it rose and have come to worship him.**" They were pursuing God, not politics. **When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him;** all Jerusalem knew about this **and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.**

The fake news at that time was that Herod was the legitimate king of the Jews The leaders of the Jews had to try and find out who would be the prophesied king. The gentile Magi had a relationship with God and were seeking Jesus. God made sure they found him. Whoever seeks for the Lord will find Him.

**"Call unto me, and I will answer thee,
and shew thee great and mighty
things, which thou knowest not."**

Jeremiah 33:3 (KJV)

The Lord waits for a disciple to come TO Him. He reveals His plans and purposes to those who seek Him (Jeremiah 29:13, 33:3).

Sometimes He won't reveal things (Deuteronomy 29:29). If one is confused over something Jesus doesn't want to reveal, He'll give the person great peace in in the situation when not knowing the details.

When thinking of seeking God, burned into memory is the picture of my mother on her knees, in her nightgown, praying before going to bed. She prayed every night for 5 years, "God show me how to serve you!" Elders from one of the Karen tribes of Burma looked into the sky and cried out, "Maker of all, show us who you are!" They had a vision of a man with his face in a banana leaf. One of them spotted Missionary George Boardman reading his bible in the jungle, and as an open book is like a banana leaf, the tribal man came to him, pointed to his bible and called Boardman to his tribe. The Boardman's learned their language and wrote the Bible into it and shared the gospel. The first one baptized was Tha Byu in 1828 as the first believer. When someone seeks God, not only by prayer but in the way they value and treat others, like the Roman centurion Cornelius in Acts 10, God will do a supernatural work that they may hear the news of Christ according to Acts 17:24, and Jeremiah 33:3. There is a well-known proverb: "You can only steer a moving ship." God guides those who are doing something He values, or seeking Him (1 Corinthians 15:58, Jeremiah 29:13). Do something for God or seek Him and you'll find Him.

Just as God has a special plan for Israel he has a special, individual, and distinct plan for each nation, and person **"And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, [27] that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward**

him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:26-7). A wise person seeks Him still.

[5] They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: [6] “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”

[7] Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly (the first meeting was public) and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. [8] And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”

[9] 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.

[10] When they saw the star, these men watched the stars, it was part of their profession. God met them in their world and brought them to His Son. **they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.** I wonder how Magi rejoiced, did they shout, dance, or whirl? Worship of Jesus is a time for joy! **[11] And going into the house** by this time they were at a house, no more stable and manger **they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.** Wise men seek and wise men worship. Have we learned the art of true worship? Notice, they followed stars, but they let the creation point to the creator.



They also knew that worship meant giving. Giving and joy! It’s worship!

Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. Daniel’s secret sect of the Magi presented gifts to the newborn Jewish Messiah King. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh were prophetic and practical, speaking of our Lord’s offices of king, priest, and savior. Gold speaks of His kingship; it is the symbol of coming from God. The practical was that they’d need cash for their trip to Egypt. For us, do we trust God to provide and give of our own treasure, as part of worship? Frankincense, a spice used as priestly incense represents prayer. He prayed in John 17 for us all, and taught us to pray. Do we give God time in fellowship? It was practical in making a home smell pleasant. Myrrh was embalming ointment signifying His death. The plant had to be pierced so the aromatic sap would run. Jesus’ follower also must die.

In the new heavens and earth, He will only receive gold and frankincense (Isaiah 60:6) since He died once for all.

[12] And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. They were dreamers, and interpreters of dreams. God met them in their world. They let God tell them what to do. That’s one of the things we struggle with. We as a free people find obedience to a king not our normal experience. To give yourself to God to obey Him is only possible because I trust Him. I know His way even when it goes against how I feel is best because He loves me.

The birth of Christ says He wants to be like us. His death says He loves us. His resurrection says He knows what He’s talking about.

A wise person knows that God’s love is greater than what one feels. A mature person feels with what is wise. I pray that this Christmas we seek Him and are wise! Paul Overstreet’s chorus from His song, *Wise Men Still Seek Him* says it well, and the rest, *The Wisest Worship*, by E. J. Villanueva,

Wise men still seek Him,/ realize how much they need Him, following where He may lead them,/ wise men still seek Him./

They waited 500 years, those wise men, Magi, rulers, and seers, from the school of Daniel the prophet, followed divine revelation, not mystical gossip, from a faraway nation, followed a prophesied star, travelled west long and far, to fall on their face, in worship and give place to the king of kings.

Wise men still seek Him,/ realize how much they need Him, following where He may lead them,/ wise men still seek Him./

Crossed the desert arid, an audience with Herod, told him what they came for wasn't another Parthian war but to worship the King of the Jews, for He was their king too, they caused a stir, in the city of jer/usalem, and they set off to Bethlehem,

Wise men still seek Him,/ realize how much they need Him, following where He may lead them,/ wise men still seek Him./

The star stood still and they were filled, with joy and delight for the boy that night, the little babe who came to save, women and men from their sin, in adoration, they gave to Him, gold for a king's nativity, frankincense for divinity, myrrh for mortal humanity,

Wise men still seek Him,/ realize how much they need Him, following where He may lead them,/ wise men still seek Him.

Herod sought the Lord, whom the Magi adored, his decision, was to kill him, the wise men had a vision, an angel in a dream, that it was time to flee, they made a plan to return to their land, avoiding an international episode they went by a different road

Wise men still seek Him/ realize how much they need Him, following where He may lead them/ wise men still seek Him.

Jesus lived life, at 33 died, for us crucified, with love, from above, paid the price with His sacrifice, from death risen, like the magi's wisdom, to give up cynicism, a star led from the east, and now the least we can do, for me and you is worship the Son of God.

Wise men still seek Him,/ realize how much they need Him, following where He may lead them,/ wise men still seek Him.