

Christmas

First Christmas : The Wise Men

Foundation

Bible passage: Matthew 2.1-12

A lot of effort has been put into trying to find an astronomical phenomenon to explain the star and every few years the media like to report on some new idea. However, all the indications in the Bible are that it was not a natural phenomenon and therefore all the speculations are a rather a waste of time.

“they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him.”

The Bible gives us very little information about these men, but we are told all we need to know. The men (being wise) deduced that a new king would most likely be born in the capital and so went to see Herod first. Herod was an Edomite but ruled as King over Israel under the authority of the Romans. Whatever others might think Herod clearly saw the possibility of a Israelite king as a threat to his reign and that of his family.

Magi

The visitors are called *magoi* by Matthew, which our Bibles tend to translate as “wise men”. They came from the East, and we know from the Book of Daniel that *magoi* were found in Babylonia centuries before. But they could have come from much further East. The only other times we encounter the word *magos* is twice in the Acts of the Apostles where it clearly refers to practitioners of the magic arts, forbidden throughout the Bible. It is inconceivable that Matthew would have made up the idea that such people came to see Jesus.



When the religious leaders of Israel were presented with the question about where the Messiah would be born, they had no doubt that it would be in Bethlehem because that is what the Old Testament said.

The quotation from Micah chapter 5 verse 2 (see Matthew 2.6) clearly shows that the Messiah would shepherd the people of Israel. Yet the fact that the wise men were not in fact Israelites and had been drawn by God to see the child and to worship him (v11) was a sign that His kingdom would be greater than just Israel. Jesus' ministry mostly took place in Judea and Galilee, but after the resurrection He sent His disciples out into the world with the message about Him. Therefore, the coming of the wise men following the star has been seen as a prelude to the spreading of the light of the gospel.

The Bible does not say that there were three wise men, nor explain their gifts. However, there are some traditional explanations which will be part of unit 20 when we look at the carol “We Three Kings”, which is a catchier title than “We Undisclosed Number of Kings”.



The visit by the Wise Men showed that Jesus came to shepherd not just Israel, but all who will worship Him.