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The Star of Bethlehem and the King of Jerusalem; Matt 2:1-12

GPBC

6.3.18

Introduction – The birth of Christ is surrounded by mystery and the unexplained and the divine. That’s what we expect knowing that the birth of Christ involves the eternal Son of God being born as a man. Today’s passage is one of the most well-known and beloved of the birth narratives and is a perfect example of mystery, the unexplained, and the divine hand of God; the visit of the Magi.

There are so many details surrounding this story we simply don’t know. So many questions that this passage raises for which we simply do not have the answers, although many have suggested various proposals through the years.

Even Hollywood has tried to offer some answers from time to time. One of my family’s favorite Christmas movies is Christmas Vacation, although I keep my finger on the skip button for a few scenes. I can’t help but like Clark Griswald, maybe because he reminds me of myself. I have to admit I’ve thought about taking the chainsaw to a few items before.

The last scene of the movie Clark enlightens his family with the true meaning of the Christmas star. He says that tonight the star is all that matters. It means something different for everyone, and tonight I know what it means to me.

I always say – “Wrong!”

I believe the reason why the Bible leaves so many details unanswered is so that we don’t get distracted by the surrounding events. To make Christmas about the star is precisely what Matthew wants to avoid by not telling us everything about the star! The point of the passage is not the mysteries surrounding the birth of Christ. The point is that the mysteries are pointing to Christ. With that in mind, let’s examine the text together.

- I. The True Star
 - a. There is a lot of mystery around the star that appeared in the heavens to guide the wise men to Bethlehem. Some suggest it was the planet Jupiter, known as the king of planets. Some say it was the

alignment of Jupiter and Saturn. Maybe a low hanging meteor, maybe a comet.

- i. The problem with all those suggestions is the attempt to explain the supernatural with natural explanations. There is nothing normal or usual or routine about God taking on flesh. The behavior of the star leaves no other explanation than God was doing something extraordinary to mark the birth of His Son.
 - ii. The star seems to have appeared and then disappeared and then reappeared. Vv2,9
 - iii. It seems that the star that lit up the heavens was only seen by the wise men., v2, 9 – why else was Herod dependent on the wise men after having learned about the star?
 - iv. It seems that the star moved – v9 – it led them to the place where the child was.
 - v. The star then hung over the house where Joseph, Mary, and Jesus lived.
 - vi. The star is clearly a divine, supernatural occurrence in the heavens meant especially as a guide and revelation to a select group of men whom God was bringing to Bethlehem to worship His Son. V2 – We saw His star...and have come to worship Him!
- b. The point is not the mysterious star in the heavens. The point is the light of the world who has come from the heavens.
- i. Listen to the words of John 1:4-9.
 1. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through Him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.
 - ii. The fact that these men came from the East testifies to the truth that Jesus came as the true light to give life to all who would believe. Just as John the Baptist was not the light but came to bear witness to the true light that all might believe, so

the star is not the light but came to bear witness to the true light that all might believe.

- c. The true star of Bethlehem is not in the sky; He's in the house.
 - i. Notice that the wise men knew the mysterious star in the sky was not the point, but rather it was He to whom the star led them. V2 – His star; vv10-11
- d. Let's not get distracted by questions about the star and miss the Light of the World!

II. The Real King

- a. There are three different kings in this story as well.
- b. First we have the wise men who are believed by some to be kings – We Three Kings is a well-known Christmas carol.
 - i. There is just as much mystery surrounding these wise men as of the star.
 - ii. We don't really know how many wise men came – we say three because three different gifts were presented. But more than likely the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh were gifts given by the collective group.
 - iii. Who were they, where exactly did they come from, how did they have knowledge of a coming King of the Jews, what was their knowledge of God – all these are questions that are simply not answered by the text for the same reasons as to the unknown details about the star.
 - iv. They were likely Persians who were known to be skilled at astronomy and astrology. It is possible their understanding of God and his promise to send a ruler to his people goes all the way back to Daniel who interacted with the wise men of Babylon.
 - v. But the real king of the story is not these kings is it? These kings had come to worship the king, and they did so by offering him gifts. Some have suggested a rich symbolism in the gifts. Gold represented that Jesus is King. Frankincense represented that Jesus is Priest. Myrrh represented his death that was to be the fulfillment of His birth.
 - vi. I don't think there's anything wrong with suggesting the symbolism, but I do, however, think the point is not the

symbolism but rather the act itself. These kings brought to Jesus their treasure. They fell down and worshipped the true king by offering Him their treasure. In so doing, these men demonstrate for us sincere worship – the giving of earthly treasure to Him who is the greatest Treasure!

- c. The second king we see is Herod. Herod had been declared by Rome to be king of the Jews. He was not appointed by God to be their king. God had already promised His King and that His king would come from Bethlehem – v6 – Micah 5:2.
 - i. The chief priest and scribes were aware that God would bring the true King. The people of Jerusalem were aware that God would bring the true King – that’s why they were troubled when Herod was troubled – they knew Herod was ruthless and cruel. Herod was just arrogant enough to think that he could thwart the plan and purpose of God – so he thought to deceive the wise men, and we’ll see next week that he tries to slaughter the Christ.
 - ii. O the foolishness of man to think he can overcome the wisdom of God. 2 examples in this very text of the true king rules over Herod the king. Vv7-8, 12
- d. Third we see in this text the true King of the Jews, the true King of Jerusalem. The true King of the world.
 - i. Appointed by God – v2 – born king of the Jews
 - ii. Announced by God – v2 – the star
 - iii. Promised by God – v6 – Micah 5:2
 - iv. Worshipped by Jew and Gentile – v11
 - v. Remember the theme of the book of Matthew is The King and His Kingdom. This King will rule over all other kings. Some kings, like the wise men, will worship Him. Some kings, like Herod, will despise Him. But all kings will come under His rule. His will is accomplished above the will of earthly kings. V12.
- e. Let’s not get distracted by the mystery surrounding the wise men and miss the wisdom of God in drawing wise men to His Son. Let’s not go the way of Herod and reject the true King of all.

Conclusion – The star is not whatever it means to you – the star is the glory of God pointing us to the One who came to make us more than we could ever be!