



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 125 - The Visitors from the East (Matthew 2)

The Mysterious Wise Men

Some of the most fascinating people in the Christmas story are the ones we know the least about. We know the wise men weren't kings; they were advisors to kings. We know they didn't come from the Orient—the Far East—they came from the Near East, probably Mesopotamia. But apart from that, we know very little about them. We don't even know how many wise men there were.

- What might be a reason Matthew left the identity of the wise men and the nature of the Christmas star so unclear?
- How is it beneficial for us *not* to know anything more specific about the wise men?
- What should be our real focus when reading this account?

An Audience with King Herod

No one was more surprised by the wise men's coming than Herod. Knowing the new king wasn't one of his sons didn't stop Herod from reacting in paranoid rage.

- Since God knew Herod would kill the young boys in Bethlehem, why would He choose to reveal Jesus' birth to the troubled king anyway?
- How does the wise men's visit leave Herod without excuse for his failure to repent and believe in the Christ Child?
- If Herod had truly repented, how could he have been a blessing for God's people in Jerusalem?

Escaping Herod's Wrath

Herod didn't repent. When the wise men failed to return, he was outraged. He gave orders to his soldiers to kill every boy in Bethlehem less than two years in age.

- Why might historians like Josephus not mention such a vicious crime against children?

Joseph's immediate obedience to the warning dream saved Jesus' life.

- What urgent warnings do you see in God's Word for you?
- Why are we often so slow to listen to God's warnings and act on them?

Out of Egypt

After Herod died the coast was clear. Joseph gathered up his family and headed back to the Promised Land. God warns him to avoid Bethlehem where the reign of Herod's son Archelaus was beginning with rebellion and terrible bloodshed. Instead, God directs Joseph to settle in the north in an insignificant little town called Nazareth.

- Why would God send His Son to be raised in Nazareth far from the spotlights in Jerusalem?
- What unexpected paths has God led you on in your life?
- What does it mean to you to realize Jesus is content to be with you always—no matter where you are or how insignificant your life may seem?

To learn more about the wise men, the star, Herod the Great and Archelaus, check out the **Men's NetWork** Bible study: *Joseph: Carpenter of Steel*.