

Matthew 2:1-12
(Isaiah 60:1-3)
“The Quest”

Introduction

There are many interesting questions that this story leaves unanswered: What sort of star did they see? A conjunction of planets? A comet? A “new” star? How many wise men were there? What eastern country did they come from? How old was Jesus when they found him? What happened to them after their return home? We don’t know. They appear and disappear within the scope of twelve verses. Yet they leave a picture of the pursuit of God that is staggering, and that calls into question our casual, easygoing approach to knowing God, to knowing truth, to discovering meaning. They serve as compelling examples to those who desire to know the Lord of life, and are willing to follow such light as they have been given to its source.

Body

- 1. They remind us that – unlike lesser journeys where the journey itself may be worth more than its destination – on this greatest journey of all, the journey’s worth is decided completely by the worth of its destination.**

The wise men were serious and intentional in their desire to know God, and their desire was not based upon expediency or proximity. We don’t know how much God had already revealed to them, or by what mode, but we know that these were not casual stargazers. They were searching the cosmos in order to know its Creator. This is the first thing that marks them.

Some people are seekers and questioners all their lives, not because they really seek truth, but because they enjoy the quest, or because like the first century Athenians they spend their time talking about the latest thing. It is considered arrogant in most academic circles to believe that you know the truth of a matter, or that there is any ultimate, universal truth to know. Yet each one of us longs to know the truth about life’s meaning, about the reality of God, about how we can be at peace with him, and how we can survive the death that will come for each of us.

Until, like these wise men, we become serious and intentional in our search for the truth of God, we will probably never know the Lord of life. We will be instead like Herod and the religious leaders of Israel who were confident that they were the people of God and that they had the Word of God, and yet who failed to recognize their Messiah, for whom they had waited and prayed all their lives, when he came to the village next door. In fact, they would have killed him if they could, because he threatened the status quo of their comfortable lives.

As we stand at the end of another year and the start of a new, it is a good and fitting

time for us to ask ourselves whether or not we are still seeking the Lord of life, pressing on with serious intention after his deepest purposes for us, whether or not we are growing in intimacy with him.

2. They remind us that those who seek the Lord with all their heart put everything on the line.

They left palaces and the pleasures of home, crossing deserts to follow what light they had and, hopefully, to find the Lord of life. No matter if the star led them to the end of the earth, they would follow, exchanging corruptible crowns for incorruptible. Contrast this with Herod who, though he was a mere six miles north east of Bethlehem, and felt threatened by the story told him by the wise men, nevertheless was too lazy to be bothered to make the trip himself, or even to send his own representatives to find out first-hand whether or not the report was true. "You find him and then come tell me."

How like so many of us, born into the church, surrounded with claims that at times are unsettling to our comfortable lives, yet who are perfectly willing to say to others, "You check it out. If there's anything to it, come tell me." So we miss the Lord of life.

3. They remind us that the pursuit of God leads to joyful worship.

Note their joy at finding Jesus. If you have never rejoiced to find him, maybe you haven't yet found him. Note, also, that they worshiped him. Their worship was not a mere formality. It cost them their pride and their wealth. They did not find him in a palace, nor even in a rich man's home, but in simple circumstances. Yet they bowed low before him, and offered him precious gifts. If you have really met him, you will understand completely their response. If you haven't met him, their behavior may seem strange.

4. They remind us that true worship leads to radical obedience and witness.

Having been warned, they obeyed, even though it could have put them in jeopardy. This was the proof that they had really found what they had been looking for, that they had met the Lord. When you have followed the light to its source, when you've met the Lord of life, you know that "the safest place in all the world is in the center of his will." Faith is validated by what the apostle Paul called "the obedience of faith." There is no sense in finally meeting God and then going on trying to play god.

Conclusion

This meeting is merely the beginning of the journey, the approach trek to the base camp of the knowledge of God. Eternity will not be long enough to explore all the wonders of the mountain of the Lord. How tragic that most spend their lives lost in the flatlands or foothills, knowing nothing of the majestic vistas God alone can grant to those who make the quest, and following the light of God's grace to its Source.

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