

“Advent”

Week #3

Introduction

In Matthew’s Gospel we are given an account of the Magi; wise men from the East who came to worship Jesus. Who were these mysterious visitors? We very have little information about them. We don’t know how many there were, only that three of their gifts were listed by Matthew. But as we consider their journey of faith we find lessons we can apply to our own faith journey and worship of the King of Kings.

Ice Breaker (Optional):

Do you have a nativity set with wise men? How they are depicted?

Study Questions (45 MIN)

God draws us by Grace

Q1. Read Matthew 2:1-2, 9-10; John 6:44; Ephesians 2:8; John 12:32

Matthew tells us that wise men¹ from the eastern lands had seen a star and came to worship the king of the Jews. These wise men were not Jewish, yet they recognized, by what they saw, that there was a “newborn King of the Jews”, even though the Jews who lived nearby had missed it. How does John 6:44 help explain this? It is significant that God drew Gentiles to His son, and hints at the way God’s grace would be extended through Jesus. (John 12:32) What are some things that alert us to God trying to capture someone’s attention? Share how God drew you to Himself initially.

¹magos - the name given by the Babylonians (Chaldeans), Medes, Persians, and others, to the wise men, teachers, priests, physicians, astrologers, seers, interpreters of dreams, augers, soothsayers, sorcerers etc.

Identifying Imposter Kings

Q2. Read Matthew 6:24; 1 John 2:15-16

Herod was not a king by royal lineage, but by the appointment of the Roman Senate. And although he was not the true King of the Jews, he fought fiercely to retain that role. It is possible that in our own lives, things have set themselves up to be our “king” that are imposters; wealth, pleasure, knowledge, pride or any number of things can wield more influence on us than God if we let them (Matthew 6:24). Can your group identify some of the “imposter kings” that battle for your

allegiance? (1 John 2:15-16) How does pursuing worshipping Jesus the true king break the hold of the imposters in our lives?

Knowing about God versus Knowing God

Q3. Read Matthew 2:3-6; Jeremiah 29:13

There was a major difference between how the wise men reacted to Jesus and how the priests and teachers of the law reacted. What were the religious leaders able to tell Herod about the Messiah’s birth? (Matthew 2:3-6) If they had that knowledge of the Messiah, and saw the appearance of a sign in the heavens and travelers came seeking “the king of the Jews”, how would you expect them to respond? There is no indication that they took any action when they heard the Messiah had come. We also run the risk of knowing about Jesus without truly encountering Him. What are some of the ways you can make the study of God’s Word less of an intellectual exercise and more of an act of encounter and worship?

Wrap-Up

In Matthew’s Christmas story we see three very different responses to Jesus’ arrival. The wise men sought to worship Him, Herod feared Him, and the priests and teachers of the law apparently ignored Him. This Christmas season we can choose how we respond as God graciously draws us to Himself. If we find “imposter kings” trying to impose on us, we can choose to recognize Jesus as our true king and follow His leading instead. May we, like the Magi, pursue God and worship Him with overwhelming joy as we encounter Him.

Memory Verse

... *"Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:2 ESV*

Prayer (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life and other needs (see space to write on back).

Challenge:

As you see images of the wise men this holiday season, let it be a reminder to stop and worship the true King of Kings.

