

Title: WISE MEN CHALLENGE THE WORLD, MATTHEW 1:1-12
(Chatham, NJ; 01/10/16, AM) [Pc – Narrative Analysis]

Theme: Wise men seek the new king, and their presence stirs up anxiety among political and religious leaders.

Purpose: To draw out the meaning of this episode for the Christian living in contemporary society.

Introduction:

1. The presence of wise men from the East is unique to Matthew's account.
2. Their story does more to the whole narrative of redemption than to affirm the place of his birth and its fulfillment.
3. That the messiah would be born in the city of David was an established fact reaffirmed by Micah's prophecy.
4. Let's examine this episode as it relates to the entire story of redemption and how it affects us today.

I. The Story of the Wise Men

A. Characters and location

1. Principles:
 - wise men from the East – magicians, astrologers, and idolaters who would have been despised by the Jews; yet God invites them to this “coming out”
 - Herod – a brutal, paranoid ruler who tolerates no threats to his power
 - religious leaders – those to whom God had entrusted His Word
 - the child Jesus, a new king – the cosmic sign points to Him
2. Secondary: Mary and Joseph
3. 1st location: Jerusalem, the seat of religious and political power
4. 2nd location: Bethlehem, a tranquil domestic setting (a house, not the stable)
5. All of this occurs in a small, obscure outpost of a large empire among a people quite troubling and meddling to Rome

B. Plot

1. It begins with a star: God's means of revealing redemption to the Gentiles
2. Wise men, who study such things, come looking for the new king
3. Can you picture them on a moonless night, gazing into the sky, and using all their worldly (idolatrous?) techniques to discern wisdom
4. God uses this to bring them to Jerusalem and eventually to the very place of Jesus' residence where they worship him
5. It is, however, insufficient in itself with guidance from Scripture
6. Only God's Word can guide them and us to the true king

C. Danger and Intrigue

1. Intrigue and fear accompany the revelation of his birth
2. Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem was also troubled, 3
3. We know why Herod was troubled. But was Jerusalem troubled because of the threat to Herod? Why didn't the Jews rejoice at the news? Was the source of this announcement, pagan magicians, beyond their experience?
4. How well did this sit with the rumors among the shepherds and the talk among the people of John's family about some priest in old age having a unique child?

D. Fulfillment and Concealment

1. The star leads the wise men to their destination
2. They experience great joy, and they worship the King
3. More divine guidance tells them to avoid going back to Herod.

4. Joseph takes the family to Egypt to avoid the danger: worldly powers will never thwart God – Psalm 2

II. How the story functions

- A. Mosaic of early life narratives
 1. Matthew fills in details not found in other Gospels
 2. A picture of early travels and how Joseph took care of Jesus
 3. This event is both memorable and meaningful
- B. A demonstration of divine promise, fulfillment, and providence
 1. Matthew shows us God's hand in all these details
 2. Dreams for Joseph and the wise men
 3. Fulfilled Scriptures to connect these things to messianic hopes
 4. God's care in keeping Jesus safe until his kingdom is established
- C. A light to the Gentiles
 1. This particular episode demonstrates that God will invite the Gentiles
 2. A precursor to "Make disciples of all nations."
 3. Also, that the Gentiles owe their allegiance to God
 4. God is the God of all mankind; Jesus is our only way to Him

III. How Can We Connect with this Story?

- A. No moral principles
 1. Moral principles not espoused
 2. No commands
 3. Perhaps the wise men's response to the star and the dreams count
- B. Part of a bigger story
 1. The story of redemption is written with many chapters
 2. This one involves a unique revelation to those outside the confines of the chosen people, but who will be included among the saved
 3. It draws us in to participate in the story
- C. A reality check
 1. God's rule does not sit well with worldly powers
 2. Jerusalem is "troubled"
 3. There are battles to be fought and struggles to overcome (new Life Group begins today: "Spiritual Warfare")
 4. Yet the wise men "rejoiced exceedingly with great joy" when they met Jesus, 10
 5. Joy drives us to fight courageously onward and to join in the redemption story

Conclusions:

1. God guided and guarded Jesus' early life.
2. Following in the footsteps of the wise men to worship Jesus will bring us into conflict with the rulers and ways of this world.
3. See the story of redemption in our everyday efforts and be open to his leading.
4. Rejoice with the wise men that God's ruler has been revealed to the world.