

The Wise Still Seek Him.

INTRODUCTION

Illustration - Wanja's wisdom song

The magi are traditionally called the wise men, and it's probably because they were able to study the stars, and to understand that the star that appeared in the sky around the time of Jesus birth was a special star that signified a special event. Why of all people God chose to have these three visit from so far we do not know, but like Anna and Simeon, whom we're told about in Luke 2, they seem to have been seeking and waiting for the birth of the messiah, and true to his word "If you seek me, and seek me with all your heart, you will find me", God allowed them to find the messiah.

I think I would be right in saying that like these three, many of us are here today because we too have been seeking the messiah. Some in the course of this year have found him, others of us are on a journey that has drawn us nearer to the saviour, but we haven't arrived yet, but we are seeking.

2 weeks ago a contrast was drawn between Herod and these men, well, today I wish to draw some further lessons from the wise men on some characteristics of wisdom that they display.

1. Wisdom comes from asking the right questions

When we were in High school, I thought the purpose of study was to retain all the knowledge I came across, and so like many others I made this gallant effort to first understand and then memorise everything. It wasn't until I got to university that I realised there was too much information available for me to be able to retain it all in my head. Somewhere in the process of education, it struck me that I shouldn't try and memorise everything, some

things yes, but not everything; that was what the books were there for. Instead it was more important that I learn how to ask the right questions and know where to find answers when I needed them. The key lay not in knowing all the answers, but in knowing where to find them.

That's the first characteristic of wisdom that these magi displayed! That wisdom is found when one is unafraid and unashamed to ask questions. Unfortunately many of us consider asking questions to be a sign of possible weakness and an admission of ignorance, and so we keep quiet. If like these magi you too are seeking for the messiah, the learn to ask questions.

But how and where does one ask questions? Well the bible tells us where to find wisdom and hence where to ask our questions. Let's look at a few of these :-

1. Wisdom is found among the spiritually mature.

Job 32:7 I thought, 'Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.'⁸ But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.⁹ It is not only the old who are wise, not only the aged who understand what is right.

Traditionally wisdom has always been the deposit of the aged. But when it comes to the things of God, we must understand aged to mean those who have walked with God a long time.

Before I accepted the Lord as my saviour I used to sit with my friends, none of whom knew the Lord, and we'd comfort each other with arguments on why salvation could not be possible. That was us looking for wisdom about the things of God where it could not be found! None of us were even spiritually discerning, and the supposed wise answers we kept coming up with - that there is nothing like salvation - were simply the blind leading the blind.

2. Wisdom is found by having the right attitude - a humble spirit.

God does not reveal himself to those with a proud and haughty spirit.

Illustration - Professor "If there is a God let him strike me dead now"

Job 28:20 "Where then does wisdom come from?

Where does understanding dwell?

²¹ It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing,
concealed even from the birds of the air.

²² Destruction and Death say,
'Only a rumour of it has reached our ears.'

²³ God understands the way to it
and he alone knows where it dwells,

²⁴ for he views the ends of the earth
and sees everything under the heavens.

²⁵ When he established the force of the wind
and measured out the waters,

²⁶ when he made a decree for the rain
and a path for the thunderstorm,

²⁷ then he looked at wisdom and appraised it;
he confirmed it and tested it.

²⁸ And he said to man,
'The fear of the Lord -- that is wisdom,
and to shun evil is understanding.'"

As the proverbs say - the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

3. Thirdly, more than any other place, wisdom is found in the Word of God

This is the way the book of Solomon is introduced

Prov 1: 1 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:

² for attaining wisdom and discipline;

for understanding words of insight;

³ for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,
doing what is right and just and fair;

⁴ for giving prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young

⁵ let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance

⁶ for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.

Ps 119:⁹⁷ Oh, how I love your law!

I meditate on it all day long.

⁹⁸ Your commands make me wiser than my enemies,
for they are ever with me.

⁹⁹ I have more insight than all my teachers,
for I meditate on your statutes.

¹⁰⁰ I have more understanding than the elders,
for I obey your precepts.

¹⁰¹ I have kept my feet from every evil path
so that I might obey your word.

¹⁰² I have not departed from your laws,
for you yourself have taught me.

¹⁰³ How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!

¹⁰⁴ I gain understanding from your precepts;
therefore I hate every wrong path.

I'll come back to this one in just a minute, but here are 3 nice insights about where to find wisdom :

- Prov 21:11 When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; Wisdom is found in discipline and punishment.
- Prov 31 is a tribute to the wife of noble character. In Prov 31:26 it says “*The wife of noble character . . . speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.*”
Wisdom is to be found in your wife if she indeed is of noble character - learn to ask her opinion and listen carefully.
- Ecc 2:26 “To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God.”

2. Wisdom is informed by Scripture

The second characteristic of wisdom that the magi displayed is that their search for the messiah was informed by scripture, not only because the old testament foretold the birth of the messiah and the sign that God would give to mark that birth, but the scriptures also identified the place where the birth would take place. This they would probably not have known had they not been willing to bring what they had learnt, and then search scripture for more light.

Again, before I accepted Christ as my saviour I used to loudly proclaim such dismissing statements like “The Bible is full of contradictions” - I couldn’t point out any, and I certainly wasn’t about to wait around for an explanation on what seemed like a contradiction - I was just happy to be the Judge against God’s word and condemn it even though I had not read or studied it. This is true for many, they quickly dismiss the Bible, but if you scratch beneath the surface you find they are actually quite ignorant of scripture.

The reason why our search must be informed by scripture is because the Bible in-fact says there are 2 types of wisdom. Human wisdom - that which seems wise from man’s limited perspective, that which is wise if your intention is to look out for number 1, wisdom that will advance your interests, no matter what the cost. The type of wisdom that says “If you want to survive in business, then you have to do A-B-C”. It’s a wisdom that is often devoid of moral judgement, and who’s highest goal is self-preservation.

And then there is Godly Wisdom . Godly Wisdom is different. It takes into account the moral consequences of our choice and it looks on things from an eternal perspective, recognising that my choices today will not only affect my life beyond the grave, but that they will also affect the generations that follow after me

James 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.
¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

The best way to differentiate between the two is to study what God’s Word says. You want to find and live out wisdom? Your choices have to be informed by the word of God. The other way to differentiate between the two is to go ahead and make your choice, and learn from experience, but because worldly wisdom is about self-preservation and self-fulfilment, it often look much more appealing at first glance. It seems to much such sense! But you

learn the hard way and often too late - the damage has been done, and the consequences can be devastating.

3. Wisdom acts on what truth has been acquired.

Yet another characteristic of wisdom displayed by these Magi in their search for the Lord is that wisdom acts on what it has acquired. Too many of us search from the stance of first I must get all the answers to all the possible questions, and I will not move until I have no more questions, but life never gives you answers like that!

Even in the matters of faith, God often requires us to step out on the little we have, and to rest secure in the knowledge that even though we do not have complete answers, even though we ask why he is doing things the way he is, we don't need all the answers, we only need to act on what we have - and it is that he is trustworthy, he never fails us, and he has proven himself over and over again! The Magi did not have full answers when they set out in their search - what they had was sufficient answers for that part of their journey. It was enough. This is the way God deals with us, he does not give us full revelation, he gives us sufficient revelation. I love Deut. 29:29 which says "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law."

In other words, there are some answers to life that God has chosen not to reveal; and no matter how hard we look, no matter how long we wait, we will not receive an answer to those things that God has chosen to keep hidden. But this one thing we can be sure of - he has indeed given us enough to find salvation! We do not have exhaustive revelation, we have sufficient revelation - sufficient for the salvation of us and our children. It is enough - act on it.

4. Wisdom leads to Worship (vs 10,11)

Lk 2:10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him..

Finally the search for the messiah was fulfilled - they found him; and their appropriate response was to bow down and worship him.

CONCLUSION

Are you still seeking the messiah? Will you find him at Christmas time? Borrow a leaf from these wise men and in your search

- *Have the courage to ask questions*
- *Allow your search to be informed by scripture*
- *Act on what you have already found*
and then your search will lead to true worship!