

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

The Wise Men's Search for Christ

Mark Kolchin

Matthew's account of the wise men's visit to the Lord highlights some of the key elements of true faith, unknown by many who celebrate His birth each year. First, the direction of their faith was correct. They left the land of ancient Babylon, the birthplace of idolatry to come where the Scriptures stated the Messiah would be born. (Micah 5:2) They abandoned false religion to find the true—a necessity in finding Christ. There is no scriptural evidence to indicate that they were three in number or even kings, though they were highly knowledgeable in the arts and sciences of their day—proof that these disciplines do not answer the deeper questions of life. Second, the diligence of their faith was correct. When they came to Jerusalem asking the question, "Where is He that is born king of the Jews" (v. 2), strangely no one could answer their question in the city known for its place in prophecy. But they persisted until they eventually found the Lord. Genuine faith does not give up until it finds that which fully satisfies the heart, (Jer. 29:11-13) They asked and searched until they found Him. Like the Queen of Sheba in Solomon's day (1 Kings 10), they travelled a great distance to find a glorious King and rejoiced when they did. (v. 10)

These wise men also demonstrated the desire of true faith. The townspeople were ignorant, not knowing the location of the promised Messiah; the chief priests were indifferent, not caring to make the short journey to nearby Bethlehem, despite their knowledge of the Old Testament prophecies. Herod was incensed not willing to acknowledge the "King of the Jews," a title that was Christ's alone. In contrast, the wise men were interested, not following the sentiments of the majority. These four responses are the typical of the reactions evidenced by society in relation to the birth of Christ. People are either ignorant, indifferent or absolutely incensed about anything when it comes acknowledging Him.

Finally, the devotion of their faith was correct. When the "star" which originally led them to the city, reappeared after having disappeared for a time, they alone saw it – God honoring their faith. It was not a supernova or a comet else

others would have seen it. It was not a conjunction of the planets, since it moved across the night sky in an opposite way than these celestial bodies and later stood directly over the house. (v. 9) Instead, it was God's supernatural provision that pointed the way to Christ just as God's people should be shining testimonies—God's supernatural provision—to also point others to Him. Later, when the wise men came to the house (not a stable), they saw the Child (not a baby), now about two years old. (v. 16) Upon entering, they also demonstrated further aspects of true faith in their actions. The object of their faith was proper—"they fell down and worshipped Him," not Mary. (v. 13) Further, the order of their worship was proper—they worshipped and then opened their gifts. It was subsequent to their worship, but significant nevertheless. Each one of the gifts represented some aspect of the Person and Work of the King—gold for His deity, frankincense for His fragrant and holy life, and myrrh foreshadowing His suffering and death. How few understand the importance that opening their hearts to the Savior is far more important than opening their treasures in a vain attempt to earn God's approval. In fact, opening our treasures is much easier thing to do when our hearts are filled with gratitude. (2 Kings 5:15) The fact that they went home "another way," (v. 12) to avoid the wrath of Herod, speaks of the outcome of true faith and reminds us of those who follow this path will return "another way" changed by their experience in finding the Savior and ready to tell others of the great things that the Lord has done for them. (Luke 8:39)

There are many ways that people celebrate the birth of our Savior, for better or for worse. But the account of the visit of the wise men provides the best account of the anatomy of true faith and the elements that are evident in the life of someone who has a proper understanding of the Savior. Only then can the celebration of His birth be truly honoring to God. *

It Is Well With My Soul

Horatio Spafford stood hour after hour on the deck of the ship and when the ship passed the place where his precious daughters had drowned, he received sustaining comfort from God and wrote the hymn, *It Is Well With My Soul*.

"When peace, like a river, attendeth my, when sorrows like deep billows roll—Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well with my soul." *

The Deadliness of Discouragement

Randy Amos

Over one million adults were saved from the judgment of God by the blood of the passover lamb. These same ones were also saved from the enemy by the power of God at the Red Sea. Yet only two of these million plus adults ever entered the Promised Land. Why didn't the great majority go in?

Was the root reason shameful immorality? Was it stealing from others? Was it something as horrible as cold blooded murder? Did it involve fundamental false doctrine concerning the ten commandments? Was the reason because of a powerful attack by a pagan enemy? The surprising truth, as recorded in Scripture, was their minds simply became discouraged. This in turn caused their faith to fail. And this deadly discouragement was produced by their very own brethren—and by only ten of them!

The twelve spies for the children of Israel viewed what God had ordained and promised by His Word. Ten of the twelve reported back to the million plus adult Israelites a good bit of truth, but in a negative spirit. The negative attitude of the ten men literally broke the mind-spirit of hundreds of thousands of their brethren.

The ten reported that the Canaanites were giants, their cities great, and their walls high. (Deut. 1:28) While this was all true, the ten used this 'truth' in a critical way so as to convince the congregation that going in would produce defeat rather than blessing. Truth mixed with the negative spirit of faultfinding subtly conveyed the idea that doing it God's way would be a foolish choice.

Thus, the people looked at the negative circumstances rather than the Word of God. Their reason for not going in was "our brethren have discouraged our heart." (Deut. 1:28)

The Hebrew word *discourage* means "to break, neutralize and make of none effect." The mind destroying sin of discouragement that kept so many out of the land was why Moses later protested so forcefully when the tribes of Gad and Reuben wanted to remain on the east side of the Jordan. (Num. 32:9) He realized that their not helping the other ten tribes with the warfare would "discourage...the hearts of the children of Israel." (32:7) From experience Moses knew that faithlessness, disobedience and defeat follow closely behind discouragement.

This is also why in Deut. 20:1-8 Moses ordered the new generation of Israelites to send home any brethren who

would be fainthearted as they faced the rigors of warfare. The reason given for this strong action was that this negative attitude would be contagious and infect the minds of others with discouragement, and thereby render them ineffective. Moses knew that discouraged minds are as deadly as the enemy's sword.

How many of God's children in the Church have become discouraged by negative attitudes toward the promises of God by their own brethren? How many assemblies have been divided by a few who paint a negative picture (with truth in it) and thus have turned the hearts of many from fully obeying the truth of the Word in exchange for "successful" traditions of men?

While not ignoring problems and biblical solutions, beware and guard your mind against discouraging reports and negative spirits. They can eventually affect your mind and then your actions.

Faith believes the promises of God in His Word and endures even during difficult circumstances. When God's Word commands something - patience accepts the situation without giving God a deadline to remove it.

In these days when many would discourage the assemblies in their practice of New Testament truths, let us press on in obedience, being encouraged by the words of the Lord to the church in Philadelphia—"Thou hast a little strength, and...thou hast kept the word of my patience." (Rev. 3:8-10) *

Continued from page 4 - *Characteristics of the...*

striking instruction. For to follow the Shepherd necessitates that the eye of the sheep should be ever upon Him, that they should ever be on the watch to ascertain when He would have them to move, and where He would have them follow. Everything is thus left in the Shepherd's hands; it is His to discern a coming danger, to provide for their sustenance, and to indicate their path. Their responsibility is to follow the Shepherd wherever He may lead and to follow Him until He shall come to receive them to Himself.

3. *They know the Shepherd (Jn. 10:14,15).* They not only know His voice; but they also know Himself. This is the highest blessing of which the sheep are capable; for it implies entering into His own thoughts, ways, and desires. It is thus that we are brought into communion with Him. We may know His voice, and be following Him, and yet be without much acquaintance with His character. This is the highest and most blessed attainment which the believer can make. And the Lord desires that it should be made in an infinite measure, "as the Father knoweth me, and I the Father." He knows us, and He desires that we should know Him. May He Himself lead us into an ever increasing acquaintance with Himself that we may so keep Himself before our souls and may grow daily in the knowledge of Him. *

Prerequisites To Worship

Steve Hulshizer

Worship is not some difficult, complex, sophisticated religious activity which is limited to a few elite saints. It is to be the portion of all believers. Worship is simply bowing before the Lord and expressing His worthiness to be worshiped. (Rev.5:8) Now worship goes beyond the wonderful fact that Jesus died for us. While we should never forget this amazing fact, and the wonderful love of Christ, there is much more for which He can be worshipped.

Rather than being solely occupied with our blessings, we can think upon His beauties as seen through the eyes of Father, to Whom He always brought delight. As the hymn writer has so nicely put it, “Loved with love which knows no measure, Save the Father’s love to Thee. All His joy, His rest, His pleasure—All His deep delight in Thee—Lord, Thy heart alone can measure what Thy Father found in Thee.” If we would see some of what the Father saw in Him, we will find ourselves at His feet, and we will be worshippers!

Worship has been called the Christian’s “highest occupation.” If this is true, and it is, then the Church is sadly failing to fulfill its highest calling. Much of what is called worship is not really worship at all. Listening to sermons and choirs falls far short of Biblical worship. Saints in many circles rarely, if ever, come together to simply be occupied with Christ and to exalt Him together.

Others come together specifically for this purpose, but often there is little worship. Many have given little thought to Christ during the week and the best they can muster is singing someone else’s thoughts penned in a hymn—this is not to say that singing hymns that honor and exalt the Lord are not worship, but they can become a substitute for real worship.

In the Bible there were two things that characterized those who were worshippers. It seems to be true of them, regardless of what dispensation they lived in. Perhaps we could view them as prerequisites to worship, and test our hearts accordingly as we come together to worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first thing that characterizes those saints in Scripture that worshipped was that they had a right view of the Lord. They understood to some degree, and were often overcome by, the majesty of His person, the greatness of His power, and the glory that is His. They never came into His presence in some casual way, but with great reverence—a reverence that is often missing in our casual day!

We see this in David’s prayer regarding the materials for the temple and the offering of the people. “Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.” (1 Chron. 29:10–11)

Isaiah records, “... I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ... And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” (Isa. 6:1–3)

Thomas uttered that short, but wonderful expression when he realized he was in the presence of the risen Christ, “My Lord, and my God.” (John 20:28) Scripture records many expressions which indicate that the worshippers had a right view of the Lord.

The second thing that characterized those who worshipped was that they had a right view of themselves. After expressing his worship David asked, “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?” (1 Chron. 29:14) Isaiah cries out, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.” (Isa. 6:5) Seeing the Lord, John writes, “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.” (Rev. 1:17)

Those who found themselves in the presence of the Lord were fully aware of the vast difference between the One they worshipped and the one worshipping. They were humbled to think that such creatures could be so privileged as to be in the presence of the Lord Himself. Are we aware of this great difference and the grace that has brought us to this place of acceptance and privilege? Do we with little thought of such things gather together to worship? If so, is it any wonder that we worship so little?

As accepted in Christ we may come boldly into His presence (Eph. 1:6; Heb. 10:19), but this does not negate the need for a right view of the Lord, and a right view of ourselves as we come into His presence to worship. *

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Characteristics of the Sheep

Edward Dennett

And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him; for they know His voice (John 10:4).

It is profitable if we ponder a little upon some of the characteristics of Christ's sheep:

1. *They hear His voice (Jn. 10:4,16,27).* This goes back to the very commencement, when He calleth His own sheep by name, and is that which distinguishes them as His sheep. We may combine with this another trait, "They know not the voice of strangers" (verse 5). Herein lies the safety of the flock. They at once recognize the voice of the Shepherd, but though a stranger should simulate the tones of the Shepherd ever so closely, they know not his voice and detect it as that of a stranger. There is no need, therefore, that we should seek to be familiar with all the errors that abound on every hand in order to escape their seductions; it is enough for us that we know the voice of the Shepherd; and our safety will be in ever listening to it, becoming increasingly acquainted with it, maintaining evermore the attitude of her who sat at the feet of Jesus, and heard His word (Luke 10:39). This will be at once our preservative from danger and the means of our safety and blessing.

2. *They follow the Shepherd (Jn. 10:4,27).* The sheep have no will but that of the Shepherd and ceasing to follow Him, they become wandering sheep. In Eastern lands, and indeed in some parts of Europe, the shepherd ever goes before his sheep; and when he moves onward, they follow, and when he stops, they stop likewise. Our blessed Lord alludes to this in the scripture before us, and uses the custom

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FREE BUSINESS CARD TRACT

LOOKING PAST THE GLITTER

With all the glitter of Christmas many people never see the importance of Christ's coming into the world by way of the virgin birth.

Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin Christ was holy. (Luke 1:35) He lived a sinless life and was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. (2 Cor. 5:21; Hebrews 9:26)

God showed His approval of Christ's sacrificial death by raising Him from the dead.

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And... he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3-4

Have you looked past the glitter of Christmas to see Christ coming to die that you might have eternal life?

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Matthew 1:23

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 1 Timothy 1:15

Read the Gospel of John to see how to obtain eternal life and peace with God through faith in the living Savior, Jesus Christ. * Write for free copies.

York Bible Study Program

December 12	Tom Irwin	John's Epistles
January 9	Bob Spender	Joshua
February 13	Mark Kolchin	Titus & Philemon
March 12	Carl Knott	1 Thessalonians
April 9	Mark Shelley	1 Peter
May 14	TBA	

10 AM - 3PM, Lunch served.