

12242023. We have all seen the stable scenes where the baby Jesus is in the manger his parents near him, with some animal around him and the shepherds and the three wise men kneeling before him with the bright guiding star shining above the whole scene...

Nice scene but inaccurate...the shepherds, the stable with the manger holding Jesus and Mary and Joseph...are biblical...but the wise men did not show up until at least fifteen months later...and we have no idea how many made the long journey.

The big question is why they showed up at all?... **who were these wise men?**

And Why would these pagan counselors, priests and Astronomers seek the Christ child the king of the Jews?... These are important questions? They are important for scriptures tell us it is imperative for us who proclaim to be Jesus followers that we understand His Word...

The Bible is silent on how many wise men and their names visited Jesus.

However, some traditions has it that the three wise men who came to seek and honor the toddler Jesus

So with these understandings in mind...it is wise to investigate why pagan wise men astrologers/astronomers also known as Magi would make the long journey to pay homage to a foreign Jewish new born King....and how they came to this knowledge....

Is there something in the Bible that would give us some insight and information into their actions ...yes...

To understand why Maji/ eastern wise men...would seek out a king we must go back 600 years in History to the back story...hidden in plain sight...

- In 605 BC ...King Nebuchadnezzar pursued a policy of expansion, He wanted Babylon to rule the world. After defeating Egypt he attacked Jerusalem in the land of Judah...lets pick up the narrative...

NLT DA 1: 1 During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah,^[a] King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

- **King Nebuchadnezzar gave Jehoiakim king of Juda a choice...be destroyed or pay tribute (or Besides taking gold and goods they also took hostages...**

NLT DA 1: 3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. 4 "Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of

learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon.”⁵ The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.⁶ **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah** were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah.

So from the kingdom of Israel was taken “royal hostages

This is how the “royal hostage” system works...

1. some close relatives and governing leaders of the hostage king are taken into captivity...usually along with gold and other precious materials...
2. the hostages will live well in Nebuchadnezzar’s royal court
3. as long as the King pays the yearly taxes...if he refuse...they could die..
4. He put him through 3 years training and placed him in his group of wise men/advisors.

About three years later...

5. Then tested them...failure could cost them and their teachers their life....minimum three languages...Hebrew, Aramaic, and Akkadian the language of the priests

There were also other purposes for taking in young nobles from conquered countries...to serve in the palace administration...

1. a foreign noble was very useful employee...
2. he knew the history and language of his country
3. he knew their customs and laws...
4. he would learn the customs and laws religion of Babylonia and be able to export them to his country.
5. he would be able to help in administrating the conquered territories
6. he could offer insight and political advice to the King
7. So they would look for the best and brightest...young noblemen.. and a problem

NLT Dan 1:18 When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁹ The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service.²⁰ Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom.

During that same year...a problem occurs... *NLT Dan 2: 1 One night during the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had such disturbing dreams that he couldn't sleep. ² He called in his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers, and he demanded that they tell him what he had dreamed. As they stood before the king, ³ he said, "I have had a dream that deeply troubles me, and I must know what it means."*

Magicians...a psychic...one who receives information from spirits

Enchanters... talks to the dead...a medium

Sorcerers...one who practices witchcraft... one who possess occult knowledge... and practices magic arts ...one who cast spells uses potions...

Astrologers...looks for guidance from the stars...

Babylon was a very religious society... These were of noble birth, educated, wealthy, and influential. They were philosophers, the counselors of rulers, learned in all the wisdom and dak spiritual arts of the ancient East.

NLT DA 2: ⁴ Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "Long live the king! Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means." ⁵ But the king said to the astrologers, "I am serious about this. If you don't tell me what my dream was and what it means, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be turned into heaps of rubble! ⁶ But if you tell me what I dreamed and what the dream means, I will give you many wonderful gifts and honors. Just tell me the dream and what it means!"

- **It is apparent that the King had given the astrologers his dreams before...and he has not been happy with their interpretations...either they were false, or were attempts to deceive him into acting according to their will So he changed the method...tell the dream then interpret...**

¹⁰ The astrologers replied to the king, "No one on earth can tell the king his dream! And no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer! ¹¹ The king's demand is impossible. No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people."

The counselors had this essential dilemma: their gods, the dead, the stars, their wisdom ...had limitations... only God who gave the dream could interpret it... and they did not know him...

NLT *DA 2: 12* The king was furious when he heard this, and he ordered that all the wise men of Babylon be executed. ¹³ And because of the king's decree, men were sent to find and kill Daniel and his friends. ¹⁴ When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, came to kill them, Daniel handled the situation with wisdom and discretion. ¹⁵ He asked Arioch, "Why has the king issued such a harsh decree?" So Arioch told him all that had happened. ¹⁶ Daniel went at once to see the king and requested more time to tell the king what the dream meant. ¹⁷ Then Daniel went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened.

they prayed... ¹⁹ That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven. ²³ I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors, for you have given me wisdom and strength. You have told me what we asked of you and revealed to us what the king demanded."

- **He rejoices and praises the one true God...who demonstrates his power through revealing history before it happens... the next morning**

NLT *DA 2: 24* Then Daniel went in to see Arioch, whom the king had ordered to execute the wise men of Babylon. Daniel said to him, "Don't kill the wise men. Take me to the king, and I will tell him the meaning of his dream." ²⁵ Arioch quickly took Daniel to the king and said, "I have found one of the captives from Judah who will tell the king the meaning of his dream!"

²⁶ The king said to Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar), "Is this true? Can you tell me what my dream was and what it means?" ²⁷ Daniel replied, "There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can reveal the king's secret. ²⁸ But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future. Now I will tell you your dream and the visions you saw as you lay on your bed.

³¹ "In your vision, Your Majesty, you saw standing before you a huge, shining statue of a man. It was a frightening sight. ³² The head of the statue was made of fine gold. Its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs were bronze, ³³ its legs were iron, and its feet were a combination of iron and baked clay. ³⁴ As you watched, a rock was cut from a mountain, but not by human hands. It struck the feet of iron and clay, smashing them to bits. ³⁵ The whole statue was crushed into small pieces of iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold. Then the wind blew them away without a trace, like

chaff on a threshing floor. But the rock that knocked the statue down became a great mountain that covered the whole earth.

³⁶ “That was the dream. Now we will tell the king what it means. ³⁷ Your Majesty, you are the greatest of kings. The God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor. ³⁸ He has made you the ruler over all the inhabited world and has put even the wild animals and birds under your control. **You are the head of gold.** ³⁹ “But after your kingdom comes to an end, another kingdom, inferior to yours, will rise to take your place. After that kingdom has fallen, yet a third kingdom, represented by bronze, will rise to rule the world. **Following that kingdom, there will be a fourth one, as strong as iron.** That kingdom will smash and crush all previous empires, just as iron smashes and crushes everything it strikes. ⁴¹ The feet and toes you saw were a combination of iron and baked clay, showing that this kingdom will be divided. Like iron mixed with clay, it will have some of the strength of iron. ⁴² But while some parts of it will be as strong as iron, other parts will be as weak as clay. ⁴³ This mixture of iron and clay also shows **that these kingdoms** will try to strengthen themselves by forming alliances with each other through intermarriage. But they will not hold together, just as iron and clay do not mix.

⁴⁴ “During the reigns of those kings, **the God of heaven will set up a kingdom** that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever. ⁴⁵ The great God was showing the king **what will happen in the future.** The dream is true, and its meaning is certain.”

Daniel tells the King his dream which reveals the future... when the God who gave the dream will come to earth...and begin setting up his Kingdom ..it will be in the fourth world Kingdom from now...

Kingdom one Babylon The king Nebuchadnezzar represented Babylon, the empire that began the prophecy. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom ruled the world from 606-538 B.C. as one of the mightiest empires of antiquity, one that could aptly be described as the head of gold.

In 538 B.C. ..Medo-Persia conquered Babylon and reduced it to ruins. **Just as silver is inferior to gold,** so the kingdom that followed Babylon was inferior to her. not inferior in power, for it conquered Babylon, **but rather in wealth, luxury, and magnificence.** These are the **two arms of the image,** so this kingdom is made up of two allies. **Medes-Persia the Medo-Persians ruled the world for 207 years**

In 331 B.C.. Alexander the Great led the Greeks to conquer the Medes and the Persians is represented by Bronze, the Greeks ruled for 168 years

In 168 BC The Roman Empire followed Greece, They were ruthless and used weapons of Iron. The Roman Empire with their Ceasars ruled the world to AD 476... 644 years.. The Eastern division lingered longer and fell in AD 1453 with the fall of Constantinople. It will be weakened by many alliances with many Kings

God's Kingdom Will be established during this Kingdom...: God's kingdom will not begin a takeover of earthly kingdoms. He will completely consume, destroy and blow away all the kingdoms of earth. God's kingdom will be everlasting. **Culminating when God will create a new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1).**

Then the King does this...NLT ^{DA 2: 46} *Then King Nebuchadnezzar threw himself down before Daniel and worshiped him, and he commanded his people to offer sacrifices and burn sweet incense before him. ⁴⁷ The king said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret."*

- **King Nebuchadnezzar recognized that Daniel's God, " is the greatest of all gods and the Lord over all kings and a revealer of mysteries**

Then the King does this...NLT ^{DA 2: 48} *Then the king appointed Daniel to a high position and gave him many valuable gifts. He made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, as well as chief over all his wise men. ⁴⁹ At Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be in charge of all the affairs of the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained in the king's court.*

Daniel is placed in charge of all the wise men and obviously teaches them the knowledge of God...the Jewish scriptures and the dream...when the King of Israel will arrive

He teaches teaches them the narrative of the Israelites miraculous deliverance from the Egyptians hundreds of years earlier...and their forty years of wandering in the desert and entering the land of milk and honey...**and a prophecy, shortly before the death of Moses and the crossing into that land from the prophet Balaam a wicked prophet in the Bible, although he was not a false**

prophet. Balaam did hear from God, and God did give him some true prophecies to speak.

In one, Balaam foretold of the time the Messiah would appear:

NLT NU 24:17 " I see him, but not here and now. I perceive him, but far in the distant future. A star will rise from Jacob; a scepter will emerge from Israel....

- They were looking for a Star in the sky to pronounce His coming
- A scepter...he would be a ruler coming from within Israel ...

This education to the Maji...wise men would be passed down generation after generation of noblemen and counselors to the Kings...

For Some 438 years after Nebuchadnezzar's dream the fourth empire began and 171 years after it began **the King of the Kingdom that will endure forever was birthed. About 1 or so years after that the star and scepter appeared...**

Show picture of comet>>>

- Let's pick up Matthews historical narrative...

NIV MT 2:1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

- **Where is the one born King of the Jews? For we know of Him... The first question asked in the Gospels...**
- They have been watching for his star a long time...so they knew of the time
- They wanted to worship...the God over all gods
- **Magi:** The Magi would have come on the scene in spectacular array fit for a new king of a foreign nation....as counselors to the King they were sent and brought their King's homage, a visit of peace and submission to this King welcome and gifts

What they did not know...as God always hides some info..

- The exact location...so they went to Jerusalem...surely this King would know of a kingly birth
- Knowledge of the character of Herod...he would not take kindly to this rival king.
- That he would be Paranoid of losing his power ... had already killed members of his own family.
- They had no knowledge of Micah 5:2...born in Bethlehem

NLT ^{MT 2: 3} King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. ⁴ He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote:⁶ ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel’ Micah 5:2

NLT ^{MT 2:7 7} Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸ Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!” ^{MT 2:9} After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!

- ***The star appeared again that evening...***

¹¹ They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

- Jesus was a "paidion" (toddler), not a "brephos" (infant)
- **The gifts reflected the aspects of Christ's nature: gold to a king, myrrh to one who will die, and incense, as homage and appeal to God**
- **Gold** is a metallic substance that symbolized, as a gift or related to a holy thing, something consecrated or devoted to God. It is a metal that does not tarnish.
- **Frankincense** was an incense, extremely aromatic, and contained one ingredient for the holy anointing of oil. It was one of the key substances burnt at the altar of incense in the It was symbolic of religious prayer,.
- **Myrrh** was also used as an ingredient of holy anointing oil, was also very aromatic, and although used as a cosmetic fragrance or substance, It was also one of the substances used for embalming at burials.
- All of these substances were extremely expensive, usually reserved for royalty when all three were combined because only royalty could afford this kind of wealth.

It is not how much you know but how much you will act upon what you know...that makes the difference... Daniel did, The maji did, Joseph did, Mary did...we can too...

Takeaway/Response: We often hold back because what we have to offer Jesus seems small and insignificant. However, God measures things completely differently than we do. What have you been putting off? In what part of your life do you need to simply step out and act, trusting that God will take what you have given him and do something great with it?

The story of God is one of taking the individual gifts (which may be small when compared to others, but sacrificial for us) and doing more than we could imagine...

Cards in the chairs...

We have three boxes up here one representing Gold.... The proper gift fit for a King...we are not the Maji...but he is our King what would you give of what you possess to the King...

One has real frankincense...what prayers, petitions or requests would you present humbly present to our King

Myrrh...what needs to die in your life to honor the King and represent him better?

end