

Character 7

THE WISE MEN

Scripture Passage: Matthew 2:1-6

Attribute: A Faith That Seeks

The wise men were some interesting dudes. There's a good bit of conjecture about exactly who they were, and where they may have come from. What we know is this: despite the fact that they lived in a culture and time very different from ours, we can learn a lot from their example. Especially as we consider the information-rich society we currently live in, where "facts" and "faith" are so often pitted against one another.

Here's what we think we know about the wise men. There are many who speculate that these men came from somewhere in what was formerly the Babylonian Empire. If this is true, then they probably gathered their knowledge of God from the Jewish people's exile in Babylon.

Far from being an obscure contextual point, this leads to a pretty powerful line of reasoning. Let me explain . . .

The wise men are pretty widely believed to have been students of astrology, mystical teachings from multiple cultures, and students of the supernatural, in general. They also possessed knowledge of world religions, such as their knowledge of God. As such, they wouldn't have necessarily been "God-fearers," but would have had a knowledge of the Hebrew God among their knowledge of many other gods. *This was the backdrop upon which the wise men processed the sign they saw in the sky.*

When the wise men saw an unusual stellar occurrence, recorded in verse 2, they recognized it for what it was: the hand of someone mighty. If it's true that these mystics had a knowledge of God, then it's possible they had knowledge of the Old Testament prophecies relating to the coming of a Messiah. **But knowing and acting are two different things.** And that is what we can learn from these wise men.

These mystics saw evidence and acted upon it. Their faith may or may not have turned into a saving faith in God. However, they expressed a faith that wasn't frustrated by their intellectuality. *Quite the opposite.* Their knowledge fueled their faith. Their deep understanding compelled them to act. Theirs was a seeking faith!

For so many in our culture, and maybe for you, our perceived "knowledge" can be a barrier to our faith. The wise men serve as a wonderful example that this never has to be the case.

Food For Thought . . .

1. Why do you think our culture makes such a strong distinction between "fact" and "faith"? Do you believe the two are incompatible? Or do you think it is a false distinction?
2. Have you ever found yourself unable to answer tough questions about your faith, or Christianity in general? How did it make you feel?
3. What is the relationship between faith and doubt? How do you deal with students who have honest doubts or questions about their faith?
4. How do you deal with your own questions and doubts? Have you ever been uneasy about owning them? What keeps you from taking your questions to God and seeking an answer?