

ChristMYTH BUSTERS: The Wise Men

1. MYTH: They were _____.

TRUTH: They were _____ a _____.

APP: Wise men always seek _____.

2. MYTH: They saw _____ in a _____.

TRUTH: They saw _____ in a _____.

APP: Wise men are _____ to the _____.

3. MYTH: There were _____.

TRUTH: There were _____ given by _____.

APP: Wise men still _____ to the _____.

Today we're kicking off our December series called ChristMYTH BUSTERS

While it might not quite as messy or explosive as what we just saw, we will be putting some myths related to the Christmas story and season to the test to see what is real

The goal, of course, is not to minimize the importance of Christmas or the birth of our Savior, but rather to find greater meaning in the season

Today, we tackle the Three Wise Men by looking at 3 myths related to them.

Here we go...

1. MYTH: They were kings.

TRUTH: They were seeking a king.

- We've sung the line it seems like a million times - "We Three Kings of Orient are..." - and so we assume they must have been royalty

- But what exactly was a magi?

a. they were considered "magicians" or "sorcerers"

b. Acts 13:6, 8 - the word "sorcerer" is the same Greek word as the word for "wise men" in Matt. 2:1

c. They believed strongly in the worship of the elements: fire, water, earth, and air

- Where did they come from?

a. The songs says they came from the Orient

b. To us, that means they were from Japan, or China, or Korea, or countries near there

c. It would have taken a long time to travel that distance

d. Is that even possible? Google maps says it isn't! (Try it. Enter Japan to Bethlehem and find out!)

e. They weren't from Japan. The word "orient" simply means "east" and they were most likely from what we know today as Iran

- What did they come to do?

a. Matthew 2:2 clearly states their purpose: to find and worship the king of the Jews

b. Quick history: They were from Persia, and since Daniel had been there in 6 BC, the Jews and Persians had a fairly strong alliance. The Romans, though, had a rivalry with Persia.

c. Bottom line of their mission? They wanted to replace Herod, who had come into his kingship through bribery and deception, with a king truly "of the Jews."

d. Since their timing and motives weren't in line with God's, they were warned to go home without helping Herod (Matt. 2:12), but not before giving their gifts to Jesus

APP: Wise men always seek someone greater

a. Even though the wise men were seen as powerful, they were still seeking a greater power. A king, or at the very least, a kingdom.

b. Their search disturbed Herod and stirred Jerusalem (v. 3)

c. The search for a king will always disturb people who think they're the greatest power, and they will always try to kill the search (vv. 8, 16)

d. Search anyway. God can protect you from the ones who try to stop you (vv. 12-15)

2. MYTH: They saw baby Jesus in a stable.

TRUTH: They saw little Jesus in a house.

- a. It doesn't matter how many Christmas cards you've seen, the wise men did NOT see baby Jesus in a stable
- b. But according to the Scriptures, Jesus may not have even been a baby when they finally saw Him
- c. Matt. 2:7 indicates that the wise men knew the exact moment the star had appeared (of course they did, because they were very much into the study of stars)
- d. v. 11 says they saw Jesus in a house, not a stable, and v. 16 says that the time the wise men saw the star until then was up to 2 years later (which is why Herod killed boys 2 years old and under, which in a small place like Bethlehem would have been about 20 boys)
- e. The bottom line? Sometimes the search for a savior can take longer than we'd hoped or planned

APP: Wise men are committed to the search

- a. They know that the end result is worth any amount of trouble (in their case, a new king!)
- b. Anyone who has searched for the perfect Christmas gift understands this principle
- c. It doesn't always come easy, but if it did, we wouldn't value it
- d. The value of our offering is often proportionate to our commitment to the search
 - i. The longer and more intense the search, the greater the offering we will give
 - ii. The wise men had set the value BEFORE they began the search
 - (a) Gold - for royalty
 - (b) Incense - for worship
 - (c) Myrrh - for burial
 - (d) We don't know how much they gave, but these gifts were hard to come by, making them even more valuable
- e. Are you committed to finding a Savior no matter how long it takes or how much it may cost you?
- f. If so, you're a wise man.

3. MYTH: There were three wise men.

TRUTH: They were three gifts given by three wise men.

- a. Can I just ask the obvious? Why are we so quick to fill the unknown with something concrete and manageable.
- b. If the Bible doesn't say how many wise men sought Jesus, then why do we?
- c. Historically in Persia, magi numbered 12. But how many isn't important as understanding that for years we've sung "We Three Kings" without ever realizing that we don't know if there were 3 and we do know they weren't kings.
- d. My guess is that the first person who ever painted the nativity scene chose to have 3 wise men so each one could hold a gift.
- e. That leads me to one last question before we get to one last application: Are we still guilty of only counting the ones who obviously hold a gift for Jesus?
- f. Romans 9:21 is clear that some appear to serve a more noticeable purpose than others, but it is also clear that all have the same value because all have the same maker.

- g. What makes you wise isn't the gift you have or don't have, it is what you do when you see Jesus.
- h. Matt. 2:11 says that when they saw Jesus, they:
 - i. bowed down - they humbled themselves
 - ii. worshiped - they exalted the King
 - iii. gave gifts - they placed value on the King at a cost to themselves
- i. The bottom line? Anyone can do that, and when we count only the ones that seem gifted, we limit the number of people who can find Jesus.

APP: Wise men still give gifts to the King.

- a. We'll talk more about this next week when we blow open the myth about the innkeeper, but the only thing that makes you wise is what you do when you see Jesus.
- b. Do you bow in humility or stand in defiance?
- c. Do you worship Him as King or demand from Him as a butler?
- d. Do you give what you have - great or small - to the King, even at great cost to yourself?
- e. If you do, then you'll cause the number of wise men to continue to grow way past 3.