

✠ Matthew 2:1-12 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

It was not just mad Herod who was troubled by the inquiries of the Magi of the East. All Jerusalem was troubled with him. The chief priests and the scribes, those religious authorities who knew Moses and the Law and could recite the prophets better and quicker than we can recite John 3:16 or Ephesians 2:8, and who should have known better, those men were also troubled by the Gentile's visit to Jerusalem.

It is almost impossible to believe, in fact, without faith it is impossible to believe, that those religious leaders in Jerusalem were troubled by this news of the birth of the Promised One. They should have been ecstatic. They had the prophets, the Scriptures. They had the Temple. They had the City of David. They knew of the star prophesied in the writings of the prophets of Israel. They knew of the virgin birth prophesied by Isaiah. And here come these foreigners who are so awe-struck and humbled by one born from among the Jews that they leave their home countries to come and pay homage to Him, the One born King of the Jews.

The religious leaders in Jerusalem should have reasoned like this: if these foreigners are so impressed with one born among us that they come in reverence and humility when He is but a babe, how much more will they fear and obey Him when He is grown and able to move against them.

They should have rejoiced that God had raised up in their midst one to whom all nations came and paid tribute. This would be their King; one who would demand respect and allegiance even from their enemies, even while He nursed at His mother's breast. Would they have thought for a moment, they would have realized that this event should be a sign of their enrichment and blessing, not a curse to be avoided and plotted against. Even if, and perhaps especially if, they were expecting the Root of Jesse to be a military king, a liberator from Roman rule and oppression, instead of one who would establish a heavenly kingdom of mercy and grace, they should have rejoiced with the Magi and gone to Bethlehem themselves to worship the One born King of the Jews.

In fact, if you really think about it, they should have never told the Magi where this infant King lay for fear that their enemies from the East had sent assassins; come to rob them of His rule by killing Him before He could assume the throne of His father, David.

It is ironic. Those who owed Him nothing, came and gave Him expensive gifts and treasures and worshiped Him. Those who owed Him everything by virtue of lineage and prophetic word, stayed away and gave Him nothing but hardship and the back of their hand. A prophet is never welcome in his hometown. Those who would hand over of the King into the hands of the Gentiles to be crucified, now hand Him over into the hands of the Gentiles to be worshiped. They will have nothing to do with Him though it is to them that He came. They want Him dead, but they want others to kill Him. They want Him worshiped, but they won't bend their knee to Him. Wicked men are never satisfied with what has been given to them by God.

But wise men are satisfied with what is given to them. A star rises in the east and they believe God's prophets and ascertain that the King of the Jews, a King mightier than they, has

been born. Wicked men say they believe God's Word, but yet plot against the One who is mightier than they. Wise men travel great distances to worship the King and pay homage to their Lord. Wicked men, though close at hand, refuse to go. Wise men go to where He says He is. Wicked men remain where they think He should be, but is no longer.

That is why the Magi went to Jerusalem, to the holy city, the city where the Temple was. They were going to the place where they hear God dwelled. God dwelled in that Temple, placed His name in it. The Temple in Jerusalem was the house of God. And where else do you go to find the Christ than to the Temple of His God? Yet when the Magi got to Jerusalem they could not find the infant King. They searched and asked but He was not in Jerusalem.

When Herod heard about these foreigners asking questions concerning the heir of David, he called all the chief priests and scribes together to find out what they knew about the Promised One. Where will He be born? Wicked men are never satisfied with God. The chief priests and scribes did not hesitate with their answer: Bethlehem. But wicked men are never satisfied.

They are restless. They are troublemakers and insolent. They pretend to have good reasons but it is all a façade. They don't care about anyone except themselves. Whatever makes them happy and secure, that is what they will pursue, killing and destroying anyone who gets in their way. Thus Herod murdered the boys of Bethlehem and the chief priests and scribes would murder this One they now ignore. They don't care where God says He is and can be found; in bread and wine, in holy absolution, in Baptism. They want God to be where they want Him to be; Jerusalem, the Temple, their own vain prayers and thoughts.

But wise men are satisfied. They believe God and it is credited to them as righteousness. They go to where He says He is. It makes no sense for the Christ of God to be born in Bethlehem. Why not Jerusalem, where His Temple is? Why not the holy city? But wise men go to where God says He is. He says He's in Bethlehem; that is where they go. He says He's in the preaching of His Word, in His holy Supper, in the Office of the Keys, then that is where we go. Wise men are always satisfied with God. They don't have to invent places to find God. Places that satisfy their own ideas of God and their relationship with Him. They go where He says He is.

The wicked are never satisfied and the wise are always satisfied, but both are used by God for His purposes to glorify His name and reveal His salvation.

Unbelieving, wicked Herod pointed the wise men to the Christ-child. He bid them go and search diligently for Him. The chief priests and scribes, though they wickedly had no intention or desire to go and worship the Christ-child, opened the Scriptures for the Gentile Magi to show where they should go to worship the Anointed One of God. The wicked always have their own plans, but what they mean for evil and selfish gain, God will use for good and the benefit of those who fear Him.

The wise men of the East listened to those entrusted with the sacred texts, believed the sacred texts, and were invited by God to worship His Christ, His Son. They were wiser than the wisdom of those who boasted knowledge but knew nothing. The Gentile Magi were more prudent than God's own people, listening to God rather than to their own minds and hearts and desires. Wise men are always satisfied with God. The Magi should have argued with the

chief priests and scribes. There's no way God would let His Promised One be born outside of Jerusalem. But they were wise indeed, believing God and obeying God.

And God used them to confound the wicked and to glorify Himself. They gave gifts to the true King and avoided the false king. They went and diligently searched for the true Prince of Peace, and avoided the prince of darkness. They considered it better to listen to God than to remain in good standing with Herod. Thus by those who were not His people, God confounded those who claimed to be His people. Those who had no promise gained access to God by faith in His Son.

Wicked men are never satisfied. Wise men are always satisfied with what God gives. Whether it makes sense or not; whether it is pleasant or not; whether it leads to offending a king or worshiping a baby in the wrong city. Wise men are always satisfied with what God gives. And to the wise, God will reveal Himself in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠