

# 25 Days of Advent

## Seeing Jesus Through the Eyes of the Christmas Story Characters

### ADVENT DAY 20: Dec. 20 – Who Trained the Wise Men?

#### Devotional

Before we leave this story of the Wise Men, the horror in Bethlehem and the escape to Egypt, I have one question for you – how did the Wise Men know to look for the star and follow it to the Messiah? They were from the East; Scripture tells us, they were not fully trained in the complete Old Testament. Recall they had to ask Herod *where* the long awaited king would be born.

So, how did they know? How did they know about Christ's birth from over 500 miles away from the event (as the crow flies) and around 700 miles away traveling route?

Scripture doesn't tell us specifically, at least not here in the book of Matthew. But the Bible does give us a clue in the writings in the Old Testament. Not prophetically, like so much of what we learn and can decipher, but from the historical records of Daniel in the king's service in what was then Babylon.

Recall that Daniel was one of several Israelis taken to Babylon and put into service in the king's court. The book of Daniel records the use of "wise men" to help the kings understand their dreams and visions. It's not hard to imagine that Daniel, who rose to prominent positions in Babylon – in fact, he was put in charge of teaching the wise men (Daniel 2:48) – had an influence on several generations of eastern intellectuals. Daniel was very outspoken about his faith in the coming Messiah. This meant that Daniel, the Jewish prophet, had leadership over those who would later be termed the magi. It is possible that Daniel taught Hebrew scriptures and messianic prophecies to the other sages, especially to those who were Jewish. A Jewish tradition even claims that Daniel founded an order of magi and instructed them to watch for the Messiah through the generations. This is very likely because of what we see in the knowledge and response of the Magi that appear at the time of Christ – they were wiser and more in tune with what was happening than the religious leaders of the day, something Christ would berate them for later on (Matthew 16:1-4). Jesus even mentions Daniel in Matthew 24:15.

Further back in history, another 1,000 years or so, Balaam prophesied that, "A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel," (Numbers 24:17(b). Daniel would have shared that prophecy with his students. But that, by itself, even with the appearance of the star and its placement in the constellations, was hardly enough to cause them to set out on such a long and dangerous expedition. That would take the prophecy of Daniel given to him by the angel Gabriel in Daniel 9 which included the exact timing of when these things would occur.

And then there were the gifts they brought ...

- **Gold:** Declaring their understanding of His royal lineage, both earthly and heavenly.
- **Incense:** Declaring their understanding that He was Immanuel, which means, "God with us."
- **Myrrh:** The bitter herb of death and burial; they knew He was the Sacrifice for the sins of mankind — King, God, and Sacrifice all in one!

These men were obviously followers of the greatest and most powerful Magi of both Babylon and Persia — *Daniel, the servant of the Most High God*. And what they learned from the sky was only interpretable in an

accurate way by their knowledge of Holy Scripture — the book of Daniel. Daniel had left them instructions telling them exactly when they should begin looking for the Messiah!

It blows my mind to think that some 600 years before Jesus' birth, God planted servants in the East to begin teachings that would ultimately lead them to the newborn King, His son, Jesus Christ. A journey that would take them a year to accomplish. Makes you wonder what he's planting in your life today that will be "birthed" in coming generations, doesn't it?

## Look Up – Connect with God

**Read:** Matthew 2:1-12

**Key Verse:** "When they saw the star, they were overjoyed." (Matthew 2:10)

**Pray:** Father God, I thank you for planning so far ahead and always thinking of us as you put the pieces of your divine puzzle in place. We can only glimpse at the master puzzle you're constantly maneuvering to ensure we find our way back to you. May we never take for granted that precious gift and may we be more attentive to seeing the way you direct our paths to where we are today. We love you Lord.

## Look In – Family Memories

**Discuss:** Looking back over your life, can you identify things God put in place years ago that ultimately led to your salvation? Did you have someone praying over you? Hindsight is always 20/20 and helps us appreciate and see that God is always at work in our lives even when we didn't know who he was. Discuss this as a family and perhaps start a thank-you journal when you identify those preparations.

### **Activity:**

- Advent Tree: select a bag of seed and put it on the tree. [Download Ornaments](#) or [Ornament Ideas](#)
- Advent Garland: put the key verse on a paper/card, assign #20, and attach it to the garland twine. [Key Verses](#)
- Advent Cards: select a card and see what the activity might be (i.e., plant a seedling for your spring garden). [Family Activities](#)

## Look Out – Connect with Others

Check out organizations that have community gardens in your area and volunteer to help plant/tend those gardens. Often food banks will have greenhouses to supplement fresh produce in their ministries. Be a part of making that happen.