

Matthew 2:1-12

Epiphany; January 11 & 12, 2015

What if the Wiseman used a GPS?

A GPS is a wonderful little box. It is amazing how this little box can replace a whole book or box of maps. It can give directions to a destination. It can tell you where you are currently. It can answer the question that kids have asked for generations: *"Are we there yet?"* And best of all it can help a marriage. Because if any of the men here are like me when you are driving, it is great when your wife is giving you directions off a map, but as soon a wrong turn is made, it is all her fault. Often, we men will not stop and either look for directions or look at the map ourselves.

In order for that box to work well, there are a couple of things that are needed. You need updated maps. You also need to enter the address correctly. A "north" or a "south" will send you to completely different parts of a city. Even when you enter everything right it can send you to a wrong place. When we were on vacation after Christmas, our GPS sent us almost into a middle of a farm field instead of a State Park in Missouri. I have no idea what happened, because we thought we had entered the address correctly, but it still managed to get us lost.

What if the Wisemen in our text had used a GPS to find Jesus? Where would they have gotten the information to know where they were going? How could they have found Jesus when no one else was even looking? What led them to Jesus? I'm convinced that if the technology had been there, they would have gotten hopelessly lost on their journey because they didn't have all the information they needed. Therefore, let us take a look at this account and see what this account of the Wisemen means for us today.

In order for a GPS to guide you somewhere, you need a starting point. Where did these Wisemen come from? Who were they? Matthew tells us: **"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 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.'**" Who were they? The number of the Wisemen varies from different sources. Some assume since they brought three gifts, there were three wisemen. Another source lists the number at 12. Matthew, however, never gives us a number.

Where did they come from? In order to answer that question, we need to go back in time about 600 years before Jesus was born. The "Magi" or "Wisemen" were **"magicians, enchanters, astrologers."** (Daniel 5:11) Most likely, it is a term that was used for such men during the rule of the Medes and the Persians. They lived in what today is the northern area of Iran or southern area of Turkey. You know one of them who was the **"chief."** His name was Daniel -- the same Daniel who was thrown into the Lion's Den because he would not bow down to pray to King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of that account, after the Lord had rescued Daniel from the hungry jaws of the lions, King Nebuchadnezzar makes this decree: **"For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."**

Did you catch God's announcement of the birth of Jesus? **"He rescues and he saves; he performs SIGNS AND WONDERS IN THE HEAVENS AND ON THE EARTH."** Over the next years, Daniel would teach these "wisemen" about the saving work of the Messiah and when he would appear. Therefore, 600 years later they would remember what Daniel had taught about looking for a sign in the sky to mark the Messiah's birth. They now had a starting point and a direction to head. They now began their journey of 500 – 1000 miles across the desert to find this **"one who has been born king of the Jews."** **"Magi from the east came to Jerusalem."** But they still didn't have all the information to be able to find this Savior. A GPS would not have brought them any closer to Jesus.

One of the most fascinating parts of this account of the wisemen is the **"star."** What was it? When we think of the **"star in the east,"** we imagine this star to be this big giant star leading the wisemen right to Jesus. There is only one problem with that. If that was the case, why didn't anyone else see it? I think it would have been pretty hard to miss this new big star in the sky. So, what was it? Why were they only ones who saw it?

In the footnote of the NIV translation of the bible it tells us: **“We saw his star as it rose in the east.”** This was probably a natural occurring phenomenon in the sky. It probably was something that everyone else could see, but you would only see the significance of it, if you had the prophecies of Daniel. So, what did they see? But since they were looking for it, it caught their attention. What did they see?

One theory is that the planet Jupiter, which was called the King Planet, crossed the path of a star named, Regulus, the King Star. As it would do that, it would make a brighter “star” in the sky than usual. And as they watched it move in the night sky, because planets appear to wander or move in the sky, it would direct them to Jerusalem. But then it would stop. Because of an optical illusion in the way that planets move in the sky, Jupiter would appear to reverse course in relationship to earth. As it reversed, it would be over the city of Bethlehem. The theory also says that nine months before this Jupiter would also have appeared to cross the path of Venus, known as the Mother Planet, to coincide with the miraculous conception of Jesus. If all of this is true, it would be a **“sign and wonder in the heavens.”** They would be announcing to the world the King of the Jews has come to this world.

Yet, if you aren’t looking for it, you would miss it completely. Think of what happens when you travel, even with a GPS. It can tell you to turn left at the next street, but if you aren’t watching carefully, you will completely miss the onramp ahead of you. You will go sailing right past it. If this theory is true, (and even if all the details aren’t all true) it means that God is controlling the universe to move the stars and planets in a certain manner to fulfill a prophecy that he had given 600 years before the birth of Jesus. It means that God is like the conductor of a massive chorus in the skies, directing the planets, the stars, the history of the world all to get to the one massive point in the musical piece to say loud and clear: **“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”** That is more impressive than any GPS could ever be! All of this is found only in the Word of God! Without that Word, you can’t put any of these pieces together. Without the prophecies of Daniel and Micah, the Wisemen would still be wandering out in the desert, even if they had a GPS.

What does this mean for us? It means that we have a God who controls all. It means that we have a God who keeps His promises. It means that we have a God who gives us direction in our lives. It means that we have a God who guides and leads us until that day he takes us to heaven. It means that we have a God who has rescued us in Jesus. It means that we have a God who brings us to trust in that Savior. It means we have eternal life in heaven. That is a map we can all trust! Amen.