

## Matthew 2:1-12

January 7 & 8, 2024

The year 1922 was a busy one for Albert Einstein: He completed his first paper on unified field theory, went to Paris to help normalize French-German relations and joined an intellectuals committee at the League of Nations. Shortly before heading to Asia for a lecture tour, he learned that he had won the 1921 Nobel Prize in physics. But rather than head to Stockholm for the award ceremony, he decided to keep his plans and continued to Japan.

When he arrived in Tokyo, thousands greeted him at the Imperial Palace to witness his meeting the emperor and empress, according to Walter Isaacson's biography of Einstein. Nearly 2,500 paid to see his first lecture in the city, which lasted almost four hours with translation. *"No living person deserves this sort of reception,"* he told his wife, Elsa, amused at the throngs who waited outside his hotel balcony in hopes of catching a glimpse of him. *"I'm afraid we're swindlers. We'll end up in prison yet."*

While staying at Tokyo's Imperial Hotel, a courier came to the door to make a delivery. The courier either refused a tip or Einstein had no small change, but Einstein wanted to give the messenger something nonetheless. So, on a piece of hotel stationery, Einstein wrote in German his theory of happiness: *"A calm and modest life brings more happiness than the pursuit of success combined with constant restlessness."* On a second sheet, he wrote another message: *"Where there's a will there's a way."* He told the bellhop to save the notes — *"they just might be valuable in the future."* That bellboy could never imagine just how valuable those two sheets of paper would become.<sup>1</sup>

These Magi could hardly comprehend just how valuable this child called Jesus was. As they followed the star to Jerusalem, they came to King Herod. But God had given them much of the information that had been recorded over the centuries. Yet, they had one simple question on their minds. **"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."** How did these men come to know about Jesus by following a star? Even though we don't know exactly from what country these men had come, it is fairly safe to say that it had to do with two prophets, Micah and Daniel, and a heathen Magician, Balaam. Around the eighth century before Christ, a heathen magician spoke these words from our first lesson today. **"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab."**<sup>2</sup> Then in the seventh century the prophet Micah spoke these words, which are quoted in our text this morning. **"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."**<sup>3</sup>

Then in the sixth century, God brings Daniel into the scene of his plan. Daniel was a young man when he was taken into captivity by the Babylonians. They soon realized just how gifted Daniel was. God had made it clear that he was blessing Daniel. His friends survived a fiery furnace. Daniel survived a night in the lion's den. He became part of a group of learned and wise men. When Daniel spoke, the men in that group listened and wrote down his words. Daniel was not afraid to tell anyone about his God. So, this ancient group of scholars waited and watch for the day that all these prophecies about this coming King would come true. Then one day, the star appeared. **"We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."**

There is so much that we don't know about these magi. We don't know from where they came. We don't know how long it took for these men to travel to Jerusalem. We don't know their names. We don't know even how many came. Did they know all the prophecies in the Old Testament? Did they even fully comprehend who this child was and what he came to accomplish? Not sure. But they knew that they need to go and worship this child. Nothing was going to stop them.

Who else did know at least something about these prophecies in Scripture? Herod did. Matthew writes: **"When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief**

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<sup>1</sup> [Einstein's Note On Happiness, Given To Bellboy In 1922, Fetches \\$1.6 Million : The Two-Way : NPR](#)

<sup>2</sup> Numbers 24:17

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 2:6

**priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.”** The wisemen never used the word: **“Messiah.”** He knew something about this Messiah, but he didn’t want to see him or believe in him. Instead he perceived him as a threat. Herod was above killing anyone to keep his office for him. After all, he had murdered his wife, his children and other family members to prevent it from being taken away from him. It’s no wonder why Jerusalem was troubled. They knew what Herod could do.

These chief priests and teachers knew about the coming Messiah. They were the experts when it came to Old Testament prophecies. But they were expecting and desiring another kind of Messiah. They were looking for a Messiah who would rule over the Romans of that day. They were not looking for a Messiah to rule over their hearts. But these wisemen – they were overjoyed to go and see this King called the Messiah. That’s the attitude of our hearts that he desires. Even though it is hard for us to fully comprehend the kind of love that the Messiah has for us, he fills our heart with joy. Can we fully comprehend Jesus being God? I’m not sure, because is so much more than I can wrap my hands around. But we do know that he is MY God. He wants us to know that we are is his children.

This account of the wisemen vividly points out to us that he has come for all people. He came for these wisemen. He has come for all of us. He has come for everyone. He is all that we need. There is a part of me that still marvels over the internet. Think about this. If you have online access, you have at your fingertips all the knowledge of the world. There is almost nothing that Google doesn’t know. It may not always be right, but it has all the knowledge we need in this world. It’s incredible how much YouTube can tell you. You can learn how to do almost anything from watching a YouTube video.

But more valuable than all the knowledge of the internet is the knowledge our God gives us in his Word. Those words are more valuable than any other words written on a piece of paper. When Albert Einstein told that young bellboy that the words he had written on those two pages of paper, he probably didn’t imagine just how valuable those pages would become. In October of 2017, the first note on happiness sold for \$1.56 million dollars. The second note sold for nearly a ¼ million dollars. Who would have guessed it would be that valuable? Trust the words and promises that Jesus gives you that are priceless and meant for all. May God grant it. Amen.