

DIRECTIONS TO JESUS! (Mt. 2:11)

When was the last time you set out on a journey of discovery? Remember in the days before the Sat-Nav how we used to turn over the pages of the map and work out how to get to where we were going? If there is a certain place you want to get to, it is important from the very beginning to take the right directions and make the right preparations.

The Bible speaks about many great journeys. Among them, in the Old Testament, Abraham travelled hundreds of miles, the children of Israel also travelled hundreds of miles when they were captured by the armies of Babylon. In the New Testament the greatest traveller was Paul, who travelled throughout the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

Of course, since childhood we have heard about the journey taken by the 'three wise men' from the east. The Bible does not actually say how many of them there were ... and it doesn't really matter. As we bring our Christmas Sunday evening service to a conclusion I would like us to consider briefly and very simply four particular aspects to their journey.

THEY STARTED THEIR JOURNEY

- * v.1 behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
- * These were very busy and very clever men. They were highly respected, and great demands were made on their time.
- * If the king or the prime ministers of their faraway land had a great and a very important decision to make, he would have consulted these wise men ... for everyone listened to their every word.
- * Among a vast array of subjects, one of their particular fields of interest was astronomy, - they studied the stars and the planets and the constellations known to them in those times.
- * They believed the stars gave a certain guidance ... and they noticed one particular star that had never been recorded before.
- * The star so caught their attention they watched it ... and they watched how it was moving in a particular way and they decided it would be quite an adventure to find out more about this star and where it was going.
- * The star was such a phenomenon that they 'looked into' possible reasons as to why it was so 'dominant' in the night sky. After much study, they concluded the star was announcing the birth of a King ... and not just any king, not the king of the land they lived in ... but the King of a land that was at that time living under the subjugation of the foreign power of Rome. This King was to be the King of the Jews.

- * What an historic event! What a privilege to go and welcome this new King into the world! ... So, **they started their journey**.
- * However, after a while in their journey, they must have taken their eyes off the star, because we find ...

THEY STRAYED FROM THEIR JOURNEY

- * They began to look at it practically ... Where does a king be born? The answer is simple ... in a palace. ... Ok, we'll go the palace.
- * Was that where the star was leading them ... to the palace? Not really, but 'everybody knows' a future king is born in a palace ... it seems the logical place to go ... so off they went to the palace.
- * Because of how important they were, the king agreed to meet them.
- * Herod was the king, and he was an extremely nasty and cruel man ... but he could 'put on a good face' for his special visitors.
- * Actually, - as it worked out, - these wise men from the east visited a man who could not help them, v.2 *Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*
- * Herod had not a clue. He had not even heard of what they were talking about.
- * He was far from pleased and he called in *his* wise men, and they quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures that such a king, - as the men from the east were talking about, - would come from Bethlehem.
- * Herod went back to the men and he acted all nice and friendly, and pretended he would like to go and pay his tributes to this new King, and he asked the men to come back and tell him where the new King was.
- * Now, they did not realise it, but these men were in danger. ...
- * V.12 implies that if they *had* gone back to Herod after having seen Jesus ... it might have been risky for them! It would not have been beyond Herod to have killed them!
- * You see, if the wise men from the east would have 'kept their eyes on' the star they would have stayed clear of Herod and the danger, but **they strayed from their journey** because they took their eyes off the star, - the sign God had given them when **they started their journey**.
- * However, God is good ... and He gave them another opportunity ... He brought them back to the road they should never have left, ... and ...

THEY WERE SET RIGHT ON THEIR JOURNEY

- * v.9 *Lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.*
- * It hadn't dimmed. It hadn't disappeared. It was still ahead of them.

- * The star had not gone off its course ... It was the so-called 'wise men' who had gone off theirs!
- * But God is good, now **they were set right on their journey** again.
- * They travelled out of Jerusalem, and away from Herod. They continued on their journey into the countryside and they came to the quiet little town of Bethlehem.
- * It was very unlike Jerusalem. It was small, it was rural, it was simple.
- * However, this was the place the star they had followed since leaving their home country was leading them to ... and the star led them to exactly the place where they found the Child.
- * This was it! This was where their journey was taking them! ... v.10 *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*
- * Yes, **they started their journey**, and even though **they strayed from their journey, they were set right on their journey** again, ... and no more did they did leave the path the star was leading them along ... they focussed their eyes on that star ... and, as a consequence, ...

THEY SUCCEEDED IN THEIR JOURNEY

- * v.11 *And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child*
- * Yes, indeed, they met the new King, ... they met Christ, v.11 *when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him.*
- * Extremely intelligent, well-respected and highly-regarded men ... and they knelt down humbly in front of the Baby, - in the simplest of surroundings, - and worshiped Him!
- * All the treasures they brought with them, ... the treasures they had initially thought they would be leaving in Herod's palace ... they presented all their treasures to Christ. All they had they gave to Him.
- * They found Him! They had travelled far and wide ... on one occasion they had looked in the wrong place ... but they looked to the star again ... *and they found Jesus!* ... **They succeeded in their journey!**

CONCLUSION

- * It is a nice story, - and I also believe it is true. ... But it is also more than a nice story for it tells me of wise men in search of Jesus.
- * Yes, they were searching for Jesus ... and only when they found Him did they discover how precious He is ... the great privilege to come to know Jesus.

- * Yes, He was special ... He was a King ... and their journey took them on paths they would normally never have considered.
- * Many people search for Jesus today. They look for Him in religion.
- * They look for all the trappings and traditions ... but you will not find Jesus in a dead religion! If you are looking for Christ in a church or a cathedral building, you will not find Him.
- * Some people go to the opposite extreme. They look for Him 'in the weird and wonderful'. They fill their heads with all sorts of fancy notions, ... all out of their own imaginations.
- * But where do you find Jesus? We don't look for a star in the sky any longer ... We look into God's Word, the Bible ... and the Bible tells you where to find Jesus.
- * You find Jesus when you come to Him, when you search for Him you will find Him. You will find He loves you with an everlasting love that brought Him to the cross of Calvary to die for you.
- * And yes, there are many distractions to finding Jesus, - the wise men were distracted too. It's so easy to imagine what we think we should do to find Jesus ... but there is no other way to find Jesus ... you must come by faith believing in Him to take your sins away.
- * The Bible says, *Mt. 7:7 seek, and ye shall find.* ... You must go looking!
- * But make sure you look in the right place. The Bible tells you that if you look in the right place you will find Him.
- * In actual fact, the Bible tells us Jesus is out looking for you because if you are not saved, - if you do not know Him, - He says you are lost ... and the good news is, *Mt. 18:11 the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. ... 12 if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? ... Lk. 15: 6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.*
- * The wise men **started on their journey**, for a while **they strayed from their journey**, but the star continued to shine brightly and **they were set right on their journey** again ... and **they succeeded in their journey** and found Jesus.
- * They did not give up, - their journey was not complete until they found Jesus! Indeed, wise men and wise women continue to find Jesus even today.
- * If you haven't finished your journey yet, - if you have not found Him, - stop your travelling! Don't go any further. Do what the wise men did.

- * ... Come and meet Jesus. By faith, bow down before Him and accept Him as Saviour and Lord.
- * Recognise that no matter how wise and able you think you are, you are nothing in comparison with Him.
- * Like the wise men, you also have your treasures, - the things of this world you hold dear ... but you have to let go off them and lay them at the feet of Jesus. Ask Him to take away your sin. Give Him your whole life for He must 'take over' completely.
- * And look at v.12 ... *And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way ... they took a different route home, - they had nothing more to do with the old rascal, Herod. They kept out of his way, they kept off the old road they used to travel.*
- * The Bible says, II Cor. 5:17 *if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* If you are not saved, come to Jesus this evening and go home a different way, and a different person ... *changed!*