

WISE MEN ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE

... AND FOLLOW THE NARROW, HARD WAY THAT LEADS TO LIFE ...



ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE. FOR THE GATE IS WIDE AND THE WAY IS EASY THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND THOSE WHO ENTER BY IT ARE MANY. FOR THE GATE IS NARROW AND THE WAY IS HARD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND THOSE WHO FIND IT ARE FEW.

(MATTHEW 7:13-14 ESV)

1. Few find the narrow gate, Matthew 7:13-14.

- (Matthew 7:13–14 ESV) Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

2. Not many wise find the narrow gate and the hard way that leads to life, 1 Corinthians 1:26.

- (1 Corinthians 1:26 ESV) For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

A. These wise men found and entered by the narrow gate while seeking the king of the Jews.

B. These wise men literally took the hard way in their search for the king.

That they set out on a long arduous journey, probably from Babylonia which would be a journey of about 900 miles, seems to be a strong witness to the true call of God on their lives and evidence of true faith and humility.

Is it not perfectly astonishing that men with so little to go on should venture so far, endure such hardships in travel, and face such uncertainties of finding the one the star betokened? What is more, they wanted to give him costly gifts and the worship of their hearts. [Green, M. (2001). *The message of Matthew: the kingdom of heaven* (p. 66). InterVarsity Press.]

Note that Ezra took four months with a group of four to five thousand people to go that route (Ezra 7:9). The Magi may have been able to travel more quickly, but still slowly compared to modern rates of travel. [Wilkins, M. J. (2004). *Matthew* (p. 94). Zondervan Publishing House.]

- (Ezra 7:8–9 ESV) And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9 For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him.

3. Another evidence of their faith is that these men were not seeking just any king but the king of the Jews, 2:1-6.

- (Matthew 2:1–6 ESV) Now after Jesus was

born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 “ ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’ ”

A. There can be no doubt from the prophets that Jesus was born in Bethlehem as king of the Jews—a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.

B. Jesus was born king of the Jews at the time in which Herod ruled as king over the Jews.

C. The wise men were seeking the king so that they could worship him.

As early as the third century A.D., the Magi were considered kings, fulfilling Psalm 72:11, “All kings will bow down to him.” But the Magi were probably more along the lines of religious advisers to their court. Their actual number is uncertain. Eastern tradition sets their number at twelve, but Western tradition sets it at three, based on the three gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh. 10 Likely the Magi, whatever their number, traveled with a much larger number of attendants and guards for the long journey. [ibid. (p. 94).]

D. They had been guided by what they called “his star” from a distant land, probably from Babylonia.

The star was possibly a natural/supernatural phenomenon. At the very least we know from Scripture that there was a star that they saw and followed and that they were convinced that it was an act of God signifying the birth of the king of the Jews.

We know that they traveled a long distance because the time frame established by Herod's ordering the death of all males in Bethlehem and the surrounding region who were two years old and under.

E. The presence and the words of the wise men had Herod and all Jerusalem stirred with apprehension.

F. And no wonder as this was a world-shaking, tumultuous moment, not just in Jerusalem, but in all of earth history—the fullness of time had come, the kingdom of God was at hand.

- (Mark 1:14–15 ESV) Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, **"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."**
- (Galatians 4:4–57 ESV) But when **the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,** 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so **that we might receive adoption as sons.**
- (Ephesians 1:3–10 ESV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. **In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ,** according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, **according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time,** to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
- (1 Timothy 2:5–6 ESV) **For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.**

4. Herod perceived the authenticity of their pursuit and secretly sought information about the child king they were seeking, 2:7-12.

- (Matthew 2:7–12 ESV) **Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.** 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, **"Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."** 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. **And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.** 10 When they saw the star, they

rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 **And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.** Then, opening their **treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.** 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

- A. Herod was secretive and deceitful in his plot to find the king.
- B. Herod sought the king so that he could murder him.
- C. In spite of Herod's evil plot God used the star to carry out its divine task of leading the wise men to where the child was.

Lesson: Evil rulers and their evil plots are no match for our sovereign, provident God.

- D. God had brought the wise men from hundreds of miles away for this very blessed moment—they fell down and worshiped the King.

Lesson: The journey is worth it.

5. After the wise men left the Lord warned Joseph to flee to Egypt, 2:13-15.

- (Matthew 2:13–15 ESV) Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, **"Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."** 14 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt 15 **and remained there until the death of Herod.** This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, **"Out of Egypt I called my son."**

- A. More lessons on the unconquerable, indomitable nature of the sovereignty and providence of our Almighty God in shepherding and protecting the people of his pasture, the sheep of his hand.

Unconquerable: Impossible to overcome or defeat; invincible; cannot be vanquished.

Indomitable: Impossible to subdue or defeat; unbeatable, steadfast, invincible, insurmountable.

- (Romans 8:31 ESV) What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who can be against us?**
- (Romans 8:37 ESV) **No, in all these**

things we are **more than conquerors** through him who loved us.

SCOREBOARD: GOD VERSUS HEROD

God wins, Herod loses ... again.
Herod dies, Jesus lives ... forever.
Prophecy fulfilled ... again.

6. Realizing he had been tricked by the wise men Herod launched a murderous campaign to kill all male children under two years old, 2:16-18.

- (Matthew 2:16–18 ESV) Then Herod, when he **saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under,** according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. 17 **Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:** 18 “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

7. Herod died and the Lord directed Joseph and family to return to Israel, 2:19-23.

- (Matthew 2:19–23 ESV) **But when Herod died,** behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” 21 And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. 23 And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

CONCLUSION: THOSE WHO ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS ...

I. Those who are more than conquerors are from God

- (1 John 4:4–6 ESV) Little children, **you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.** 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 **We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us.** By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

II. Those who are more than conquerors are of the truth and listen to the King.

- (John 18:37 ESV) Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, **“You say that I am a king.** For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. **Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”**
- (John 8:47 ESV) **Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.**
- (John 10:3–4 ESV) To him the gatekeeper opens. **The sheep hear his voice,** and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, **and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.**
- (John 10:16 ESV) And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, **and they will listen to my voice.** So there will be one flock, one shepherd.
- (John 10:27 ESV) **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.**