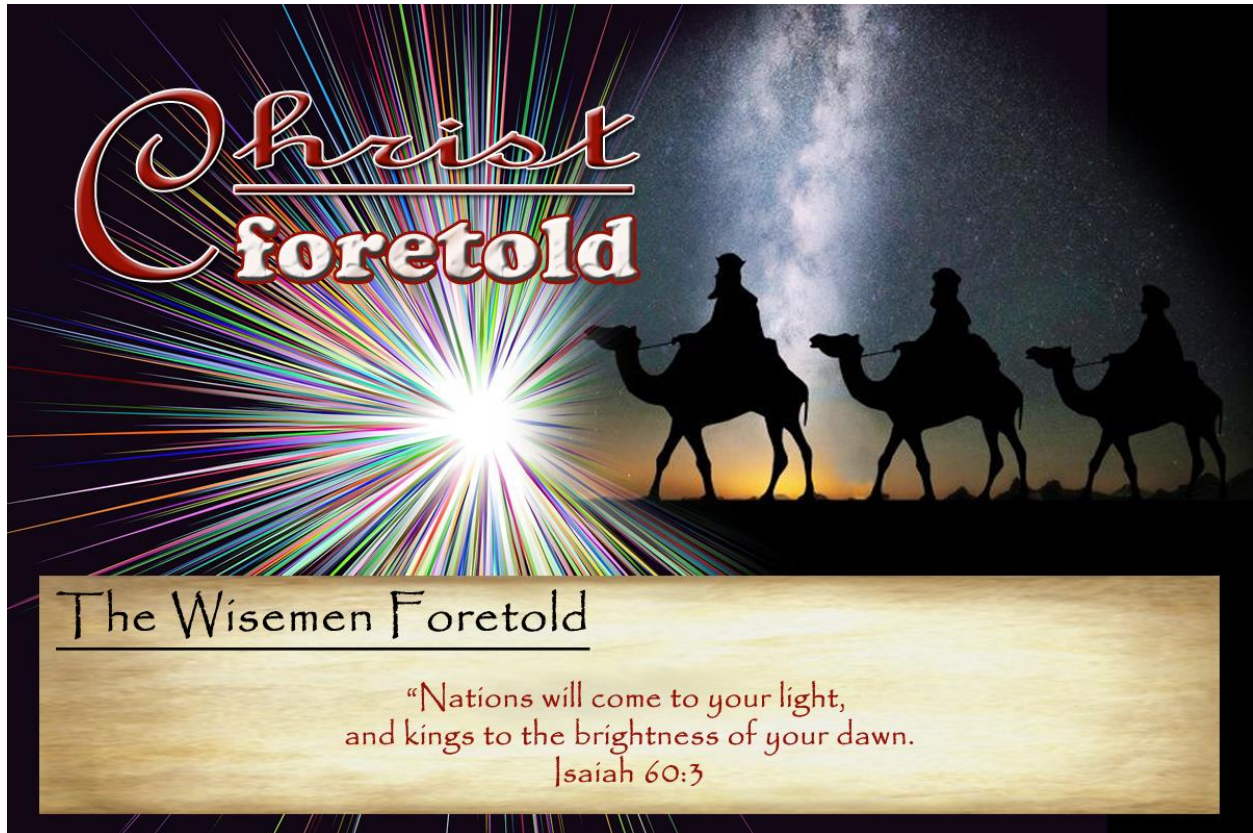


12/26/2021

The Wisemen Foretold

Isaiah 60:3

“Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”



Special Music: “We Three Kings” The Hound + The Fox

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEtUGqBwzEM>

WHAT GIFT BEFITS A KING

We, in the east

Have seen the star

Calling to us

To follow.

The magnificent Star implores

us to come,

Lighting the path

Guiding our steps

In a most unnatural way.

This journey

To welcome the prince of peace,

New to this world.

We are humbled

As we make our way

To be in the presence

Of this king of all kings.

In October of 2021, a new record was set. William Shatner who played Captain James T. Kirk on the original “Star Trek” series became the oldest human being to travel into space. He was 90 years old. Traveling on the Blue Origin’s New Shepherd he crossed the Karman line, and invisible boundary that is considered the separation point between the earth’s atmosphere and space. In his response to the experience, Shatner broke into tears as he said, “I’m so filled with emotion with what just happened, I hope I never recover from this.”

Just prior to Shatner’s experience, Wally Funk (age 82) had flown on a Blue Origin’s flight just a few months before. Wally Funk was a female test pilot that had been kept out of the astronaut program even though she exceptional when taking the tests. The only reason that she was rejected from the program was because she was female.

William Shatner’s dream began when he first started playing Captain Kirk on television. His trip aboard the “New Shepherd” was the fulfillment of a dream. Although uniquely qualified, Wally Funk was denied her dream based on her sex. But finally saw it realized.

How far are we willing to go to reach our star? When do we throw up our hands and say it just isn’t worth it to chase a dream and settle for a comfortable recliner and a picket fence? What is the point that we decide that the price is too much?

Let me tell you something about dreams. They are priceless. You simply can’t put a price on star chasing. And while it may become costly, cost has

nothing to do with value. Ask anyone who has ever bought an antique for next to nothing and managed to sell it for a fortune.

More often than not, our goals are tied to our egos rather than our pocketbooks. If we truly want something bad enough, we will do whatever it takes to make it happen, often to our own detriment. Sometimes we overextend ourselves financially or with our time. But that does not mean that the goal is not important nor unattainable.

Such was the case with the wise men. Most scholars agree that these travelers were not kings, but magi, wisemen, counselors, scholars; those who find wonder in the skies and in the hearts of humankind. They were highly respected. Scholars also agree that these wisemen were most probably from Persia, Arabia (or Ethiopia), and India, which would put them east of Israel, meaning the star was actually to their west. But there is no reference in the Bible to the actual empires, or the names (Balthasar, Melchior and Gasper), or even that there were only three. Many assume there are only three because there are only three gifts mentioned.

In the end, that isn't what the story is about. The story is about these magi seeing the star and desperately wanting to find the purpose behind that star. Many ancient writings refer to the star and how it would appear, directing whoever followed it to the birth of a king that would rule over all. If you are a scholar and the opportunity arose for you to make this journey, the only wise decision would be to follow the star.

**1 “Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.
2 See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the Lord rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.
3 Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”**

Isaiah 60:1-3

We tend to believe that the writings in the Old Testament was only read by the Jews, but those writings, including the writings of Isaiah, was actually part of collections of ancient writings studied by scholars everywhere. Prophecy was taken seriously by Jews and non-Jews alike. When the opportunity to see prophecy fulfilled presented itself, it was a challenge that could not be denied.

The journey would have been a long and arduous one. It would have taken a great deal of both inquisitiveness and commitment. This journey was the scholarly thing to do, much like many archeologists today.

The Bible does not tell us when the wisemen arrived, but we do know that by the time they reached Bethlehem, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were living in a house. What an interesting turn of events this would have been as the family woke up one morning to find a caravan of very important people parked in their front yard wanting to see the Christ Child. We also know that the wisemen arrived before God told Joseph to flee with his family to Egypt. When they

arrived, they brought expensive gifts which allowed for Joseph to leave Israel, just as God instructed him.

But does any of this have to do with us? It's a beautiful part of the Christmas story but we aren't wisemen. We don't live in Iran, Iraq, the Arab Republic, India, or Ethiopia. There is no star for us to follow. The event has already happened. It's nice that we can add these king-like scholars to our nativity sets, but does it really affect us if we don't? After all, aren't these guys pretty materialistic with their gold, frankincense, and myrrh? Aren't we trying to avoid all that claptrap at Christmas? After all, isn't it the thought that counts? Wouldn't Jesus have been just as happy with some sugar cookies and a dreidel?

When we start thinking like that, we are trying to put God into a box of our expectations. Mary and Joseph certainly didn't know that they were about to have to take a journey to Egypt. But God knew. And God made preparations for that trip.

We try to put the focus on the gifts, what they symbolize, what they cost. But in the grand scheme of things, that isn't what was important at all. What was important is that these wisemen were willing to make a huge sacrifice just to experience being in the presence of this child, Jesus. Minus all the other details, it was being in the moment with this king of kings that made it all worthwhile.

How much do we want that very same thing? What are we willing to sacrifice in order to stand in the presence of King Jesus? I'm not talking money here. I'm not talking gold, frankincense, and myrrh. I'm asking, are we willing to

saddle up our camels and follow a star with the hope of being able to experience standing in the presence of our Creator in the flesh?

As glorious as that quest may sound, the fact is that God has created an environment where we don't have to saddle up a camel and follow the star. Jesus is already here, in our presence, in our lives, filling us. What we celebrate each Christmas season is that God came to us in the flesh of a baby who would grow and become the sacrifice that would allow us into the very presence of our Creator.

Whether that step to meet Jesus is thousands of miles or just a couple of steps, we have to be willing to make the journey. We have to want it badly enough to sacrifice everything to obtain it. We need to begin to understand that the world holds nothing for us and that taking that step into the arms of Jesus is all that we will ever need.

God gave us the gift of the son knowing full well the cost of that gift. But we have to accept that gift. We have to move into that gift. And once we do, we have to allow Jesus to use us to gift others with his love, grace, and spirit. We have to become his hands and feet. It is the only way that the gift can be fulfilled.

God bless you all.

AMEN

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