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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1603 ~ The Wise Men Visit.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

One of the most well known scenes shown on Christmas cards is a picture of three expensively dressed men riding camels through the night sky towards a big star. The Scriptures don't say that there were only three wise men but it is assumed because there were three different types of gifts given to the baby Jesus.

These men were known as the 'Magi.' They are called astrologers because it has only been in modern times that the differences between astrologers and astronomers had been clearly defined. Astronomers study the heavenly objects relying on experience and experiment but not on theories or beliefs.

From very early on in world history, however, some people have worshipped the sun, moon and planets instead of God. Historically, the term 'astrology' was regarded as a technical and learned tradition, sustained in royal courts, cultural centers and universities during the Middle Ages. However, a part of an astrologer's work is to discover future events by supernatural powers and by the positions of seven planets in relation to each other. Some people believe that star and planet positions influence a person's personality, human affairs and destiny. Dates of birth can be given unreasonable powers over a person's life and doing this has caused a denial of self-will.

What do the Scriptures say about all this? God clearly says in Exodus, Chapter 20, that we must not worship any of God's created things, whether they are located in the heavens, or on earth or under the sea. We are to worship God our Creator only. A person cannot excuse personal bad behaviour because they were born under a certain star sign. When a person opens up his mind to such thinking, the devil will seize the chance to have demonic influence over him.

If people want to know the future, they should ask God what it is. He's revealed so much in Scripture but in mercy, usually keeps our own future a secret from us. Why do people want to know the future? In Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 6, Jesus says: "Sufficient for the day is its own troubles." We don't need to carry next month's burdens today; only today's.

The wise men had travelled from the Babylon region 500 years after Daniel had trained their ancestors about Israel's God. He taught them how to watch for a special bright star. In the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers, Chapter 24, it says: "A star shall come out of Jacob." And in the book of Daniel, Chapter 9, there is a prophecy which gives a timeline for the birth of the Messiah. That's why the wise men knew the meaning of the star when they saw it appear.

The Star of Bethlehem was no ordinary star. It appeared only to the wise men and kept leading them on until it stopped over the house where Mary and Joseph, and the baby Jesus were living. This star was God's way of leading these men to the Messiah.

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In Psalm 72, there's a prophecy about the Messiah which says: "The kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts." And the New Testament fulfilment in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 2, says: "About that time, some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We have seen his star as it arose, and we have come to worship him'." When the wise men reached Bethlehem, the Bible says "... they entered the house where the child and his mother, Mary, were, and they fell down before him and worshiped him."

After the visit of the wise men, everyone in Jerusalem knew about the new baby. While some no doubt were pleased to hear a new prince had come and they might expect Him to overthrow the Roman yoke and King Herod, others were not happy about it. The very priests who were the custodians of the Jewish religion didn't want to accept Him. They didn't want trouble from an aggressive King Herod, as he didn't need any excuse for killing a few more Jews.

This man known in history as King Herod the Great was one of the most powerful men and one of the greatest builders of all time. He kept his throne by the wish of Rome and its many soldiers. In 19 BC, King Herod started to redecorate and enlarge the Temple built by Zerubbabel in 516 BC when Zerubbabel was governor of the returning Israelites from captivity in Babylon. It was in the political interests of the priests in the Temple to keep Herod on side so he would do more of the work on the Temple. Herod even had some of the priests trained in building work so he could proceed without violating God's rules.

The work wasn't finished when Herod died in 4 BC but continued on for 46 years, as told to us in John's Gospel, Chapter 2. Although it was called 'Herod's Temple', it was still only the second temple built to worship God in Jerusalem. It was finally finished in AD 64, only six years before the Romans destroyed it completely, leaving no two stones standing together. The only exception to its complete destruction was the lower levels of wall known as the 'Wailing Wall' and this was where Jewish people have prayed ever since.

People of every generation can limit God to their way of thinking. The priests said the Messiah hadn't been born yet. In their minds, they weren't prepared to have the Messiah born into such a poor family. Yet other leaders of some countries have been born into poverty. Such an obstacle isn't too hard for God to overcome. In Luke, Chapter 1, the angel said: "For with God nothing will be impossible." God provided for Jesus by sending the wise men with expensive gifts. A truly poor person is not one who has too little but rather a person who is constantly craving more, believing he never has enough.

Was it right for the priests to play politics? They could have added up the number of years from Daniel's prophecy to decide on a date for the Messiah to be born. Was the high priest afraid that the Messiah would take over his job? Or was he trying to hide baby Jesus from Herod? We don't know.

Christians have to be careful not to confuse political convictions with spiritual convictions. We can assume that people of one Lord, one faith and one baptism must also promote one political agenda. This brings us to the area of making judgments about people that should be left to God alone. When the church confuses spiritual and political convictions, it's tempted to use political power to push forward a 'spiritual' agenda.

One writer said: "The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state but rather, the conscience of the state." Churches too can have their own internal politics. And this is very displeasing to God. Christ is to be the head of the church. If some church leader assumes the position of controller and doesn't seek God's will in prayer, then one day they will have to answer for their self enthronement.

In Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 7, Jesus said that church people will be known by the type of fruit they produce in their lives. He gave a stark warning about church people who have no personal relationship with Him.

At judgment time, they will tell Him all the wonderful things they have done for Him yet He will deny knowing them. What a terrible shock this will be for some people who may have worked so hard in the church but have not walked carefully and humbly with their Lord.

In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians, Chapter 2, we're told to do nothing out of selfish ambition or a cheap desire to boast. Yet instead, we are to be humble towards one another. In John's Gospel, Chapter 15, Jesus said: "I am the vine and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me. Those who do not remain in me are thrown out like a branch and will dry up. Such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, where they are burned." No one can get to heaven by doing a lot of good deeds.

In the New Testament Scriptures, the Lord Jesus was given many different names. Apart from God's "Anointed One", Jesus was called Lord, Son of God, Son of Man, the Word, Saviour, high priest and prophet. In Isaiah, Chapter 6, the prediction of His coming as an eternal ruler includes the names of: Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Later in Isaiah, Jesus was called the Lamb of God.

Jesus' mission in life here on earth was to bring salvation to all those who would believe in Him. Being saved spiritually means your sins are no longer counted against you and you are spared from an eternal death sentence by committing those sins. These sins need to be confessed and forsaken, and are forgiven by the grace of God. In John's Gospel, Chapter 5, Jesus said: "I tell you the truth; those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life." The truth of God's salvation must not be ignored.

The wise men from the east didn't delay when they saw the Star of Bethlehem. They were men who read and believed God's Word, sought Jesus, recognised the worth of Christ, humbled themselves to worship Jesus, and obeyed God rather than man by returning to their country without revisiting Herod. They were truly wise men! And wise people still follow Jesus.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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