

Two Kinds of Faith

Matthew 2:1-12

Those who seemed closest to God and the truth about Him, spiritually and geographically, (the religious leaders) turned out to be those who were the furthest away. They missed seeing the Messiah who was born a few miles down the road.

Those who seemed furthest away from God and the truth about Him, spiritually and geographically, (the Wise Men) turned out to be those who were the closest. They saw the Messiah, God's chosen King and Rescuer, who was born a few miles down the road.

The religious leaders knew "chapter and verse" about the Messiah but did nothing about it. The Wise Men knew very little but acted in faith on what they knew.

1 What stood out for people in this sermon? What was encouraging, challenging or in any way significant? Deal with any questions that people have.

2 In what way can this text be used to help us have confidence that what the Bible says is historically accurate? [The fact that the Magi were theologically dubious means that their inclusion only makes sense if it's true. If you were making this up it wouldn't help! So too the Shepherds (and the women being the first witnesses of the resurrection)]

3 Why might the religious leaders have known the theory about the Messiah but not acted on it? Why might we know what God's Word says but not be inclined to act on it? [e.g. Disappointment perhaps when we've acted on things before, a desire to theorise because it's less risky and more comfortable...]

4 What might we be in danger of knowing about Jesus but not put into practice? [e.g. That God's grace revealed in Christ is sufficient for all we might be going through, that's it's important to be openhanded and sacrificially generous with our money and possessions, that we have a part to play in the body of Christ that will help strengthen the church (1 Cor. 12), that we need to gather with the church to pray...] It might be worth dividing up into smaller groups to generate as extensive a list as possible. What do these things have in common? Is it because we are wanting to be disobedient to God or is there something else going on? [The previous question might link in to this].

5 How can we be those who act on our faith? If it is the case that bringing the work of Christ (the gospel) to bear on our lives is what we need to do in order for our hearts to be stirred then how can we do this? How can we help one another in this? What might it look like for us in one or two areas to be like the Wise Men who took a risk and acted on what they knew? Note their boldness and willingness to experience some discomfort! Again, it might be good to talk about this in smaller groups or pairs and then come back together.

6 Take time to pray for one another.

