

# The Dire Need for Discernment

by Erlo Stegen

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*The sermon emphasizes the dire need for discernment to avoid deception and follow God closely, using the example of the wise men from the east who almost became fools by following their own logic.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 2:1

**Topics:** "Discernment", "Worship"

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## Description

Erlo Stegen emphasizes the critical need for discernment in the Christian life, using the story of the wise men who, despite their journey and understanding of the prophecies, initially followed their own logic and almost led to the death of Jesus. He contrasts the wise men, who came to worship and give gifts, with Herod and the chief priests, who failed to recognize the significance of the Messiah's birth. Stegen warns that many Christians may be deceived by appearances and urges believers to seek God's guidance to avoid pitfalls. The sermon highlights the importance of obedience to God's direction, as demonstrated by Joseph's immediate flight to Egypt upon receiving divine warning. Ultimately, Stegen challenges the congregation to reflect on their own spiritual posture--whether they are truly worshippers or merely spectators.

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## Transcript

Summary of sermon by Erlo Stegen, 05 Jan 2014

Matthew 2

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

These wise men from the east were pagans, just like our ancestors. They had come from very far, over a thousand miles. We don't know what prompted them to come so far, but they probably also knew the ancient prophecies. Balaam prophesied that the Messiah would come, and so did Micah. We do know that they grasped the mystery. And when the secret was revealed to them they wasted no time to go to Israel and see the king for themselves. These were the first pagans to come and bow and worship at the feet of Jesus. We don't know how many they were. There might have been even kings among them.

They however made a big mistake, thinking that He must be born in the capital, Jerusalem. The star did not point to Jerusalem. They had shifted their eyes away from the star. They did grasp the mystery that a king had been born but when they got close they thought they knew and followed their own logic.

There is the danger that God does reveal himself to us but then we think we know the way and don't follow him closely.

This mistake brought them to Jerusalem, to Herod, who in hearing of it sought to have Him killed. Why did Herod want to kill Him? Herod should have known that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but called the chief priests to get confirmation. He also secretly called the wise men to know when they first saw the star, feigning that he also want to worship Him. But he had no desire to worship Him, but rather to murder Him.

The wise men left after seeing Herod, and then they saw the star again. They rejoiced greatly. This time they followed the star until it came to stand still above the place where the Child was, and they opened their gifts and worshipped Him.

They offered Him gold, frankincense and myrrh. These were very expensive gifts. Each gift signifies something special. The gold for His royalty, the frankincense the sweet smell offered up to God, signifying that He was God. The myrrh signifies His death, that He would die for His creation!

This is an amazing matter.

These pagans came from so far away to reveal these mysteries.

Few Christians can understand mysteries and when God does speak they don't seem to really understand.

God's own people did not understand, but the pagans understood and came from far to worship Him.

They did not come to Him to get things but to give to Him. In stead of coming to receive, they worshipped Him with their treasures.

After worshipping Him they were about to go to Herod when God warned them not to return. This time they listened carefully to what God said and did not follow their own wisdom.

They might have thought that a revival was breaking out, God even touching this hard man Herod. Don't be deceived and believe everything you're told. We Christians are in dire need of discernment to not be deceived.

Their mistake passing by Jerusalem almost had the Child killed. Joseph had to flee to Egypt to escape the fury of Herod.

We might believe a child wants to follow the Lord but unless we have discernment we'll be deceived.

Pray and ask the Lord for discernment that you would know the mind of the Lord.

Many revivals start well but soon satan gets a foothold because there is no discernment.

When God told Joseph to flee he immediately took Mary and fled. He didn't argue but simply obeyed.

We might quickly rejoice and think God is at work while we don't see the trap of the devil.

Here these wise men from the east did grasp the mystery but soon went astray and almost became fools, by having the Child killed!

It's also amazing how that of the chief priests, who correctly knew that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, not one of them actually went to worship Him. They were simply like road signs, never actually going to the place they're pointing others to.

What type are you? We've spoken about the wise men from the east. We've spoken of Herod and also of the chief priests. Which one do you follow after? Does God rejoice because of you?

Some surmise that Herod wanted to protect his position. Well, he only lived two years after this and then died.

Are you jealous of someone else, fearing that others would take your place? It's terrible if someone only seeks his own.

Are we of those who only want things from God, or do we fall prostrate at His feet and worship Him?

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