



## The Wisemen

My Christmas decorations aren't up yet but already my thoughts are turning to the upcoming holiday as we set plans, prepare for events and watch the snow fall. With this in mind, I thought I'd take some time to focus on a few Christmas ideas, people and places in the next few devotionals. I hope you enjoy journeying along with me!

I'll start with reflecting on the wise men. Have you ever wondered why these men from the East were invited to the party when the Jewish Messiah was born? As I've reviewed some of the Old Testament scriptures preceding this event, I think I can catch a glimpse of the reason.



From the first time that God initiated conversation with Abraham, he cast a promise that included Abraham's descendants but went far beyond a national vision: *I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse **and all people on earth will be blessed through you.*** Genesis 12:2-3

After bringing the Israelites out of Egypt, God rephrased this covenant to Moses, saying, "*Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. **Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.***" Exodus 19:5-6

The whole earth is his, God says, but the Israelites were to be special: a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Priests mediate between God and man; they communicate God's words and distribute his blessings. As a kingdom of priests, God intended that the entire Israelite population would mediate His blessing to the nations around them. The Israelites were meant to live in such a way, as a holy nation, to exalt the God they served and bring other people into relationship with Him.

We know that collectively, they failed in this task and turned instead to other gods and other nations for help. Despite their disobedience, however, some important people drew close to the Israelite God: People like the prostitute from Jericho, Rahab, who became the

mother of Boaz, and Boaz's wife, Ruth, who left Moab and travelled to Bethlehem to find this God and became the great grandmother to King David.

God's plan all along, it seems, was to bless the Jews because he loved them, but also because he wanted them to distribute his blessing to others. He wanted to draw others in, but the Israelites got sidetracked by nationalism and in-fighting and bids for power and the blessing got lost along the way.

The Israelites didn't necessarily see God's bigger picture, but God kept inviting outsiders into his story, and because of His generosity, all of us can now experience His saving grace.

*For I tell you that Christ has become **a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth**, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs **so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy** ...The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; **the Gentiles will hope in him**". (Romans 15:8-12)*

### **Some thoughts for application:**

What do we do with the blessings we receive? When God gives us loving families and financial stability and a comfortable home and the ability to make a difference in the lives of others, do we hold these blessings close to our chest and do our best to protect what he's given us, or do we ask, "God, how can I best share your blessings with those around me?"

Listen to Peter's words to us:

*But you are **a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.** 1 Peter 2:9*

May we declare His praises, and distribute His blessings today.

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