

1. Matthew 2:1-12 (about the Magi--Wise Men--ill. of Three Kings song--seen in all the Nativity scenes although they were not there at his birth)
2. The Magi's Quest (In the entirety of what we now call the Christmas story--the oddest part of it--the part that does not seem to fit the context is the Magi. Why are they involved? Who are they? Where do they come from? They have always been a bit of a mystery. The things that are revealed about them do not help much. They came from the east--lots of territory there. They followed a star--how did they know to do that; how were they aware of what that meant--the birth of the Christ? How many of them were there? Even the word--magi itself--is ambiguous--making us think they might have been some type of magicians. So let's take a shot at answering some of these questions and see what we can learn and apply from them)
3. What We Know (and can guess with a little confidence)
 - a. They were likely astrologers (not magicians as we understand them--which would explain them recognizing this unusual star)
 - b. They likely were from the area of Babylon/Persia--Daniel 1:20; 2:27; 5:15 (since this kind of star-gazing/magic as it was called/wise men type endeavors was engaged in there--as these texts attest. This also plays into a theory that dates back to Daniel's time there--could it be possible that he shared the prophecy of the Christ-child--which then was handed down generations to the Magi--who had enough knowledge of it to recognize the star as pointing to the fulfillment of the prophecy?)
 - c. They did receive revelation from God--Matthew 2:12 (at least at the end of their story in Matthew--could it have been possible for them to have received it earlier--informing them to make the trip?)
 - d. They were non Jews (Perhaps the most important part of their story--here at the start of Christ's life--those outside of the covenant of God come to worship him and offer him quite expensive gifts, while those with Jewish heritage like Herod sought to kill him. It is a foreshadow of what was to come--rejection by his own and acceptance by the others and of what the kingdom was to be--people from every nation, tribe and tongue.)
4. Making the Journey (think about the faith of the Magi--to follow a star, not know exactly where it was leading; to pack up, take off and make such a long journey--again no one knows for sure but potentially it was a journey of 400-700 miles taking 3-4 weeks. Incredible. Surely there were obstacles with travel--not a very easy or convenient way for them to go; plus there was Herod to deal with and his evil agenda. Yet they made the journey--Nothing stopped them. This can serve as a metaphor of our own journey of faith and it reminds me of other biblical teaching in a different context)
5. Hebrews 12:1-2 (think about it--we have)
 - a. A witness to guide us (not a star--a host of faithful)
 - b. Challenges to overcome (discouragement and sin)
 - c. Perseverance to attain (the patience to know and accept that the journey may be long--with the endurance to finish)
 - d. Jesus waiting for us at the end (he will finish our faith--if we let him; if we make the journey--if our quest is indeed to find him no matter what)
6. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus" (That is exactly what the Magi did--and what we should do if we want to wise; if we want to not lose heart; if we want to enjoy the kingdom in its fullest that this Christ-child was born to fulfill. In a sense we are the Magi--on a journey and it is my prayer it will always be toward the Star of Bethlehem)