

**General Topics :: The Wise Men (Magi): Who were they, what did they know and why?**

**The Wise Men (Magi): Who were they, what did they know and why? - posted by ccchhhrrriiisss (), on: 2018/12/15 3:41**

Lately, I've been studying a bit about the wise men from the East who came in search of Christ. I've read stories about the wise men (or Magi) having likely come from Persia or having been influenced by ancient Persian thought.

I've always been puzzled by how non-believers (at least those who might not have known the Lord) would be looking for a sign of his coming. I wonder if Daniel -- raised in Persia during the diaspora of Jews out of Israel -- might have played a role in this.

Does anyone have thoughts about this?

**Re: The Wise Men (Magi): Who were they, what did they know and why? - posted by TMK (), on: 2018/12/15 11:08**

So much to speculate about. I have often wondered if they knew each other before the star appeared, as is usually assumed. In the novel "Ben Hur" by Lew Wallace (excellent by the way) one is an Egyptian, one is Hindu and one is a Greek who independently set out to follow the star, then meet along the way realizing they have a common goal. In the Nativity Story they know each other and recognize the heavenly phenomenon (convergence of three planets forming the bright star in the sky) as an astrological confirmation of a prophecy regarding the birth of a different kind of king. Of course these are just ideas.

But I like your Daniel- influence idea if in fact they were from Persia.

I have also been curious about the passages that suggest the star moved and came to rest over the house where Jesus was. I don't know if this means it literally moved or if, to the magi, it seemed to hang over that house.

**Re: - posted by deltadom (), on: 2018/12/15 13:55**

Numbers 24:7

I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

This is where the star comes from regarding the Messiah, the wise men would have known this verse but not this verse

But did not know this verse

Micah 5:2-5 King James Version (KJV)

2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

3 Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

4 And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

Which shows they must have been familiar with the Torah but not the prophets.

John MacArthur did a good talk at one point i listened to every sermon on this subject

Who were the wise men by John MacArthur

<https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/grace-to-you/listen/fools-and-wise-men-part-1-729380.html>

The term magi

—, 3097. magos —°

Strong's Concordance

magos: a Magian, i.e. an (Oriental) astrologer, by impl. a magician

Original Word: ἰσχυροῦς, ἰσχυρῶς, ἰσχυρῶς

Part of Speech: Noun, Masculine

Transliteration: magos

Phonetic Spelling: (mag'-os)

Definition: a Magian, an (Oriental) astrologer, by implication a magician

Usage: a sorcerer, a magician, a wizard

Matthew 2:1 N-NMP

GRK: ἰσχυροῦς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς

NAS: the king, magi from the east

KJV: there came wise men from

INT: king behold magi from east

Matthew 2:7 N-AMP

GRK: ἰσχυροῦς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς

NAS: called the magi and determined

KJV: called the wise men, enquired

INT: having called the magi inquired earnestly of

Matthew 2:16 N-GMP

GRK: ἰσχυροῦς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς

NAS: that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very

KJV: of the wise men, was exceeding

INT: by the magi was enraged greatly

Matthew 2:16 N-GMP

GRK: ἰσχυροῦς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς

NAS: which he had determined from the magi.

KJV: of the wise men.

INT: from the magi

Acts 13:6 N-AMS

GRK: ἰσχυροῦς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς

NAS: they found a magician, a Jewish

KJV: a certain sorcerer, a false prophet,

INT: a fellow a certain magician a false prophet a Jew

Acts 13:8 N-NMS

GRK: ἰσχυροῦς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς

NAS: But Elymas the magician (for so

KJV: But Elymas the sorcerer (for so

INT: Elymas the magician thus indeed

It is interesting that elymas was a magi

There is a common theory that they came from India but they more likely came from Persia , iran as previously said.

Another common misconception is that the wise men or the magi came the same time as the shepards came

Matt 2:18

King James Bible

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

So this means Jesus must be two years old but there is no passage to state that the Shepards came the same time as the wise men

The phrase magi appears in the septuagint 7 times

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

The magi according to John MacArthur were a group of kingmakers from the middle East Iran

## Early church fathers on the magi

When the Child was born in Bethlehem, since Joseph could not find a lodging in that village, he took up his quarters in a certain cave near the village. While they were there, Mary brought forth the Christ and placed Him in a manger, and here the Magi who came from Arabia found Him. Justin Martyr (c. 160, E), 1.237. For the Magi, who were held in bondage for the commission of all evil deeds through the owner of that demon, by coming to worship Christ, showed that they had revolted from that dominion which held them captive. Justin Martyr (c. 160, E), 1.238. Another Scripture says, "Behold a man! The East is His name". Accordingly, when a star arose in heaven at the time of His birth—as is recorded in the memoirs of His apostles—the Magi from Arabia recognized the sign by this. And they came and worshipped Him. Justin Martyr (c. 160, E), 1.252. The Greeks consider intercourse with a mother as unlawful. However, this practice is considered most becoming by the Persian Magi. Tatian (c. 160, E), 2.77.

Now it was in this style that He called the Magi by the name of ~~the~~ Samaritans, for they practiced idolatry, just as the Samaritans did. Tertullian (c. 207, W), 3.332. Notice the blunder of one who cannot distinguish between Magi and Chaldeans, nor recognize that what they profess is different. Origen (c. 248, E), 4.422. The Magi, being on familiar terms with evil spirits, and invoking them for such purposes as their knowledge and wishes extend to, bring about only such results as apparently do not exceed the superhuman power and strength of the evil spirits. . . . However, if some greater manifestation of divinity is made, then the powers of the evil spirits are overthrown, being unable to resist the light of divinity. . . . The Magi, accordingly, wishing to produce the customary results, . . . knew the reason of their failure, conjecturing the cause to be a great one. Beholding a divine sign in the heaven, they desired to learn its significance. . . . Accordingly, they came to Judea, persuaded that some king had been born. . . . However, He was Divine, the Savior of the human race, raised far above all those angels that minister to men. Accordingly, an angel rewarded the piety of the Magi for their worship of him, by making known to them that they were not to go back to Herod. Origen (c. 248, E), 4.423. The Magi . . . are from whom the art of magic derived its name. Through them, it has been transmitted to other nations, to the corruption and destruction of those who use it. Origen (c. 248, E), 4.609, 610. But the master and president of the Magi of Egypt prevailed on him to abandon that course and urged him to slay and persecute those pure and holy men. Dionysius of Alexandria (c. 262, E), 6.106, 107, as quoted by Eusebius. The Magi claim that they have intercessory prayers to win over certain powers, to make the way easy for those who are striving to climb to heaven. Arnobius (c. 305, E), 6.457.

**Re: - posted by ccchhhrrriiisss (), on: 2018/12/15 13:56**

Hi TMK,

That's interesting. The reason that I ponder the possible influence of Daniel is that many scholars seem to trace the "Magi" back to the time of Darius the Great.

The "Magi" religious philosophy ("Zoroastrianism") seems to have mingled a monotheistic "supreme god" philosophy with elements of Hebrew faith (possibly from the diaspora of the time). They worshiped "Ahura Mazda" (literally "Wise Lord") and their religious beliefs included belief in one Supreme Being (quite rare at the time), judgement, heaven and hell, etc.

There is an ancient Persian text from Darius the Great known as the "Behistun Inscription." It is interesting to read -- particularly if we consider that Darius the Great might be Darius the Mede from the Book of Daniel (and the influence that Daniel and the Hebrews may have had upon him).

As for the "star:" I'm not sure that it was ever a celestial event (like the convergence of planets in the night sky). The fact that it was followed and guided the wise men is indicative of something local (because it wouldn't operate along the "celestial sphere"). Thus, while the initial sign could have been celestial, I suspect that the "star" that was followed was something different.

**Re: - posted by ccchhhrrriiisss (), on: 2018/12/15 13:58**

Thank you, Dominic. I'll look over this today.

**Re: - posted by deltadom (), on: 2018/12/15 14:13**

It also occurs in an Iranian inscription the word Behistun Inscription

(12) King Darius says: The kingdom of which Gaumātā, the Magian, dispossessed Cambyses, had always belonged to our dynasty. After that Gaumātā, the Magian, had dispossessed Cambyses of Persia and Media, and of the other provinces, he did according to his will. He became

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Full\\_translation\\_of\\_the\\_Behistun\\_Inscription?wprov=sfla1](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Full_translation_of_the_Behistun_Inscription?wprov=sfla1)

Listen to John MacArthur's sermon

Who Were the Wise Men? <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2182/who-were-the-wise-men#.XBVRdQ-Ub2U.twitter>

I wish people would deal with this subject from a more archaeology and scientific way but the things I like is that Paul rebukes Elymas who is a magi and turns him blind in Acts

Dr Jason Lisle on the Bethlehem star  
<https://youtu.be/zijbTQ0SERg>

One of the best sermons on the star is by Dr Jason Lisle