

NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP ADVENT SEASON WEEKLY FAMILY DEVOTIONS

WEEK 4: THE HONOR OF KINGS

In martial arts, there is another saying: “Many of the secret treasures of kata (i.e. forms) are hidden in plain sight; the problem is we cannot see them or are never told about them. Thus, to train in basics (i.e. what many students consider to be boring and repetitive) is to train in the very secrets of kata.” In the same way, many of the secrets of the Scriptures, simple solutions to the puzzles, are hidden in plain sight. Therefore, to study (vs. read) the Scriptures, to compare them with each other, interpreting Scripture with Scripture, line upon line, precept upon precept, to search them out as the wise men searched out the meaning of the star . . . such is to handle the very secrets of the LORD. And thus saith the LORD: “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant” (Psalm 25:14).

DAY 1

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 25:2; Numbers 24:16-17; Matthew 2:1-8

1. The proverbs of Solomon are practical wisdom penned “to give subtilty to the simple” (Proverbs 1:4); they were written for the common man, not simply for the educated or for kings. Therefore, what does Proverbs 25:2 teach the common man; what is it teaching us?
2. Back during Week 1 of this devotional series, we studied Numbers 24:16-17 as a Messianic Prophecy from the Books of Moses that clearly indicates two comings of Messiah (contrary to Jewish rabbis who say two comings are nowhere prophesied or mentioned in the Torah). What was the sign of Messiah’s First Advent? What will be the sign of His Second Advent?
3. The wise men saw a strange star in the east. People have seen strange phenomena and signs in the heavens throughout history and have interpreted them to mean many things. How could the wise men have known from this star’s appearance to go looking for a King of the Jews in Jerusalem?
4. Too often, we accept traditions concerning biblical narratives and historical events as fact without ever questioning them, and sometimes without even knowing it, we elevate tradition over the authority of the Scriptures. Religious tradition tells us that three wise men came to Jerusalem, and we often see this illustrated as three men quietly coming on three camels. Look closely at Matthew 2:1-3 and see if you can determine the secret hidden in plain sight that disproves this tradition.

DAY 2

Scripture Reading: Daniel 5; Micah 5

1. Historically, wise men from the east were associated with ancient Chaldea—Abraham’s homeland and later the center of the Babylonian and Persian Empires. They were Gentile astrologers, magicians, and soothsayers who looked to the heavens for answers and dabbled in practices forbidden by God amongst the people of Israel. In Daniel 5, we see such “wise men” consulted by the king regarding the riddle of the handwriting on the wall. What does the Queen Mother’s response and the events that followed say about the renown of Daniel in the same place from which the wise men would study the star centuries later?
2. Daniel prophesied much and in detail about future Gentile Kingdoms—the rise and fall of Babylon, Persia, the Greeks, and the Romans—long before these things were fulfilled in history. Concerning the Babylonian Kingdom, Daniel 5 is the historical fulfillment of something Daniel prophesied many years earlier to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2 and something he wrote down about fifteen years before in Daniel 7. Interestingly, Daniel 2:4-7:28 was originally written in Aramaic, the language of the Babylonian Court and could have been easily understood by wise men from the east. These prophecies speak of a Messianic Kingdom that will one day fill the whole earth and destroy all Gentile Kingdoms. The wise men must have

known of these prophecies. What other very important prophecy in Daniel, this one originally written in Hebrew because it concerned the whole future of Israel, must they also have studied to know that the Messiah would be a Jewish King, that His First Advent was near, and that they should go looking for Him around Jerusalem?

3. When the wise men came to Jerusalem asking about the King of the Jews, Herod and the people of the city were very troubled and consulted the priests and scribes. They found the prophecy from Micah 5:2 concerning where the Messiah would be born. Herod was an Idumean, a Gentile king descended from the Edomites who originally descended from Esau. He was given authority by the Romans and in many ways was sympathetic to the Jews—he invested much in remodeling and refortifying their Temple, a 46-year project; and he also built a monument over the tomb of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the floor of which remains at Machpelah to this day. However, he responded to this prophecy in fury by attempting to frustrate its fulfillment and destroy the baby Messiah. He was so desperate to do that he had all the babies that were in Bethlehem and its suburbs, two years old and under, slaughtered. Micah 5:2 appears in the larger context of Micah 5 which prophesies far more about Messiah than just the place of His birth. What about this prophecy would have given Herod, a Gentile king ruling in Jerusalem, cause to fear? What about this prophecy would have fueled his desperation to destroy the baby Messiah?

DAY 3

Scripture Reading: Matthew 2:9-15; Luke 2:22-24; Leviticus 12:1-8

1. Tradition tells us that the wise men followed the star to Jerusalem and Bethlehem all the way from the east. Is this true? Where specifically did the star lead them, and how did they know to come from the east to Jerusalem?
2. According to the Mosaic Law in Leviticus 12, how many days after Jesus' birth would the events of Luke 2:22-24 have happened?
3. Mary and Joseph did not offer up a lamb for Mary's purification. Instead, they gave two birds for an offering? According to the Law, what type of people were allowed to give birds instead of a lamb? What tradition concerning the wise men does this simple fact refute?
4. In Matthew 2, the wise men came to a "house" and found a "young child" as opposed to the "babe" found by the shepherds. Based upon what you read in Luke 2 and Leviticus 12, Jesus must have been AT LEAST how old when the wise men came?
5. Joseph and Mary were too poor to offer up a lamb in the Temple for her purification, yet they were able to quickly put together and finance a journey to Egypt—two to three days just to get to the border. What does this teach us about the Lord's Provision? Fill in the blank: God never GUIDES where He does not _____.

DAY 4

Scripture Reading: I Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 1:5-6; Acts 17:10-12; II Timothy 2:15-16

1. It's the glory of God to conceal a thing and the honor of kings to search it out. What does this say to us as believers: a royal priesthood, kings, and those who possess the Scriptures?
2. How were the Bereans in Acts 17 a living embodiment of Proverbs 25:2? What did the Bereans and the wise men have in common?
3. Anyone can flip through the Scriptures and look up a word or words in a concordance. But, what mindset modeled by the Bereans is necessary for answers and understanding?
4. We should study the Scriptures to produce and refine what two important faculties (II Timothy 2:15-16)?