

DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

BEHOLD, THE STAR

by the Rev. Victor J. Gladish

You remember how it was that the wise men came to worship the Lord. They saw His star in the east. Perhaps you wonder how they knew this star from the others in the sky, and how they knew that this star meant that the Lord was born. Remember the story of the prophet Balaam, who blessed the children of Israel when King Balak wanted him to curse them? (Numbers 24:10) At that time Balaam said, “A star shall come out of Jacob.” This meant that the Lord would be born among the sons of Jacob. One of the names by which the Lord is called is “the Bright and Morning Star.” And it also meant that certain people would be able to see the star at that time.

Now Balaam also was from the east country, and although he had lived long before the Lord was born on earth, the wise men had heard about this story. And because they were wise and because someone who is truly wise is also good, they were looking for a sign from heaven that would tell them of the Lord’s coming. Finally they saw a star that was like no other star they had ever seen. It was brighter and in some way it was quite different. For instead of being an ordinary star it was a band of angels like the angels that the shepherds saw, with the “glory of the Lord” shining around them. But these angels that the wise men saw, and the brightness around them, looked like a star off in the distance. As you know, the wise men followed the star’s leading, and after a long journey across the desert and across rivers and mountains, they came to Jerusalem. Then something happened to make the wise men very sad. They couldn’t see the star while they were in Jerusalem, for it was their spiritual eyes which had been opened to see the star, and Jerusalem was such a wicked city then that the angel-star couldn’t appear to them there. When they asked the people of Jerusalem “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” Herod heard about it. And he was worried for fear that he would no longer be king. And he sent for the priests and the scribes to look in the prophecies of the Word and find out for him where Christ was to be born. The priests said: “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler Who shall shepherd my people Israel’” (Matthew 2:5, 6).

When Herod had heard this he sent for the wise men and told them that when they had found the babe they should “bring back word to me that I may come and worship him also.” But, as you know, Herod really wanted to put the Lord to death. And then the wise men left the city of Jerusalem, and as they got away from the wicked city and into the peaceful country the star which they had seen appeared again, nearer than ever. “And behold, the star which they had seen in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy” (Matthew 2:9, 10). And when they saw the infant Lord, they fell down and worshipped Him. So, the ancient prophecy spoken by Balaam came true.

Texts: Numbers 24:10; Matthew 2:5-6, 9-10