

## **Where do you park a caravan in Bethlehem?**

*Isaiah 60<sup>1-6</sup>; Psalm 72<sup>10-15</sup>; Ephesians 3<sup>1-12</sup>; Matthew 2<sup>1-12</sup>*

*We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage. (Matthew 2<sup>2</sup>)*

What did the wise men talk about on their way to Jerusalem?

Travelling long distances in close proximity with other people does force people to talk, sometimes even to talk enough so that you can listen!

What did they expect to discover when they at last found the **child who has been born king of the Jews?**

- ✦ It is clear that they had followed the message they read in the stars and that the message was clear enough to get them from wherever they originated from in the East to Israel, but within the last 20 miles they took a wrong turn and ended up in Jerusalem rather than Bethlehem.
- ✦ It is an honest mistake to read the stars and see the birth of a king and then to go to a palace, but Herod may not have been the safest choice!

But these wise men may not have been totally ignorant players in a cute version of the Nativity! They might have read Isaiah and they might have encountered the Psalm and so the gifts may not have been random.

- ✦ Isaiah prophesies a light, camels and gold and frankincense. Almost 800 years later the prophecy is fulfilled with Myrrh added for extra value.
- ✦ The Psalmist foretold that the Kings of Tarshish would pay homage to the one person who would make a real difference to the world: who shall deliver the poor; have pity on the weak; redeem lives from oppression.
- ✦ Paul said that **the riches of Christ would be made known to rulers** but that potential had been read in the stars by those whose daily work would have been to prepare horoscopes for the great and the good and for those who set store by such things.

What they must have thought when they turns up at a normal family home in Bethlehem must have been interesting (and where do you find parking for a caravan in Bethlehem?! They probably get there when Jesus is around 18 months old (which is why Herod kills all the boys under 2).

What is clear that, despite the surrounds, they recognise Jesus and worship (the word translated as homage is the Greek *proskuneo*, normally translated as worship: *approaching to kiss*) him and leave the gifts that have been prophesied as belonging to the Messiah (and return by a route that avoided Herod).

- ✦ How did you find your way to Jesus? You wouldn't be the first to misread the signs or to arrive at a false destination before recognising the baby that is God!
- ✦ When you recognised Jesus what gift accompanied your worship? You may not have gold and not everyone like incense, but the gift of time, of love or of time: all are acceptable to God.
- ✦ Having found Jesus, did you discover a new path? No-one meets him and stays the same. The Wise Men took a different direction, and so will we.