

Gifts from the Wise Men

Matthew 2:1-11

Introduction:

- There is a lot of misinformation when it comes to certain events around Christ's birth. First, the Bible does not tell us that these men were kings. The Greek word translated wise men here is "Magi". These were people who searched for truths and mysteries through the stars-astrologers. The tradition of the wise men being kings may have developed because of verses in the OT such as: Psalm 68:29,31, Isaiah 60:1-6. But these seem to refer to Christ's Second Coming instead.
- Then, the Bible never tells us how many wise men there were- although the tradition is that there were three.
- Lastly, many people also confuse the timeframe around Jesus' birth. Here we see the wise men noticed the star and first went to Jerusalem, and from there went to go find Christ in Bethlehem. This traveling no doubt took several months. So by the time they arrived Jesus was not just an infant in a manger, but a young child (1-2) living in a house by now. Herod's threat in verse 16 also helps shed some light on this. So the wise men were not present with the shepherds at the nativity scene. Sorry, if I just ruined the nativity scene that you set out!
- But, many are correct in noting these wise men followed a star. This is interesting because God revealed this to them supernaturally in their own field of expertise. These wise men were also probably influenced by Jewish teaching and writings about a coming Messiah. We see here wise men from the east searching for Jesus. "They said, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?' 'Jews?' Who cared for Jews? Even in those days, Jews were the subject of contempt, and scorn. Although they were the apple of God's eye, His chosen people, yet the nations looked down upon the Jews."
- God revealed great truth to these Gentile unbelievers and they responded by seeking after Jesus! They responded much better than Herod! Herod was troubled at the news of Christ-many today act the same way. We should follow the light just as the wise men did! What is the light we have today? God's word- Psalm 119:130, 105. We see a wonderful pattern: "Those who look for Jesus will see him: those who truly see him will worship him: those who worship him will consecrate their substance to him." (Spurgeon)

Today, I don't want us to simply study the wise men from the east. But I would like for us to focus on the gifts they brought to Jesus as a form of worship.

I. The Gift of Gold-

- a. This signified Christ's royalty
 - i. Common tradition of appearing before royalty with gifts
 - ii. As we look at Matthew's account here of these events surrounding the birth of our Lord we must understand why Matthew's Gospel is unique. More than any other Gospel writer, Matthew includes references to the Old Testament. This is because Matthew's purpose for writing is for Jewish people to see Christ as the Promised Messiah and King. Matthew presents Christ as King (Matthew 1:1). God promised David an everlasting throne, an eternal dynasty. Jesus, as a descendant of David, was the fulfillment of that promise
 - iii. Bethlehem was the hometown of the great King David
 - iv. The wise men understood this- Matthew 2:2
 - v. Jesus is not just an earthly ruler, but the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!
 - vi. "all power is given unto me..." – sovereignty. There is not one molecule in this universe that is outside of His power and authority
- b. Right there in a lowly manger, in great poverty- a King was born!
- c. Illustr- Hallelujah chorus is one of my favorite songs this time of year. The tradition of standing supposedly started with King George II in 1743. King George II stood up at the performance of George Frederick Handel's "Hallelujah chorus" on March 23, 1743. No one knows for sure why he stood. He never explained his actions. The words repeat: For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, Hallelujah! The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, And of His Christ. And He shall reign for ever and ever! King of Kings and Lord of Lords! -Perhaps he was moved at a king far superior to himself!
- d. 'Twas the Birthday of a King!
- e. Gold also represents His deity
 - i. The emphasis that Jesus Christ was worshipped, and only God is to be worshipped. (John 20:28- Thomas)
 - ii. Isaiah 44:6, Rev. 1:8- titles used only for God are also applied to Jesus- showing that He is God!

- f. Application- You may not have gold, but Have you crowned Jesus as King of your life?
Who sits on the throne of your heart?

II. The Gift of Frankincense- an ointment or perfume

- a. Holiness and Righteousness
- i. Was used in the burnt offering
 - ii. Christ was a willing sacrifice for us- II Cor 5:21 "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."
- b. II Cor 2:15-16 Application: the fragrance of a holy life
- i. We may not have frankincense, but we can be living sacrifice unto the Lord
 - ii. Romans 12:1

III. The Gift of Myrrh (a bitter herb/spice used in embalming)

- a. Suffering
- i. Myrrh was often used to form a bitter drink
 - ii. This signifies the bitterness, suffering, and affliction Christ would face (Isaiah 53:3-4)
 - iii. I Peter 3:18
- b. Death
- i. Christ had to die – born to die upon calvary
 - ii. He took our place- substitutionary atonement
 - iii. "tasted death for every man."
- c. Application – When we get saved we are in union with Christ- have we spiritually identified with his death, and die to our flesh as the Bible teaches?

Conclusion:

- An American Express survey about Christmas gifts found that the fruitcake was chosen most often (31%) from a list of "worst" holiday gifts. It even finished ahead of "no gift at all." When asked how to dispose of a bad gift, 30% would hide it in the closet, 21% would return it, and 19% would give it away. This suggests that the Christmas fruitcake might get recycled as a gift for the New Year's party.
- The greatest gift ever given is Jesus! The greatest gift you can bring Christ is yourself! Give Him your heart, and life and follow Him!

- **What can I give Him, poor as I am?**

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;

What can I give Him: give Him all my heart.