

## THE GIFTS

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Matthew 2:1-15

1. We have romanticized the biblical account of the Incarnation to such a degree that its implications are lost on most people.
2. However, there is real food for thought and meditation for those who will take the time to quietly reflect on the events and the people involved.
3. There are important lessons to be learned from the lives of those who played a part in this momentous event.
4. This morning I want to focus on what we can learn from the visit of the Wise Men or Magi to the temporary home of Mary, Joseph and the child, Jesus.
5. My main focus will be on the gifts that they brought with them.
6. The Magi were wise men who specialized in astronomy, astrology and science.
7. Notice several things that we are not told about the Magi.
  - a. Exactly where they came from other than from the East.
  - b. Their number, even though the common assumption is three because there were three gifts.
  - b. How long their journey was.
  - c. The exact nature of the star that they followed.

NOTE: I tend to agree with John MacArthur who wrote, "It is more likely a supernatural reality similar to the Shekinah that guided the Israelites in the days of Moses."

  - d. How old Jesus was when they arrived.
    - The visit of the shepherds recorded in Luke was to the baby Jesus while still in the manger.
    - The visit of the Wise Men was to a house in which the family was living, and Jesus was referred to as a child.

NOTE: Herod had made it a point to find out the exact time the star first appeared, and based on that information assumed that Jesus was under two-years old.
8. Their arrival in Jerusalem, the question they asked, and the stated purpose of their visit caused quite a stir among the people and in the palace as well.
9. I wonder what the impact of their arrival in the small village of Bethlehem was since they probably were not traveling alone but with servants and supplies.
10. Finally, I like to reflect on Joseph and Mary's response when they opened the door of what was probably a very modest home.
11. After entering they prostrated themselves on the ground, worshiped the recently born King, and presented gifts to him; gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

NOTE: What has your response to Jesus been?
12. Notice three things about the gifts.

### **I. They were precious.**

- A. Notice that they opened their treasures.
- B. Not only were the gifts precious, but I suspect that the presentation boxes were as well.
- C. They had come to worship Him who had been born King of the Jews, and their gifts would have been carefully chosen.
- D. How do you view Jesus Christ and to what degree does your life support that view?

### **II. They were practical.**

- A. They could easily be converted into currency.
- B. After the Wise Men left an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to flee with his family into Egypt to avoid Herod's upcoming attempt to destroy Jesus.
- C. The value of the gold, along with the gift boxes, and the frankincense and myrrh would support a peasant family for quite awhile.
- D. Does your devotion to Jesus translate into practical gifts of giving and service that advance God's purposes?

### **III. They were prophetic.**

- A. The myrrh was a burial spice and spoke of Christ's sacrificial death on Calvary's Cross.
- B. The frankincense gave off a sweet smell when burned and spoke of Jesus' current role as our "great High Priest."
  - 1. Hebrews 4:14-16  
For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. 15 And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, 16 "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,"
  - 2. Hebrews 7:23-28  
The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, 24 but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. 25 Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 26 For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. 28 For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.
  - 3. Hebrews 9:11-14  
But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all,

having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

4. Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

C. The gold speaks of royalty and the fact that Jesus Christ is not only our great High Priest, but He is also King of kings, and Lord of lords, who will soon come in glory and establish His Messianic Kingdom upon this earth.

D. Is Jesus Christ your Savior, High Priest, and Lord?

### **APPLICATION**

1. Many who get all excited about Christmas are not all that excited about Jesus Christ.
2. They may pay Him lip service but their lives contradict what is on their lips.
3. We have reduced Christianity to a simple profession of faith, but our Lord's own words and the teaching of Scripture cast doubt on the genuineness of many peoples' professed relationship with Jesus Christ.
4. To be saved a person has to do what the Wise Men did.
5. Note the progression: they followed God's leading, they worshipped, and they presented to Him gifts of great value.
6. We must respond to God's leading and activity in our lives, we must bow our knee and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and we must present ourselves to God as living and holy sacrifices that He might sanctify and use us.
7. It would be a step in the right direction if people loved Jesus to the degree they love Christmas.