

GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH
Matt. 2:1-12

Intro: Although the event recorded by Matthew concerning the wisemen probably did not take place immediately after the birth of Christ, it is recorded by Matthew as a significant event which did take place in our Lord's infancy. Therefore, we turn to it this morning trusting that the Spirit of God will open our eyes to see why He directed Matthew to write this.

Matthew does not give us all of the details that we would like to have, but we can be sure that he has given us all of the details that the Spirit of God wanted us to have. Sometimes a story is more impressive if we do not know it all. No one can read this passage without marveling at what took place -- with the wise men, Herod, as well as with the chief priests and the scribes!

I. THE WISEMEN -- MAGI.

There is nothing to indicate that they were kings.

The term, Magi, would seem to indicate that they were men who studied the stars. PERHAPS ASTROLOGERS - A SITUATION COMPARABLE TO THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

Quite obviously they were from the other end of the social scale from the shepherds which Luke tells us about. It is interesting to see how men from all walks of life were attracted to our Lord.

But we do not know . . .

- where they had come from (except that they were from "the east" and that they were not Jews).
- how many there were. There were three gifts, but that does not prove that there were three men.
- about the star.
- how they became interested in "the King of the Jews."

WHAT WE DO KNOW IS THAT THEY HAD MADE A LONG JOURNEY TO FIND HIM "THAT IS BORN KING OF THE JEWS." (Note their question in v. 2.)

How did they know that the star had to do with "the King of the Jews"? Were they able to travel only by night, or was it bright enough to give them light by day? Or, did they only see it in their own country, and, knowing that it had to do with the Messiah, go quite reasonably to Jerusalem? These are more things which we do not know. BUT THE IMPORTANT FACT IS THAT THEY WERE THERE! We do not even know if they were believers, but the evidence seems to indicate that they might have been.

II. THE SITUATION IN JERUSALEM (cf. Matt. 2:3-6).

A. Herod and the people.

They were "troubled" -- filled with commotion, agitated, disquieted, stirred up.

B. The chief priests and the scribes.

They knew the answer to the question the wise men had asked. They knew where to find it in the OT Scriptures. With Bethlehem only 5 miles away they were not even interested enough to go with the wise men to see if the Messiah were there!

How often this characterizes church people as well as people of the world. We know the Scriptures. We sing the carols. BUT HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE THERE WHO ARE REALLY INTERESTED IN FINDING THE LORD JESUS CHRIST? This is the most tragic part of the whole account given by Matthew in these verses.

III. THE STAR.

What is the meaning here?

There is no prophecy of such a thing in the OT! This star appeared in a Gentile country to direct these wise men to the Lord, and it appeared again as the wise men left Herod to go on to Bethlehem in search of the Lord.

Why did the star appear?

Because God in heaven was not going to let the hunger of these wise men go unsatisfied even though there were no men who seemed interested in finding the Messiah.

Spurgeon quotes that short verse,

"Remember that Omnipotence
Has servants everywhere."

Are you worried about those who have not heard? We should be. But we should also know that the God of the universe is not limited to men if men are not interested in Him. He used a star in this case, AND THE STAR TEACHES US A GREAT DEAL ABOUT WHAT A SERVANT OF THE LORD SHOULD BE.

c.f. Phil. 2:15b, 16a

Please note three things:

A. The star was "His star," i.e., the Lord's star.

It belonged to Him. It was concerned only with Him. It

had as its sole purpose to lead men to Christ.

This is what the chief priests and the scribes should have been doing, but it is doubtful if any of them had even gone in search of the Messiah!

B. The star led the wise men to Christ.

How wonderful it is when a servant of the Lord sets the example and leads the way -- TO CHRIST!

C. The star stopped when it got the wise men to Christ.

Where else can you go after you have gotten to HIM?
There is nothing beyond HIM!

Note: These are the characteristics of a true servant of the Lord. And there is a message here for all -- for those who know the Lord, and for those who do not.

Cf. Job in Job 23:3, and the Psalmist in Psa. 63:1, 2.

IV. THE WISE MEN AND THE LORD.

Will you note that they did NOT worship . . .

- 1) The star.
 - 2) Mary, the mother of our Lord?
- They "fell down, and worshiped Him" -- the Lord!

That is what they came to do, and that is what they did!

But, in worshiping Him, they presented costly gifts -- gifts which represented the high esteem they had for the Lord, and gifts which carry with them a great deal of significance for us. OR WHY WOULD THE HOLY SPIRIT TELL US WHAT THEY WERE?

The gifts:

- 1) "Gold." This is used to represent several things in Scripture, e.g., Deity, or Royalty. But let us think this morning of it as a gift which they were presenting to the Lord -- things which were very valuable even to the Lord Himself.

Cf. 1 Pet. 1:6, 7. We can present "gold" to the Lord when we submit to the trials which are designed to strengthen our faith in Him!

- 2) "Frankincense." This was pure incense. The Jews had been familiar with it from their days when the Tabernacle was constructed.

In Rev. 5:8 and 8:3, 4 it is linked with the prayers of the saints.

- 3) "Myrrh." In John 19:39 when Nicodemus came to assist Joseph of Arimathea in burying the body of the Lord Jesus, we read:

"And there came also Nicodemus, who at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and would it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury" (vv. 39, 40).

"Myrrh" among the Jews had to do with death!

How would you and I present these gifts to Him?

- 1) By our submission to Him in trial that our faith in Him might be strengthened for that day when we will present our gifts to Him in glory (as well as now).
- 2) By our prayers -- our worship, our praise, our petitions. How it delighted Him when we cannot be satisfied with anyone but Him.
- 3) Concerning death -- cf. Phil. 3:10, 11.

Concl: Prophetically this passage is significant also in that it opens the door of salvation to the Gentiles.

Cf. Matt. 8:10-12; Phil. 2:9-11. This is also involved in the judgment of the nations described by our Lord in Matt. 25:31-46.

But the thing that I would leave with you this morning is the question of the wise men:

"Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him."

Christian, will you ask that question this morning?

And, if you are not one who knows the Lord, will you ask that question from the heart this morning?

The prophet Jeremiah encourages us with these words in Jer. 29:13,

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."