

Title: Gifts for the Savior
Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12
Series: Topical

1. Introduction:

- a. Today, by the grace of God, we will study the arrival of the three wise men in the Christmas narrative. We will aim to understand the importance of their actions and gifts.
- b. The wise men are mysterious characters who enter the scene abruptly and then quickly exit. Little is known about them. However, the testimony that these men left behind cannot be undervalued. Theirs is a story that points all of humanity to the importance of the Savior.
- c. Much tradition has surrounded this story throughout the ages, and that tradition has a tendency to obscure the true meaning of our passage. Let us discuss some of these traditions to clarify the real story.
 - i. Tradition 1: This tradition states that there were three wise men, sometimes called Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspar, who came to see Christ. The number three arises from the three gifts that were brought and given. In actuality, the three gifts were prophetically essential and did not speak about the number of men who came. All we know is that more than two men made the journey.
 1. The importance is not how many wise men came, each bringing a present, but the reason why they came and what those presents prophesied.

- ii. Tradition 2: This tradition states that the wise men found the Babe in the manger. Many of us have a nativity set displaying this tradition in our homes. The fact of the matter is that Jesus could have been up to 2 years old when these men arrived. If the star appeared when Christ was born (which seems to be the case) and they left and traveled immediately, the journey would have taken substantial time. Proving this point is the fact that Herod had all the children two and under killed. Scripture tells us that the wise men found Jesus in a home, not a manger.
 - 1. If this is the case, the Scripture makes it abundantly clear that at birth when the shepherds came, in his young life when the wise men came, in his teen years at the temple, and throughout his adult life, Jesus was always the Son of God worthy of worship.
- iii. Tradition 3: This tradition states that the men who visited Jesus were magicians. However, it is most probable that they were astronomers and that God spoke to them through their limited understanding. Whatever the case, they understood that God had done something significant and that the Child born would be the Savior of both the Jews and the Gentiles. They weren't given over to the dark arts but they were longing for the light of salvation.
 - 1. We see the Jewish authorities rejecting Christ the Child but Gentile dignitaries bowing before Him.

Here, we see the beginning of the Gospel to the world and not just to a specific ethnic group.

a. The bible proves this truth in **Colossians 3:11**

Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

d. Today, our focus will be on the incredible scene painted for us in verse 11. After traveling great distances over a long period, these mysterious men finally arrive at their destination. With great joy, they enter the home that the star illuminates. We have an unbelievable scene of humble worship and divine revelation before us. May God use this verse to draw our attention to the true meaning of Christmas. May our hearts be in awe of God's greatest gift; Jesus Christ, the Savior!

2. Verse 11A: Worship the Son of God: And going into the house, they saw the Child with Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.

a. Upon entering the home of Joseph and Mary, the wise men immediately encounter the object of their journey. Having been illuminated by God, the wise men are overcome by the importance of the toddler that stands before them. Behold, they think, here is the King of the Jews, God's promised Savior. The Bible tells us that they fell down and worshiped.

i. As mentioned earlier, most of our nativity sets have these wise men kneeling before a cradle but what really happened was that these gentile dignitaries fell

prostrate on the floor. They make themselves as small as possible before the Child. To the casual observer, this scene would seem absurd. Why would such influential men bow before a poor Jewish child? However, this act seems entirely appropriate to those who know that the Child is God in the flesh living among us.

- ii. With their faces in the dirt, they begin to worship the Son of God.
 1. This scene is heightened because they have spent a better part of a couple of years traveling to arrive at this very moment.
 2. Before them stands God's provision, God's greatest gift to humanity. Before them stands the Savior who would bring peace to the world. Before them stands the hope of the Jews and the Gentiles alike. Overcome by faith and emotion, we can see them weeping in grateful adoration. Beloved Jesus is the gift of Christmas that should never be forgotten. In the gifting of Jesus to humanity, we get the fullest expression of God's love. Such realization is enough for all of us to fall prostrate before God and worship Him for His most gracious Gift of the Son.
 - a. John the revelator speaks about the gift of Christmas in **John 3:16** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- i. In this Child, the wise men somehow see God and worship him!
 - b. The scene before us also serves to illustrate God's propensity for role reversal. In God's economy, things are different from the world's values. In God's economy, the most significant person in the room are not the wise men but the poor child, who is God made flesh. The world might not see it, nor understand it. But that Child is the Incarnate God. God has become flesh and is pleased to live among us and share our human experience.
 - i. The Bible declares the great mystery of the incarnation in **John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
 1. This is why the wise men worshiped. They were privileged to behold the glory of the only Son of God who is full of grace and truth. Such a privilege should draw us to worship in the same manner.
 2. God has a propensity for role reversal and it is best demonstrated in the act of our salvation. We who were dead in trespass and sin are now alive in Christ!
3. Verse 11B: Honor the Son of God: Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense, and myrrh.

- a. The scene now changes a bit. After having fallen prostrate before Christ and worshiping Him, the wise men now offer gifts befitting the true nature of the Son of God. The purpose of the gifts is to honor the Child and place Him high above all other men, including themselves.
- b. The Three Gifts: the first gift is gold for a king, the second gift is frankincense, an offering to God, and the third gift is myrrh for the mortal man that will die.
 - i. Some do not agree with this interpretation. They say that the gifts were brought to honor Christ but had no more profound significance beyond that purpose. However, a closer look at the scriptures proves that there is a crucial element of prophetic utterance meant in the gifts.
- c. The Gift of Gold: It is incredible how often in Scripture this precious metal is associated with royalty, whether a king, queen, vice-gerent, or prince. It is also used to describe the divine rule of God.
 - i. Let us consider some of these passages:
 1. **Psalms 21:1-3** O LORD, in your strength the King rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exults! (2) You have given him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah (3) For you meet him with rich blessings; you set a crown of fine gold upon his head.
 2. Speaking of the King we read in **Psalms 72:15** Long may he live; may gold of Sheba be given to

him! May prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for him all the day!

3. **Revelation 14:14** Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand.

a. The gift of gold was meant to prophesy that the King of kings had been given. Although Christ's first advent was lowly and as a servant, this did not negate that He is God's chosen King. He is the one that will one day, at his second advent, subdue all nations and bring all powers and authorities under himself. As we read in **Revelation 17:14** They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

i. The wise men pointed to Jesus and proclaimed Him the King of kings.

d. The Gift of Frankincense: In most of the cases in which frankincense occurs in the Old Testament, it is mentioned as a key ingredient in connection with the making of the holy incense for the service of God (Exodus 30:34).

i. Once mixes, the incense was to belong solely to God. We read in **Exodus 30:37** And the incense that you shall make according to its composition, you shall

not make for yourselves. It shall be for you holy to the LORD.

ii. In the offering of this incense, burning coals were taken from the altar of burnt offering and placed on the altar of incense. On these coals, the incense was then sprinkled. The fragrant smoke rising heavenward was symbolic of the prayers and thanksgiving of the people and the priests. The incense was an offering made to God alone.

1. The gift of frankincense then prophetically points to Jesus as God the Son. If Exodus prohibited the use of the holy incense by men, and yet here it is appropriately offered to Christ; then He must be God in the flesh.

2. The biblical narrative bears this out. Speaking of Jesus as God, we read in **Colossians 1:16-19** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (17) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (18) And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. (19) For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

a. The wise men pointed to Jesus and proclaimed to be God.

- e. The Gift of Myrrh: in the scriptures, myrrh was generally a perfume used by men and to make burial less offensive. Myrrh was embalming fluid.
 - i. This gift prophetically points to the suffering of Christ for the redemption of God's elect. The gift of myrrh prophetically tells us that Jesus was destined for suffering and death.
 - ii. The death of Christ on the cross was not accidental put predetermined. The mission of Jesus was to fulfill the law that we couldn't and die the death for sins that belonged to us. He is the Lamb, the substitute. By his righteous death sinners are forgiven and made righteous with the righteousness not their own. In essence, the gift of myrrh spoke about the divine humanity of Jesus Christ. It spoke of the way and cost of salvation.
 - a. The wise men pointed to Christ and proclaimed to be the sacrifice for our sins, the holy offering to God.

4. Before we close, the bringing of gifts by these Gentiles reminds us of a messianic passage recorded in the book of Isaiah.

- a. We read in **Isaiah 60:6** A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.

- i. Isaiah predicted that Gentiles would one day come to the Messiah with gifts of gold and frankincense but fails to mention myrrh. Why is this?
 - 1. In Matthew, the myrrh is included because Christ's first coming is in view. In Matthew, we have the sufferings of Christ; the first advent.
 - 2. But Isaiah spoke of Christ's second advent—His coming in power and great glory. There will be no myrrh then because Jesus will not suffer then. He comes to establish his Kingdom, and no power on earth can forbid it. The Second coming of the Lord ushers in the glories of the Kingdom. In that Kingdom, neither Christ nor his people will ever suffer again.
 - a. **Romans 14:17** For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
5. A final note: Matthew's main lesson for the Jews who were the first to read his Gospel must have been to remind them of the fact that salvation, though beginning with the Jews, does not end there. The Gentiles, too, must be won for Christ.
- a. At the birth of Christ, Jewish shepherds and gentile wise men worshipped at the feet of the King of Kings, God the Son, and God incarnate.
 - b. This is the Christmas story. In Jesus, we all can be saved. Let us remember the words of Simeon in **Luke**

2:29-32 "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; (30) for my eyes have seen your salvation (31) that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, (32) a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

6. Benediction:

- a. **Luke 2:13-14** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, (14) "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Public Reading
Luke 2:1-7