

Text: Matthew 2:1-12

Matthew 2:1–12, “¹After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.’”

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

I. Introduction

- A. When we look around our society today, we see the meaning of Christmas is vastly distorted from that first Christmas centuries ago.
 - 1. Emphasis placed on buying gifts and material goods.
 - 2. Emphasis placed on Santa Claus and Rudolph the Reindeer
 - a. Nothing against “St Nick” but young people should have the proper perspective about Christmas.
 - 3. Our motives for giving are not always on the up and up
 - a. We give because we have to
 - b. We give because we want to receive a gift
- B. Satan has once again taken the scriptures and subtly distorted God’s original order:
 - 1. The meaning behind gifts today has shifted from giving to marketing and making

- money (e.g., black Friday, cyber Monday, etc.)
2. Many cities have done away with nativity scenes citing a conflict between church and state.
 3. People greet one another with “happy holidays” rather than “Merry Christmas”
- C. But in this text today we see the first gifts given at the first Christmas: gold, frankincense and myrrh.
1. These gifts had meaning as it relates to the baby Jesus as we shall see.
 2. These gifts were given by men who were commonly called “magi” or astrologers.
 - a. Astronomers say that these men sought out Jesus as result of the alignment of the planets Saturn and Jupiter creating a star.
 3. They came to Judea seeking Jesus but they first had an encounter with Herod
 - a. Up til now they had been following the star but they learn of the city from Herod’s own scribes (v. 4-5)
 - b. When they finally reach Jesus at the manger, they fall down and worship him and then they present their gifts.

II. Gold: Jesus Royalty

- A. The gift of gold presented to the baby Jesus is a reference to the royalty of Christ. Examples of gold linked to royalty:
1. Exodus 38:24 – Gold was used throughout the construction of the tabernacle. God was the “king” of Israel—their leader.
 2. 1 Kings 9:28; 10:1-2 – Solomon, king of Israel, received gold as a tribute because he was king.
- B. Jesus Christ is the king of all
1. Jesus was from the lineage of David and so he is rightfully “king of the Jews”
 - a. Isaiah 9:6–7, “⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and

righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.”

- b. 2 Samuel 7:12–13, “¹²When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and **I will establish his kingdom.** ¹³He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and **I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.**”
[Promise to David]
2. Jesus was worshiped as such during his earthly ministry
 - a. Matthew 21:9, “⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!”
3. Jesus is going to be returning as a king
 - a. Revelation 19:11,16, “¹¹I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. . . ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

III. Frankincense: His Divinity

- A. One of the hardest things for us to grasp is the fact that God was in the flesh (Philippians 2:7, “. . . made in the likeness of man”).
- B. This particular gift represents the divinity or deity of Jesus Christ as incenses were used in the Old Testament temple.
 1. In Exodus 30:34–37, God instructs the Hebrews to create a fragrance that included frankincense and that it was to be used only in the temple. This fragrance was consecrated unto God.
 - a. v. 37-38, “³⁷Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the LORD. ³⁸Whoever makes any like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from his people.”
 2. The holiness of the incense is seen in Leviticus and Numbers where the Hebrews are instructed not to use incense with sin offerings.
 - a. Leviticus 5:11, “If, however, he cannot afford two doves or two young pigeons, he is to bring as an offering for his sin a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He must not put oil or incense on it, because it is a sin offering.”

- b. Numbers 5:15, “then he is to take his wife to the priest. He must also take an offering of a tenth of an ephah of barley flour on her behalf. He must not pour oil on it or put incense on it, because it is a grain offering for jealousy, a reminder offering to draw attention to guilt.”
- C. Jesus Christ was indeed deity; no one points this out better than John’s gospel.
 - 1. John 1:1, 14, “¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . ¹⁴**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.** We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
 - 2. John 4:10, 13-14, “¹⁰Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” . . . ¹³Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, **the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.**”
 - 3. John 14:6, “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
 - 4. Mark 2:5–11, “⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” . . . ¹⁰But that you may know that **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.**” He said to the paralytic, ¹¹“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”
 - 5. Jesus’ capacity for forgiveness could only have been divine. Luke 23:34, “Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

IV. Myrrh: Jesus Humanity

- A. Many times we get so caught up in the words and deeds of Christ that we overlook his humanity.
- B. Jesus humanity is evident throughout the scriptures.
 - 1. Luke 2:7: Jesus was born of a woman.
 - 2. Luke 2:41: Jesus had parents and grew like any other child (v. 40)
 - 3. Matthew 4:2: Jesus exhibited hunger during his time of fasting in the wilderness.
 - 4. Matthew 8:24: Jesus needed physical rest from time-to-time

5. John 11:32-35: Jesus showed human emotion at the passing of Lazarus.
- C. But the significant thing about this gift is that it was frequently used to embalm the dead which clues us in on the purpose of Christ's advent:
1. John 2:19, "Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."
 - a. Jesus was aware that His death would yield redemption for all humankind.
 2. Hebrews 9:26, ". . . now he [Jesus] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."
- D. And because Jesus died once and for all, we receive a lot of benefits (or gifts) as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ:
1. Access to God via prayer
 2. Indwelling presence of God through the Holy Spirit
 3. Right standing before God [justification]
 4. Everlasting life

V. Conclusion

- A. At this time of the year, let us get into the habit of remembering what God did for us in sending His son into the world.
1. Before opening your gifts on Christmas day, stop a moment and remember the reason for the season.
 2. Before opening your gifts, read the birth of Jesus in Luke 2:1-20.
 3. Before complaining about what you didn't get as a gift, remember that some people didn't receive any gifts from anyone.
 - a. Children who have a parent(s) in prison.
 - b. Parents who have lost a child (CT school shooting, Dec 2012)
 - c. People who are lonely this holiday season because a loved one is no longer around due to death.

- d. Malawi brothers and sisters.

- B. To the world, Christmas is a once-a-year event only to be remembered by what it receives in terms of earthly goods. As we think about these first Christmas gifts given, let us be thankful for all Jesus is to us:
 - 1. King
 - 2. Priest
 - 3. Savior

- C. Let us take this time to thank God for the gift that no man could ever manufacture or purchase
 - 1. Ephesians 2:8, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God”

Date Preached	Place Preached	# That Came To Christ
1985 Dec 22	Pontiac Camp Prison - Pontiac MI	
1990 Dec 23	True Vine Baptist Church - Asbury Park, NJ	
2012 Dec 23	St Mark Missionary Baptist Church - Tampa, FL	
2016 Dec 18	Mt Olive Missionary Baptist Church – Crystal River, FL	