

**Gift for the King** Matthew 2:1-12 [www.bible-sermons.org](http://www.bible-sermons.org) December 24, 2016

The magi from the east were more than likely the counselors of Persia. They would have been the heirs of the writings of Daniel the prophet. He predicted that after a set period of time an anointed one would come who would put an end to sin and atone for iniquity (Daniel 9:24-26a). The time he predicted had almost come, so these wise men were watching for a sign of His birth. A star appeared. If it appeared when Jesus was born, it would have taken the wise men about three months to prepare and make the journey. So, unlike our manger scenes, the wise men would have been to visit the holy family when Jesus was about three months old.

These wise men knew from Daniel's 400-year-old prophecy that this King who was to come was very special. How could any normal king put an end to sin and atone for iniquity? That is the question that was on the minds of the ancients. How can we be right with our Creator? How can mortal man find favor with God? Our sins separate us from a holy God. Only in recent times has man become dull to the need to be right with God before we die and stand before Him. We are so distracted with the things of the world and all our gadgets and entertainment, we avoid thinking about our eternal souls. Only at funerals, or during a serious illness, or an accident do we stop to consider how brief our lives are and what will happen when we face our Creator.

The wise men saw the sign of the star as their opportunity to honor the One who would atone for their sins. They wanted to be the first to honor Him with their gifts, so when the sign appeared, they prepared gifts for a king and left to find Him.

How do you follow a star? There is a lot of speculation about whether or not it was some kind of natural phenomenon. I don't see how it could have been if it came and stayed over the home of Joseph and Mary (Matthew 2:9). It had to be something supernatural. It is similar the way people come to Jesus today. **There is the supernatural tug on their hearts to find out why we are alive and if God has a plan for our lives.** Guilt is a heavy burden, and we seek for a way to be free. We find ourselves driven to do things we know we shouldn't, and yet are powerless to stop on our own. We find ourselves seeking the same thing the wise men sought, the One who can put an end to our sin and make us acceptable to God. That desire is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The scholars of the Jewish writings told Herod the birthplace of the coming King was Bethlehem. Micah the prophet had predicted it centuries before. They did not mention that Micah also said that this One's going forth was of old (Micah 5:2). That means He is more than just a mortal man. He existed in ancient times.

I wonder what went through the wise men's minds when they found this humble home. They would have found in it the shadow of one of Herod's great architectural wonders, the Herodium. It was a manmade hill in which Herod built a palace with its own giant cisterns to hold tens of thousands of gallons of water. In front of the hill was a stadium where mock water battles were enacted for Herod's guests, complete with ships and hippos. Right nearby was the humble Jewish home of the family of the King of kings.

**Commented [PW1]: Daniel 9:24-26 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

<sup>25</sup> Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

<sup>26a</sup> And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.

**Commented [PW2]: Matthew 2:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

They probably did a few recalculations and measurements of the light in the sky to confirm this was really the right family. Wouldn't it seem more logical to find the new king in the Herodium palace?

Don't you love the fact that God did it that way? He came from the highest heights to our lowest level so every person would be able to relate to Him and know He understands what we experience. John Milton put it this way, That glorious form, that light unsufferable, And that far-beaming blaze of majesty, . . . Forsook the courts of everlasting day, And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay. (John Milton "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity") Did the wise men realize God had entered His creation? Could they possibly have understood the miracle they were observing?

Kneeling before this baby, they offered Him the gifts they had prepared. What do you bring a king who can save the world from sin? Gold was the present that would symbolize His holy condition. Gold lined the interior of the holy temple. The holiest vessels and furniture in the temple were of gold (Exodus 35:22; 1Kings 6:21). It was a fitting gift for a holy child. Perhaps that wise man was hoping this King would make his heart as pure as the gold he brought.

The second gift was frankincense. It was used in the sanctuary to make incense that symbolizes our prayers going up to God (Exodus 30:34-36). Maybe this wise man was hoping that the prayers of this new King would be a part in atoning for his iniquity. It is Jesus' intercession for us that draws us to Him and guides us through this life.

The third gift was myrrh. It was used in holy anointing oil to anoint the priests (Exodus 30:30-32). Perhaps this wise man thought of the role of this King removing sins as a priestly role, combining the offices of priest and king. Myrrh was also used to cover the smell of a decaying body (John 19:39). The Daniel prophecy mentions the death of this King that was to come. Maybe it was a gift to serve that purpose.

We now know this baby King left the glory of heaven to do just what Daniel predicted by offering Himself as the perfect sin offering, taking our sin and dying in our place. What kind of a gift can we bring so great a King? A psalmist asked, "What will I give to the Lord for all His goodness to me?" He answers his own question by saying he will take the cup of salvation and call on His name (Psalm 116:12-13). In other words, he will accept what God has done for him with gratitude and look to Him for forgiveness.

That is what so many are afraid to do. They are afraid because they know it will change their lives. To accept what Jesus has done for you and look to Him to direct you will change your life, for the better. It will make demands on your life, but they are demands for your eternal good. Don't be so short sighted as to live for what is so temporary and miss the love, joy, and peace that God has for you.

Is there some other sacrifice we can bring? When we give Him our lives in return for the gift of forgiveness, we give Him all that we are and have been blessed with, but is there some sacrifice we can bring? Can we bring an offering to our King for all His goodness to us?

**Commented [PW3]: Exodus 35:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects, every man dedicating an offering of gold to the LORD.

**Commented [PW4]: 1 Kings 6:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> And Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold, and he drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold.

**Commented [PW5]: Exodus 30:34-36 (ESV)**

<sup>34</sup> The LORD said to Moses, "Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part),  
<sup>35</sup> and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy.

<sup>36</sup> You shall beat some of it very small, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you. It shall be most holy for you.

**Commented [PW6]: Exodus 30:30-32 (ESV)**

<sup>30</sup> You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests.

<sup>31</sup> And you shall say to the people of Israel, 'This shall be my holy anointing oil throughout your generations.

<sup>32</sup> It shall not be poured on the body of an ordinary person, and you shall make no other like it in composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you.

**Commented [PW7]: John 19:39 (ESV)**

<sup>39</sup> Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.

This church is currently going through the book of Hebrews. As God would have it, we are looking at the gifts we can offer today. Here is one we can and should bring. <sup>15</sup> *Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.* Hebrews 13:15 A sacrifice of praise is something we can bring. Of course, more importantly is receiving the gift of forgiveness of sins. Then we can and should continually offer a sacrifice of praise for all He has done for us. He came into space and time as one of us to take care of a problem we could not deal with on our own. How gracious! How merciful! Our response should be to accept such a gracious gift. Then we should continually offer a sacrifice of praise. The Hebrews passage goes on to say that a sacrifice of praise, doing good, and serving others are sacrifices that are pleasing to God.

Jesus came as light into our dark world so we could see how far we had fallen from God's good intentions for us. He told us that He is the light of the world. If we will follow Him, we will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

That is what we are celebrating tonight. Jesus was born. Daniel's prophecy was being fulfilled, an end of sin and atonement for our iniquity. The baby would grow up to be a man and have His life cut short to atone for our sins at the very time Daniel predicted. How grateful we should be!

We are going to pass the light from person to person symbolizing receiving Jesus, the light who came into our world to illuminate our darkness and to open to us the way to life. As we do, I would encourage you to bring a sacrifice of praise. Whisper your sacrifice of praise, praise for your salvation. Or perhaps praise for the strength to endure a difficulty, or maybe some recent victory in life you know was from Him, for this season of life, for family, for His Word. There is so much to be thankful for. Let's take a moment of silence to settle in our hearts our own sacrifice of praise, our own gift to bring to the King from grateful hearts. Let us pray. (After a time of silence I pray.)

Lord Jesus, as we pass this light we remember when we first received Your forgiveness that came through Your sacrifice on the cross. If this is the first time for someone to receive that forgiveness, fill them with a sense of the love you showed for dying for them. We offer up a gift of praise for what You have done in our lives. Help us to do so continually. Fill our hearts with the gratitude we should have. It is because of You, Christ Jesus, that we can ask this. Amen!

(The worship team takes the light to the ends of the aisles allowing everyone to have time to whisper their offering before the closing song, Joy to the World. I'll dismiss them and invite them to Christmas morning service.)