

## **Christmas Gifts to Jesus: the Three Wise Men - Matthew 2:1-2:11**

Most Nativities have it wrong! Most nativities show several kinds of people gathering around the birth of Jesus:

- Most have Jesus at the center of the picture (which is probably right)
- Angel
- Shepherds – usually a little boy
- Mary & Joseph
- Some have a star above the baby, and most show:
- Three Wisemen

The facts of the Bible, however, are different. Most nativities show that there were three wisemen, but the Bible doesn't say how many there were. In fact, it was likely that there was a whole caravan showing up in front of Jesus.

The Bible also doesn't say what these magi (where we get our word magician) were or where they were from. The Bible just says that they were from the East. If you look, traditional nativities have one black wiseman and two white. The wisemen were probably all the same race, and were probably from the areas of modern day Iraq or Iran. They were probably astrologers and took a long time to get to Jesus.

The question has been posed: "What would have happened if there had been Three Wise Women instead of Three Wise Men?" The answer: They would have asked directions immediately upon commencing their trip, which would have allowed them to arrive on time; they would have helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole and brought cute little outfits that baby Jesus could have worn on his trip home. But, we have three wisemen, not women.

One thing we do know is that the wisemen were not around when Jesus was born, and they especially weren't around when the Shepherds or Angels were around. Most scholars agree that the wisemen didn't show up until weeks after the birth of Christ. This means that what they brought to Jesus and their reaction to Jesus happened in the New Year, weeks after Christmas.

This has major implications for us as we leave behind the Christmas celebration and face the new year. We should look at the gifts the wisemen brought to Jesus in the new year and see them as an example for how we will treat Jesus in 2005.

Let's read what the Bible says about these wisemen. Turn with me to Matthew 2:1-11

The wisemen brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Jesus. As they came into the new year, they approached Jesus, bowed and worshipped Him, and layed their gifts out before Him. This is the same that we must do in 2005.

Many of us form New Year Resolutions as a guide to help us become better people. What are some of your New Year Resolutions?

I want you to know that the wisemen's gifts to Jesus should be the ultimate example to us of what our New Year's Resolutions should be. The gifts of the Magi that were presented to Jesus expressed the very essence of who Jesus is. I want to take a look at each of these gifts and help you see a guide as we face 2005! They should tell us what we should give to Jesus as we enter 2005. They should tell us how we should approach Jesus in worship in the coming year!

1. We should honor Jesus as King!

- A. You see, the wisemen gave Jesus, first, a gift of Gold. Gold is only a gift for a King!
- B. In the Christmas hymn, We Three Kings of Orient Are, we find the Wiseman singing about their gifts. Turn with me in Favorite Hymns of Praise to #80 and read with me the second verse:  
     Born a King on Bethlehem's plain, Gold I bring to crown Him again,  
     King forever, ceasing never, Over us all to reign.
- C. Gold carries obvious worth. Gold has always been seen as a symbol of great wealth and power. It's precious, worthy across all cultures and times. It's a gift fit for royalty.
- D. Gold is a fitting example to us, for we indeed should see Jesus Christ as the Supreme sovereign King:
  - i. *Philippians 2:9-11 - Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
  - ii. In fact, the one time in the Bible where it says that Jesus has a tattoo, Jesus is said to be King. *Revelation 19:16 - On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND Lord OF LordS.*
- E. In 2005, will you honor Jesus as King?
  - i. Sometimes we get the idea that the only place we really need to make Jesus King is in the church. Some may think that as long as they have confessed Jesus as Lord and have been baptized in the church than they are OK. That is not true, unless they take it further. Jesus wants you to recognize Him as King in the every area of our lives. Quite often, the biggest struggle is when we realize that we

must allow Jesus to be King in our jobs, or place of employment. There are many people who had to decide if they were going to follow God as King while they were working:

1. Moses – tending sheep.
2. Gideon – harvesting wheat
3. Peter – cleaning nets after a night of fishing
4. Matthew – at a table collecting taxes
5. Wise Men – in their study of the stars

ii. Have you made Jesus King where you work?

iii. As King He deserves your allegiance!

1. Luke 16:13 - *No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.*
2. One preacher put it this way, “A wife who is 85% faithful to her husband is not faithful at all. There is no such thing as part-time loyalty to Jesus Christ.”

F. Realizing that Jesus is King means doing what He says. In Luke 6:46, Jesus asks, “*Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?*”

This gift of gold should be our example that Jesus will be our King in 2005. The next gift, frankincense, will show us that...

2. We should worship Jesus as the Holy One!

A. The wisemen gave Him a gift of frankincense.

B. The second Wiseman in the hymn sings in the third verse:

Frankincense to offer have I, Incense owns a Deity nigh.

Prayer and praising all men raising worship Him God most High.

C. There are over 17 references to Frankincense in the Bible. Frankincense was used as holy incense. The incense used in Jewish worship at the temple had four parts to it, of which pure Frankincense was one.

Frankincense is frequently mentioned in the Pentateuch, the first 5 books of the Bible. Pure Frankincense was an essential part of the worship in the Temple to the Holy God.

- i. Leviticus 2:16 (KJV) - *And the priest shall burn the memorial of it, part of the beaten corn thereof, and part of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof: it is an offering made by fire unto the LORD.*

- D. When these wisemen presented Jesus with Frankincense they were simply saying, “you are deity.” The offering of frankincense speaks of Christ as the Incarnate Holy One.
- i. Isaiah 9:6 - *For 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.*
  - ii. Matthew 1:23 - *The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel—which means, “God with us.”*
- E. This gift should tell us that one of our New Year Resolutions for 2005 should be to worship Jesus all the more! It should be to go deeper in our worship and to experience Jesus like we never have before!
- i. Matthew 2:11 - *On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him...*
  - ii. Psalm 95:6 - *Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;*
- F. James Smith, a Daily Devotion writer, put it this way: Jesus, who died for your sins, is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. We can never ascribe too much to Jesus. But He is worthy also to be believed, in preference to Satan, unbelief, the world, or appearances; to be trusted with all, for all, before all; to be loved more than any other, in opposition to any that would rival Him;... to be followed, wherever He may lead us, through evil report or good report; to be preferred to ease, pleasure, wealth, health, to anything and everything. Jesus is worthy to be our example, our confidant, our king, and our all. He is worthy of all He requires, all we can give, all His people have done for Him or suffered in His cause.
- G. This means that we must strive as the people of God in Cerro Gordo to really worship Christ in everything we do. Our worship services must be alive. We can not accept stale worship when we look at the offering of Frankincense. Jesus is God and He deserves our praise and honor and esteem and reverence and love!!!

The gift of gold tells us that we should honor Jesus as King in 2005,  
 The gift of frankincense should tell us that we should praise Jesus in worship in 2005,  
 and the last gift (Myrrh) should tell us that...

3. We should accept Jesus as our Redeemer!
  - A. The wisemen gave Jesus a gift of Myrrh

- B. The third Wiseman in the hymn in the fourth verse sings:  
Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering doom;  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone cold tomb.
- C. Even before the baby Jesus received Myrrh as a gift, over 2000 years ago, Myrrh was one of the most desired and most sought after items in the world. It is mentioned in the Bible over 22 times. Myrrh is the basis for expensive perfume and was a plant derivative from several rare trees and shrubs in India, Arabia, and eastern Africa. In ancient times, the red-brown resin of myrrh was primarily used to embalm the bodies of the dead and to preserve mummies.
- D. Myrrh was a gift that signified worth and at the same time death. When the wisemen gave the gift of myrrh, they were saying that Jesus was their redeemer. They were saying that He was born with death in mind. He was born to be the sin bearer – the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take all of our sins upon Himself. The one who would defeat sin and death so that we might have eternal life.
- i. Matthew 1:21 - *She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*
  - ii. Isaiah 53:6-7 - *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*
  - iii. Luke 2:11 - *Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*
- E. As we look at this last gift, what in 2005 will you give to Christ as your Sacrificial Lamb – your Savior? As Savior we owe Him our lives, our all.
- i. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*
- F. For many in this room this means different things:
- i. For some it means recognizing Jesus as Christ for the first time publicly. It means that you will put your faith in Him for the first time for the rest of your life. It means that you will confess Him as Lord, that you will repent of your sins, that you will be baptized, and that you will live for Him. He is waiting for this and the gift of myrrh should remind us of the proper response we should give Jesus as Savior.

- ii. For some it means coming back to Him. Some of you may have strayed from Christ's plan for your life and 2005 maybe the year to make it right with God. His arms are open wide for you.

As we look at the gifts that the wisemen brought, we are reminded that we should bring a gift to Jesus as well:

- The gift of gold tells us that we should honor Jesus as King,
- The gift of frankincense should tell us that we should praise Jesus in worship, and
- The last gift (Myrrh) should tell us that we should accept Jesus as our Redeemer!

What will your response be? How will you approach God in 2005? What gifts will you bring to Jesus in the coming year, in the coming years? Ultimately, your response to Jesus will determine whether or not you have peace in your life, peace with yourself, peace with God. The Bible makes it clear that we have peace in life by having faith in Jesus.

- Romans 5:1 - *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Having faith means honoring Jesus as King, worshipping Jesus as God, and accepting Jesus as Redeemer. When you do these things, Jesus promises you peace! Can you imagine a life of peace? You can find it in Jesus. He promises it:

- John 14:27 - *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

This means that you have a choice. Closed Eyes – have them raise a hand.