

Gold, Incense and Myrrh 13/12/09 Pelumi Igunnubole

Matthew 2:1-12

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, **Magi from the east** came to Jerusalem.

- **Time:** Stating that it was in Herod's time lets us know the historical validity of this story

Who are the Magi / Wisemen?

- Magi is the root word of magician. Skilled in philosophy, medicine and natural science. Likely a combination of soothsayers.
- Select sect of priests. Dual priestly and governmental office. They had a religious and political office and would provide a service for those in power.

Where were they from?

- **East:** these were gentiles, demonstrating God's purpose to reveal himself to all mankind. (And this wasn't the first time he had revealed himself as the one true God in Babylon)
- Earliest Astrologers recorded historically stemmed from Mesopotamia in Babylon (Iraq).
- Daniel was made the head of the Babylonian leaders and Wiseman

Daniel 5v11 (read the chapter)- ...There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king, I say—appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners...

Daniel prophesied much of the coming of Christ. As the greatest of the Magi its more than probable he left a legacy or a mark or a tradition of some sort that led to the study of the appearance of Christ.

(Deuteronomy 17 lets us know God is not for astrology, at least amongst the Israelites. But there are examples that show it was not in all cases that God apposed this practise),

It's possible that this group of Magi no longer followed the traditions of former Babylonians astrologers who failed Nebuchadnezzar and Balthazar and had now subscribed to serving the one true God following the pattern of Daniel.

2 and 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.**"

- At his birth he was titled King of the Jews, and at his death he was titled King of the Jews.
- **Astrologers:** People who study the movement of celestial bodies (stars) interpreted as having an effect on human affairs and the natural world.

Similar to modern times many believed in horoscopes and it's power to determine the fate of affairs on earth. Today many still believe that your star sign determines your character traits. God was making a statement by creating a unique star for his son to be born under. Those who are in Christ are no longer under bondage to a system of a fallen personality, you to can come under Christ's' star. Go determines your personality and destiny when you are in him.

- The Wise men, were men who had so **studied the word**. And had such a **revelation** that they knew who this new born King was. They came to worship him. Imagine the pilgrimage they made (from Babylon on camels to Jerusalem), just to come and worship Him. It was not enough just to know he had been born.

3 When King Herod heard this he was **disturbed**, and **all Jerusalem** with him.

- Earthly Kingdom verse heavenly Kingdom. Though Jesus' kingdom of another world, that world governs this world, it sits on a higher plain. This is partly why even now, many governments (I dare say all governments) find Jesus to be a threat.
- King: Jesus' life was always in constant conflict with people who just didn't get his Kingship. His King like qualities were so strong his people wanted to make him king and took him to the cliff edged after his refusal. They were unknowingly or knowingly tried to limit Christ's

Kingdom which was way beyond the earthly perimeters. They wanted to box Him, make him fit their limited understanding of his ruler-ship by crowning him- they had to recognise he was already crowned. (There ought to be King life qualities in the believer)

- History shows **Herod** wasn't really a native Jew and had to fight and struggle for his position. To hear of a King of the Jews would certainly disturb him.
- The wise men, especially carrying such treasures probably came in force. More like 300 than three, enough of a presence for Jerusalem to know (Mcgee).

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.

- This was an incredibly important issue
- Asking with the wrong motives, even sinister motives.

5"In 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."

- The Magi didn't go to Bethlehem because of the star, there direction came from the word (**Micah 5:2**), the star later appears (verse 9).
- There is no record of the priest following the magi to see the new born King. Perhaps this speaks of the veil that was over their eyes that wasn't over the eyes of the Magi, (a depth of revelation). Or maybe it speaks of a lack of seeking and hunger for the messiah, or a lack of belief in the scripture.

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**."

- Herod already had wicked plans in mind. He represents the devil's plan to interrupt God's plan for salvation. (Similar to when Moses was born all the babies were to be killed)
- Here we see a man who believed in the scriptures and the prophecy yet instead of humbly submitting hated the child Jesus. Knowing the truth isn't enough, we must love and embrace the truth. John 3, lets us know people perish not because they don't know the truth but because they loved their works of darkness instead.

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**.

The Gifts: They tell us of the depth of understanding the Magi had in their knowledge of whom they had come to worship. They speak of who Christ is and his purpose. As children of God there is also a pattern here for us to follow on our Christian journey.

Some material sourced from. Jason Forthofer of PlanetHoly.com.

Gold

- In 1 Kings when the Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon she brought him Gold and spices. Gold was viewed as precious, and had to be dug to find (huge challenge in biblical days)
- Symbolically Gold represents kingship.
- Gold is one of the only metals that when heated with fire will not lose anything of its nature, weight, colour, or any other property.

This gift is a statement of who Jesus was. It speaks of his, incorruptible nature, and His everlasting Kingship.

The Pattern

Know who you are: (1 Pet. 5:14) In Christ “We are a royal priest hood”.

(Frank)Incense

- A fragrant gum resin consisting of small, white chunks and beads which are easily ground into a powder; this powder emits a sweet odour when burned. An ingredient of the sacred oil. (*NIV Naves Topical Bible*)
- Frankincense is used as a perfume but mostly it was burned as a sweet incense during worship. During the Exodus Aaron would burn Frankincense at the alter as a **sweet offering** to the Lord. (Exodus 30:34-38 – instructions to Moses at the tent of meeting / Exodus 30:1-9 high priest as he tended the lamp/ Leviticus 16:12-13- in the Most Holy Place,) (Psalm 141:2, Luke 1:10, Revelation 5:8, 8:3- used to symbolise prayer)

Frankincense represents a life of **communion** and **intercession**. Christ was to live sacrificial life pleasing unto the Lord. Even in life he was destined to be the lamb that was slain, who would give the eternally sweet fragrance unto God.

The Pattern.

The Process frankincense goes through before it gives off a pleasing aroma: There must be a crushing up of our self life and a burning off of what is dross in our life to give off the pure sweet smell of Christ. As the sweet aroma is given off through grounding, and then burning, so we must be ready to go through grounding and burning (**suffering**) to give off the sweet fragrance unto the Lord with our life.

Often when you are crushed or going through fiery trails, the purpose is for the sweet fragrance of the life of Christ to be expressed.

Romans 5:3-4 “Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope

Myrrh

- Myrrh, like Frankincense, also is the sap from a tree that is hardened and then used. (e.g. Est 2:12) Myrrh was mostly used to embalm the dead because it had the property to preserve. It was also used as a perfume, an ingredient of holy ointments

This gift points to the ultimate purpose of Christ in Earth. Myrrh represents the bitter cup that Christ had to drink in suffering for our sins and the healing for us that his death brings.

Pattern:

There is also a cup for us to drink.

Rom. 12:1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

Mark 8:34: Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Why must we also go to the cross, because the cross is the only way to experience the resurrection life. Unless a seed falls.

12And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

- God knows how to preserve his own. His purposes cannot be foiled.

**Learn to be Seekers and worshipers like the Magi
Apply the believers Pattern to your life**