

## The Gifts of the Wisemen (Matthew 2: 1-12)

### The Seven Irrevocable Laws Of The Christmas Holidays.

1. The time that you spend find a parking space is inversely proportional to the amount of time you have to spend shopping.
2. The other check-out line always moves faster – if you don't believe me, change lines and see what happens.
3. **Beware of the three most frightening words – Some Assembly Required.** Be aware that unassembled toys take three times as long to assemble as they say, because the guy who wrote the instructions speaks 3 languages English not being one of them. And while there will always be at least one missing part, there will always be a pile of nuts and bolts and washers left over.
4. **The three most often overlooked words are – Batteries Not Included.** Be aware that toys that require batteries seldom if ever come with them.
5. When you return to the store to buy the gift that your husband, wife or child showed you the previous day, it is gone and they will not be receiving any more.
6. If you hear a loud crash in the living room, it is highly probable that your Christmas tree is probably lying on its side. If this happens more than once during the season you probably own an indoor pet.
7. If your toilet is ever going to break or your sink plug up it will be when at everyone is at your house celebrating.

Christmas is often seen as that time of year for the giving of gifts. People frantically try to find that perfect gift for that special person that will express their feelings and relationship toward one another.

The origin of the gift giving tradition is obscured in antiquity. But I do find in Scripture in the narrative of the birth of Jesus that a group of wise men came from the East (the area of Iraq and Iran) seeking the infant Jesus. Finding Him they presented Him with gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. The gifts of the Wisemen or Magi were appropriate for they express the very essence of who Jesus is.

There are a lot of lessons we can learn from the story of the wisemen. Four of them are:

1. We all have a God-given desire to seek Him
2. God has taken the initiative to reveal Himself to us.
3. The enemy fights against our knowledge of God.
4. From the time Jesus was born, Satan went to work trying to undo/stop what God had begun.

But today I want us to look at the lessons of the special gifts that were brought to the Baby Jesus on that first Christmas.

## Passage – Matthew 2:1-12 – The Gifts of the Wisemen

<sup>1</sup> Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem,

<sup>2</sup> saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

<sup>3</sup> When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him;

<sup>4</sup> and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

<sup>5</sup> They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup> “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.

<sup>8</sup> And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”

<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.

<sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

<sup>11</sup> And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

<sup>12</sup> And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

### THE GIFTS OF THE GIVER

At the time of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem, there appeared a star over Judea that had never been seen before. This star was the announcement of the birth of the “Bright and Morning Star” that is spoken of in Revelation 22:16, “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

There is a prophecy of Balaam’s in Numbers 24:17, “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;” This prophecy of Balaam, who lived in the east, might have been easily known by these men; and who, observing such a star appear over the land of Judea, might conclude that now the scepter bearer or king was born.

This was to be among the first prophecies of the coming Messiah. These wise men took the appearance of this star to be a sign of the Messiah’s arrival. They interpreted these words to

mean that, when a star shall "walk" or steer its course from Jacob, over the land of Israel, then a sceptre, or sceptre bearer, that is, a king, shall rise out of Israel.

## I. Gold

In the earliest of creation, gold was principally used for ornaments. It was very abundant and easily mined. Many tons of it were used in connection with the temple as we can see in 2 Chronicles 1:15, "And the king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah."

In our time gold is less plentiful. Most nations have hoarded it in vaults that are nearly impervious to outside elements. Gold is now, and always has been a symbol of great riches and wealth. Our entire economy began on the value of gold as its foundation.

Thus we see that the gold that was given by the Wisemen to the child Jesus was a symbol of his royalty and riches. Here was the very Son of God, the owner of all the cattle on a thousand hills, the King of the Universe, the King of all Kings, Creator of all things, rich in mercy and grace. Rich in Love and compassion for the fallen state of man, who had left all of those riches of Heaven behind to become a man who would die for the sins of mankind, to reconcile us to God, and redeem us from the curse.

Now we see that no amount of gold can purchase one moment of life. Even the happiness and joy that comes from wealth fades very quickly. But the riches of His grace give us the gift of salvation without price. We cannot pay for it nor earn it. No wealth is needed to purchase eternal life yet we receive all the wealth of Heaven as heirs with Jesus when we accept His sacrifice for our sin and receive Him as our Lord and Savior.

The wisemen brought gold to the Lord. How can we give gold to him?

- **In 1 Corinthians 3:11-13**, God says that our works and lives when we stand at judgment will either be like gold, silver and precious stones which is worth something or they will be as wood, hay and stubble. Let's give God the gold of a life built on the very best foundation. Jesus Christ!
- **In 2 Timothy. 2:20**, let's us give Jesus the gold of being a vessel of honor as we serve him. Let us be someone that he can be proud of.
- **In 1 Peter 1:7**, let's give the Lord the gold of living the life that will resist sin, overcome temptation, face any trials, and pay any price to live for Him.

## II. Frankincense

There are over 17 references to Frankincense in the Bible.

- It was one of the ingredients in the perfume of the sanctuary in Exodus 30:34-37.
- It was also used as a part of the meat-offering in Leviticus 2:1 and 2:16.

When frankincense burned it gave off a fragrant odor, and because of this the incense became a symbol of the Divine name of Jehovah God and an emblem of prayer.

By this we can see that Jesus was given a gift that symbolized the fact that his body was to be a “meat offering” unto God for the sin of humanity. His life gave off a fragrant scent of love and compassion for all that came in contact with Him and the prayers of our Lord were ever going toward the Father in Heaven on behalf of those around him.

Jesus is the sweet presence that we feel in our service this morning. He is the sweet, peaceful presence when you are shut in with God in your secret place. All of the love, compassion and mercy of Christ was mixed together with his sacrifice upon the cross for our sin as he became that “meat offering” unto God. We can see that the frankincense has a very special meaning to this child, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the one through whom we pray.

The wisemen brought frankincense to the Lord. How can we give frankincense to him?

- **Let us offer Him the frankincense of a life of prayer.**
- **Let us offer Him the frankincense of material offerings.** Leviticus 2:1, “When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it.”
- **Let us offer Him the frankincense of our all forever put on the altar for his use.** Leviticus 2:2, “and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. And he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.”

### III. Myrrh

Myrrh was first mentioned as a principal ingredient in the holy anointing oil in Exodus 30:23 and was used to anoint every part of the tabernacle in the wilderness. I remind you that every part of that Old Testament tabernacle was a type and shadow of the coming Savior of the world.

It was also used in embalming of the dead as we can see in John 19:39-40, "Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews."

It was also as a perfume:

- **In Esther 2:12**, where all of the women of Ahasuerus' court were anointed with myrrh before coming before the king.
- **In Psalms 45:7-8**, "you have loved righteousness, and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions; you robes

are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia, from ivory palaces, stringed instruments make you glad."

- **In Proverbs 7:17**, "I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon."

It was also a custom of the Jews to give those who were condemned to death by crucifixion "wine mingled with myrrh" to dull the pain and torture of the cross (Mark 15:23). The drugged wine was probably partaken of by the two malefactors, but when the Roman soldiers pressed it upon Jesus "he received it not".

The wisemen's gift of myrrh to the child Jesus has great meaning to us.

- **It was a gift of sweetness in the love and mercy that he extended to us.** Thank God for the love of Jesus Christ for a lost and dying world. Thank you Jesus for loving us before we loved you.
- **It was a symbol of the anointing upon the life of Christ.** He is the anointed one! He is the very Son of God and it only through the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the washing of our sins away in his anointed sacrifice of his own blood that we can be saved.
- **It was a symbol of his willingness to suffer for our sins.** He refused to dull the pain for it had to be felt. He refused to give up his suffering or his ability to think clearly until the very end for he knew the importance of what his death upon the cross meant to each of us.

Jesus died for you and I. The gifts he received even as a small child were symbols of his love, compassion and mercy for mankind.

The wisemen brought myrrh to the Lord. How can we give myrrh to him?

- We can give him the myrrh of an anointed life by the power of the Holy spirit.
- We can give him the myrrh of dying to ourselves that we might say as Paul in Col.3:3-5 "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

## **Conclusion**

Can we give him anything less? Are you giving Him your gold --- your frankincense ---- your myrrh?

Let this Christmas Season be the greatest time of your life. Give Jesus the greatest gift you could ever give. Give Him your heart and life in complete surrender and He will give you the greatest gift you could ever receive in return if he hasn't already, the gift of salvation and eternal life. Now that's what I call a **Real Christmas!**