



Sermon Notes: December 27, 2015

Taking Hold of God's Miracle

5 of 5 from the teaching series "The Christmas Miracle"
Matthew 2:1-12 • Pastor Paul Bradford

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 ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 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 shepherd my people Israel.'" ⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On 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, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

The Magi - Their Identity

1) We do know...

- They were from the East. Very possibly from Persia (present day Iran) - the land where Daniel and the Jews were exiled.
- They were not Jewish. Matthew contrasts them to the Jewish political and religious leaders who, far from being ecstatic at the Messiah's birth, were "troubled."
- They had wealth and education. They were Magi - educated men who studied the stars, interpreted dreams, and were familiar with ancient prophecies.
- They weren't at the manger. The star announced the birth, but they needed many months to prepare for and make the journey. They probably arrived in Jerusalem a year or more after Jesus' birth (as is evident by Herod's actions).

2) We don't know...

- How many there were. There is also no evidence that they were "kings."
- What became of them.
- The exact nature of the star they saw.

The Magi - Their Character

1) The Magi sought Christ above all else. (Gold = Value)

- They grasped his glory and valued him above all, despite being Persians who had gods of their own they could have worshipped.

- As true seekers after the truth, they must have searched the Hebrew Scriptures. They may have been familiar with Daniel's prophecy (Daniel, a Jewish exile in Persia, was a great ruler in Persia and a prophet of Yahweh. *(Daniel 7:13-14, 9:24-26)*)
- They saw a star that made clear to them the Messiah, the King, had been born. Perhaps they knew the ancient prophecy found in Numbers *(Numbers 24:17)*. Whatever the nature of the star they saw (most likely an angel), they understood that it proclaimed the birth of the Messiah.
- They longed to see the Messiah, to honor God's King of Kings, even though they had nothing to gain in this world from this long journey. *(Philippians 3:7-8)*
- ***Let us bring Jesus our gift of Gold: Valuing Christ above all else.***

2) The Magi were steadfast in pursuit of their goal. (Frankincense = Consecration)

- They didn't allow themselves to be distracted. There are so many diversions that can draw us away. Some diversions aren't sinful in themselves, but they can fill our lives and turn us aside from the most important thing of all.
- They pressed on when they had to walk by faith, not by sight. The star was not always visible.
- Frankincense was a key part of certain offerings in the tabernacle and represented the gift of a life set apart for God.
- ***Let us bring Jesus our gift of Frankincense: A consecrated life.***

3) The Magi sacrificed to obtain the prize. (Myrrh = Death to Self and to the World)

- Long travels, harsh conditions, dangers. The genuineness of our commitment to Christ is proven by our willingness to give up the things of this world for the higher call. Is it worth it? Yes. *(Romans 8:18)*
- Myrrh was a fragrance that was part of the anointing oil in the tabernacle, and also used for embalming the dead..
- ***Let us bring Jesus our gift of Myrrh: Dying to the world to gain Christ.***

4) The Magi submitted to the Messiah.

- They bowed down and worshipped him. *(Matthew 2:11)*
- Perhaps this submitted worship was the most important thing of all. They saw their need for God and were willing to lay aside their great learning and traditions and positions to worship a peasant child.
- Let us bring Jesus our gift of Worship: Bowing down to Christ alone.

OUR RESPONSE

Ponder the infinite [worth](#) and [wonder](#) of Christ; then give [all](#) to attain that [treasure](#)!