

## The Gifts of Christmas

Matthew 2:1-12

### The History of the Magi

You will remember that during the time of the prophet Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, invaded the land of the Israelites, conquered the land, and captured many of the people to serve as slaves in Babylon. In fact the prophet Isaiah shares a lot of these events as he prophesies who will conquer who. We know that region of Babylon today as Iraq. One of these servants was Daniel, who lived to be more than 100 years old. Ultimately, Babylon was conquered by the Persian Empire, and those Israelites continued to become more powerful under the Persian rulers. They created a special tribe of people called the Magi. Daniel, in the Old Testament, is referred to as the chief of the Magi. This is the history behind the Wise-Men we see here in Matthew 2. God had this whole thing rigged!

**The Greatness of Christ (Matthew 2:11)** *The Gift Acknowledging the Reign and Royalty of Christ (Gold)*. Gold, the most valuable commodity in the world at that time, was a symbol of royalty. By presenting gold to Christ, the Magi were acknowledging that Jesus would rule, and they were designating Him as King forever. Herod launched his search-and-destroy mission, yet an angel of the Lord warned Joseph in a dream to take Mary and the child and to escape to Egypt. Verse 12 gives insight that the Magi too were warned in a dream and went another way.

Joseph and Mary weren't a wealthy family, we see this clearly in Luke 2:24 at the appointed sacrifice for Jesus, they offered two turtledoves, which was reserved for those who couldn't afford a lamb. We can assume that their financial resources were strained. The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem were under difficult circumstances, complying to the Roman census and now a quick move from a home in Bethlehem to Egypt had to be costly. We know that the Magi came to a house where Mary and the child were, and we know that they were in Bethlehem for at least 40 days after the birth and maybe even longer. Now this is the time to talk about proper yard decorating! Leave your wisemen up that you placed in your neighbor's yard until at least February. You put them in your neighbor's yard, because they wouldn't have been there on Christmas. They came after Christmas! May Christians celebrate what is called the Epiphany or Theophany commemorating the visit of the Magi. The wise men's gift of gold became a God-send for this new young family. This gold designed to symbolize the kingship of Christ would probably have helped fund the beginning of the life of this little one who was destined to transform humanity.

**The Glory of Christ (Matthew 2:11)** *The Gift Acknowledging the Divinity of Christ (Frankincense)*. Frankincense was sap extracted from a frankincense tree. When this sap becomes solid, it forms an amber-colored lump. When those lumps are warmed, they give off a nice smell. Frankincense became useful in cleansing and purifying the temple in preparation for the worship of God, and frankincense was sprinkled over the sacrifices in the temple in

order to make them worthy to God. Because of this, frankincense became the symbol for divinity. Therefore, by bringing the gift of frankincense, the Magi from the East were acknowledging the divinity of Jesus, and they were designating Him as the Son of God.

**The Gruesome Sacrifice of Christ (Matthew 2:11)** *The Gift Acknowledging that Christ would suffer (Myrrh).* Myrrh is the symbol of suffering. It was the substance which was used for the deadening of pain and for the embalming of the dead. And therefore, the Magi from the East, by presenting myrrh to Christ, were acknowledging the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and declaring Him to be the Savior of the world. I'm convinced that Mary understood that her son was born to die. You see it in the encounter that she had with Simeon in the temple. He told her that that would be the case, and he said, "It will be like a sword that pierces your heart." I believe she carried that truth in her heart. Possibly, Mary took the urn of myrrh and, with her friends, hurried through the dawn's early light to the garden tomb, determined there to properly prepare her son for burial, only to be greeted by the thunderous announcement, "He is not here. He has risen." And that's why I believe that the wise men's gift of myrrh was the only gift that was never used.

**The Gaining of Salvation in Christ (Romans 6:23; 10:9-10)** *The Eternal Gift that Christ gives by grace through faith.* What gift can we give to Jesus? A drum solo? I don't believe that new parents, trying to help their Savior child sleep, really want a drum solo! This popular song "Little Drummer Boy" was written by Katherine Davis in 1941 to celebrate gifts given to Jesus. The gift that we can really give Christ is our heart! That's really what He desires! Romans 6:23 and 10:9-10 sums this up. (Romans 6:23) ***"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** (Romans 10"9-10) ***"because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."***

**When we give ourself, we gain everything in return**

(Galatians 4:4-7) ***"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. "*** Give your heart to Christ! If you have already done that, give Him your service, your time, and your talents all for His glory!