

12-22-24 Christmas Together

Week 3

Text: Matthew 2:1–11, 16; Luke 2:32; John 3:16–17; Matthew 28:18–20

Topics: Fashionably Late, Wise Men, Worship, Salvation, Evangelism

Big Idea of the Message: Christmas brings together people from around the world to offer gifts and worship to the King of the Jews.

Application Point: Jesus commissioned his followers to go into all the world to share the gospel with people of all different nationalities and make disciples.

Have you ever shown up late to something important? Perhaps you were late because you got lost on the way or traffic delayed you. Maybe you started to drive to the location and realized you forgot to grab something. Or perhaps you intentionally planned to arrive late because the introvert in you didn't want to stay at the event longer than what was socially acceptable.

According to a 2023 study by Lombardo Homes, 56 percent of people consider it socially acceptable to arrive 15–30 minutes late to events. (I am NOT in that 56 percent!)

It's one thing to arrive fashionably late to a party and "making an entrance to a captive audience" and it's another thing altogether to be so late that you miss the event completely! This was the case for a group of wise men, or magi, from the East who arrived in Jerusalem to celebrate Jesus's birth several months—possibly even up to two years—after the event.

While the Scriptures in **Matthew 2** are unclear where in the East these wise men came from or how many were in their traveling party, it is possible that they were from the priestly caste in Persia and Gentiles of high position from a country, perhaps Parthia, north-east of Babylon.

Magi were not royalty but were widely respected astrologers in society; they generally included men who were interested in dreams, astrology, magic, books thought to contain mysterious references to the future, and the like. (Gentile pagans)

These men looked to the stars for a sign that the Jewish Messiah had arrived—a sign possibly revealed to them through their study of Old Testament manuscripts brought by Jewish scholars on their travels east. So, when they saw his star rise in the sky, the wise men knew the King of the Jews had been born, and they headed to Jerusalem to worship him (**Matthew 2:1–2**).

The arrival of the wise men in Jerusalem came as a shock to King Herod. He, along with all Jerusalem, was troubled at the news that the king of the Jews had come (**v. 3**). Herod desires to know where and when the new king was born (**vv. 4, 7**), so as we find out later, he could kill the child (**v. 16**) to secure his hold on the throne! He sends the wise men south to Bethlehem (**v. 8**), armed with the prophecy that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem in Judah (**Micah 5:2**). Once more guided by the star, the wise men arrive at the house where Mary and Jesus are staying. Upon seeing Jesus, they fell to their knees in worship and offer to him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (**Matthew 2:9–11**).

The Christmas story brings together Jewish and Gentile dignitaries. Jesus, the King of the Jews, with Magi from the East to a house in Bethlehem. This was not a meeting that simply happened by chance.

If the Magi did travel from Parthia at the time when they first saw the star, their meeting with the newborn king may have taken two years and required an expedition of thousands of miles. That's a long time anticipating what you will say and do when you finally meet!

These foreigners from a distant country, guided by their astrological skills and possibly only with limited access to Jewish Scriptures, went to extreme lengths to worship the King of Kings. However, the scribes and Pharisees in Jerusalem, those who knew and taught the Scriptures, did not see the signs of Jesus's arrival, and none of them traveled the five miles to Bethlehem to see Jesus.

How far are you prepared to go in your worship of Jesus?

What are you prepared to offer him as your spiritual act of worship?

We see three ways of responding to Jesus.

I. Some hear and reject.

- **Read verse 1-3.**
- Leave me alone.
- Herod wanted Jesus to leave him alone. Herod was suspicious of anyone who might interfere with his life. Herod's reaction to Jesus was leave me alone so I can do as I please. I am the one true King. I am in charge of me!

Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. Luke 9:23 NLT

- Those that reject might even be hostile.
- You don't have to look very far to see people of differing opinions to be hostile to each other. In society today, you don't have to look very far to see people justifying others being murdered. Making statements that imply someone deserved it because of who they are, where they work, etc.
- **Read verses 7-8.**
- There are still many today that do not want Jesus in their life. They want to do their own thing and do not want to be accountable to God or anyone else.
- Many will reject Jesus by not making a choice, a decision. Or they will choose to wait until a later date, a better time. Or they believe there are many other ways to God than through Jesus.
- It is our job to love them and try with all we can to reach them with the truth of the gospel.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 ESV

- Live a life of example, love them and accept them, waiting for the time (redeeming the time) for when God moves in their lives, so that we are ready to share about God's love.

- Notice what I didn't say. I didn't say approval of their ways or endorse it. I stated that we are to love them and be ready for when God opens their hearts.
- Our responsibility is to live a life that is appealing, one that can only be explained as supernaturally led. We cannot have that if we are living conformed (just like) to the world.

II. **Some hear and aren't ready to consider it or are in denial.**

- **Read verses 4-6.**
- I am too busy.
- This was the reaction of the Chief Priests and Scribes. They were more worried about their religious activities. When Herod asked them where Christ was to be born, they quoted **Micah 5:2** indicating that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but they were too busy to go and see.
- There are many today that are just too busy doing other things to come to Jesus.
- Christians, we must not become so busy that we forget the purpose of Christmas.
- Christmas is not solely about Santa, or a tree, or an elf on a shelf, or a snoop on a stoop, or stockings, or the parties or presents we receive.
- Christmas is about God giving the world the best gift He could. Forgiveness and restoration through the sacrifice of the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- When we think of or share the Christmas story, we cannot stop at the baby born in a manger. That is only part of the story, we must finish it. The baby came to become the Messiah, the chosen one of God, to pay the sin debt for man. That baby came to be the bridge mankind needed to get back to God.
- It's about a Messiah being born to be Immanuel, God is with us. It is not about the presents, it's about Him being present in our lives. It is about what His presence in our lives means.
- Christmas is about Jesus and being born of a virgin. It is about Him being the Messiah. It is about salvation (rescue) of all people; through Jesus we can be saved.
- Although we know all these things, if we are too busy to share them with a lost and dying world; we have forgotten our true purpose.
- Or indifferent to it, complacent and don't care enough, and that is not from the Holy Spirit, that is from the flesh and or Satan.
- Some people we meet will not care to hear about the gospel. But that is on them, again, our responsibility is to live a way that they might want what we have, and to share Jesus. Or at least know where to go when things in their lives need answers.

III. **Some hear and surrender.**

- **Read verses 9-12.**
- **"...fell down and worshipped Him."**
- I know you probably get tired of me saying it, BUT there is nothing better than witnessing God working in the lives of others.
- When someone's eyes are open to the gospel?! When someone who has backslidden, walked away from God, comes home?!

- When someone steps out in faith and surrenders, repents of something God has been convicting, or challenging them.... whoa wee! That will get you fired up!
- Look at the Magi...
- They brought gifts. Wait.... they didn't come to Joseph and Mary's house and see a bunch of presents for themselves? No Bose, Beats, or Air pods? No Xbox or PlayStation? No big newest phone or newest it? Hmmm, they brought Him gifts....
- They brought Him... Gold. Gold is the gift of Kings. This was a very fitting gift for the King of kings.
- They brought Him... Frankincense. Frankincense is the gift for priest. Jesus is our High Priest.
- They brought Him... Myrrh. Myrrh was a gift for one who was to die. Christ was born to die for sins.
- It's almost like Christmas was never about trees, tradition, and treasures... if that is the case then why is it that we have made it?
- I am not an Ebenezer Scrooge; I enjoy all the festivities as much as the next guy. But we (Christian's) must be intentional to not get distracted by all of it and just fall in line with the rest of the world?
- If we are going to get bent out of shape about things, how about we get bent out of shape at how much we have compromised or settle.
- How about we make a change. What if we practice what we preach and repent.

Conclusion

How are we responding to the message of Christmas?

Are we fashionably late? As believers, do we choose to ignore the meaning?

If so, are we willing to repent and surrender?

What about those that haven't placed their faith in the Messiah, Jesus?

If you think there is more than one way to God, Jesus says you are wrong.

If you choose to wait until things are better, you have no idea what tomorrow will bring.

Christmas brings together people from different nations across the world to worship Jesus. It was always God's plan for all the world to be saved through a relationship with Jesus (**John 3:16-17**), Jews and gentiles alike, for Jesus is **"a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel"** (**Luke 2:32**).

No matter your nationality, race, or cultural heritage, the gift of God's salvation and the forgiveness of sin is available for you by grace, through faith, in the redemptive work of Jesus's sacrificial death upon the cross (**Ephesians 2:8-9**).

Have you received God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ?

Everyone who hears of Jesus Christ reacts in 1 of 3 ways:

Rejection.

Indifference.

Commitment.

There are many Herod's, priests, and scribes out there; but wise men are innumerable.

I heard a teaching by Dr. Henry Cloud, his thesis is there are three types of people.

1. **Wise:** Those who hear and recognize and accept the truth and adjust themselves to fit the truth.
2. **Foolish:** Those who hear the truth and try to adjust the truth to fit them.
 - Makes the same mistakes repeatedly.
 - Self-absorbed.
 - Lying.
 - Manipulation.
 - Unwilling to hear or listen to feedback.
 - Gaslighting when a problem is presented.
 - Assigning blame to others, rather than looking inward.
 - Never wrong, defense is to play the victim.
 - Frequently angry and lashes out "in the name of injustice of religion".
 - Critical spirit and others' ideas.
 - Gossip or malicious talk.
 - Ignoring boundaries, cannot set boundaries.
 - Passive aggressive.
 - Pursue your own mission, not the organization.
3. **Evil:** They don't recognize or desire to recognize the truth and seek harm.

Our desire, our goal should be to continuously bounce between a fool and wise. When we come to recognize foolishness, we need to stop trying to adjust the truth to fit us. We need to seek to be wise, adjust to the truth.