

# “O Come, All Ye Faithful”

(Matthew 2:1-12)

## Introduction

➤ When I heard the following story of “Santa Claus”, it immediately became my favorite Santa Claus story:

✓ **Illust:** “I’d like to tell you my favorite Santa Claus story. Modern Society of course has turned Santa Claus into a farce – a jolly, bearded, Scandinavian pulled through the night sky by a team of magic Caribou. But church history provides a very different picture. The fourth century pastor, Nicholas of Myra, ministered in modern day Turkey. He was known for his generosity which is part of the reason that there were legends about his gift giving. Eventually the Roman Catholic Church canonized him as a saint and he became known as Saint Nicolas, and he was the patron Saint of Dutch sailors who called him Sinter Claus and that’s how it came into English as Santa Claus.

But my favorite story about Nicholas of Myra, the pastor not the cartoonist caricature, involves his actions at the council of Nicaea. Roughly seventeen centuries ago, in the year 325 [A.D.], church leaders from around the Roman empire gathered in Nicaea to respond to the heretical teachings of a man named Arius. Arius was an elder from the church in Alexandria Egypt, and he taught that the Son of God was a created being. Arius denied the eternality of the Lord Jesus and, because He is not eternal (Arius claimed), He is not equal to the Father and therefore in fact is of a different substance or essence from the Father. In short, Arius denied the deity of Christ. The blasphemy of Arius sent shockwaves throughout the Roman world, and so in the year 325 emperor Constantine convened the council of Nicaea to deal with the controversy.

More than 300 bishops attended the council, they traveled to Nicaea with their presbyters and deacons in tow ... and they came to Nicaea to address a core theological question: Is the Lord Jesus co-eternal, co-equal, and co-essential with the Father? Is Jesus God?

This is where Nicholas enters the story because he was there at the council of Nicaea. And when Nicholas heard Arius brashly deny the deity of Christ he was overcome with righteous indignation, and according to the story Nicholas stood to his feet in the middle of the proceedings and he approached Arius in front of everyone there, and he faced him. And in response to his blasphemy, Santa Claus smacked [Arius] in the face.

Nicholas actually got in quite a bit of trouble for doing that because Constantine was not about to let his council turn into a riot. And while we would of course not condone physical violence, you have to admit that’s quite a story. The real Santa Claus was not a competitor to Christ he was a worshipper of Christ, and he rightly understood that the Son of God is no mere creature – He is God the Son – the eternal second person of the Trinity, the Creator of all things. And when he heard the name of the Lord so shamefully blasphemed, Nicholas did not simply put coal in Arius’ stocking. No, he was moved to defend the glory of his Savior no matter the consequence. Nicholas of Myra had clarity about the deity of Christ, and it moved him to action.” (Nathan Busenitz; sermon: “[The Name of the Lord](#)”; March 6, 2020)

➤ As we celebrate Christmas, the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we must have clarity concerning the deity of Christ and it must move us to action. For all the biblical narratives and teachings concerning the birth of Christ are meant for us to acknowledge and worship Him as the one and only Son of God, and one and only Savior from God (see Is.9:6; Matt.1:21; Lk.1:32, 35; 2:10; Jn.1:1-3, 14; 20:31).

➤ This is certainly, abundantly, evident in the scriptural passage we are studying this morning:

**Matt 2:1-12** ~ “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.”

- Matthew’s divinely inspired account of the visit of the wise men, is replete with unique and important details concerning the incarnation of the Son of God. This narrative passage can be divided into six distinct scenes, each giving us more proof that Jesus is the Christ, the one and only Son of God, and one and only Savior from God.

### 1. The historical setting (vs.1a)

- This passage begins by establishing a brief but detailed historical setting: *“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king”* (vs.1). The first part of verse one is packed with important historical information for us to consider.

#### The time

- First, note the time: *“Now after Jesus was born”* (vs.1). This occurred after the angelic announcements to Mary (Lk.1:26-38) and Joseph (Matt.1:20-25), after the birth of John the Baptist (Lk.1:57-80), after the birth of Jesus Christ (Matt.1:25; Lk.2:1-7), after the angels’ announcement to the shepherds (Lk.2:8-20), and most likely after Jesus was circumcised and presented (Lk.2:21-38) [see “A Harmony of the Biblical Accounts of Jesus’ Birth”].
- The typical nativity scene includes three wise men next to Jesus in the manger. However, in Matthew’s Gospel, we read: *“after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem”* (Matt.2:1), and *“Where is He who has been born king of the Jews”* (Matt.2:2). So clearly, Jesus had already been born by the time the wise men arrived in Jerusalem. Since the angels appeared to the shepherds (*“in the same region”*, Lk.2:8) at night, announcing that Christ had been born, it is safe to presume that Jesus was born at night. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that the wise men would arrive after Jesus’ birth, meet with Herod, who then *“assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people”* to inquire of them where the Christ was to be born (Matt.2:4), discover that the prophets foretold the Christ would be born in Bethlehem (Matt.2:5; cf. Mic.5:2), meet again with Herod (Matt.2:7), and then make the six-mile long journey to Bethlehem all in the same night.

Some scholars suggest that the wise men visited Jesus months – even as much as two years – after His birth, since after their visit Matthew stated that an angel warned Joseph to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt where they remained until after Herod died (Matt.2:13-15). But Luke recorded that eight days after Jesus was born He was circumcised (Lk.2:21), and at least 40 days after His birth Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem to have Him dedicated in the temple (Lk.2:22-38). In addition, Herod (after finding out he was tricked by the wise men; Matt.2:16) *“sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men”* (Matt.2:16).

Interestingly, Matthew recorded that the wise men followed the star *“until it came to rest over the place where the child was”* (vs.9), and then went *“into the house”* (*oikia*; vs.11) – not “manger” (*phatnē*; Lk.2:7, 12, 16) or “inn” (*katalyma*; Lk.2:7). It is also interesting to note that Jesus is here

referred to as *“the child”* (*paidion*; vs.9), not a “baby” (*brephos*; Lk.2:12, 16) as the angel had told the shepherds and the shepherds saw for themselves (see Lk.2:12, 16).

### The place

- Second, we note the place in which these events occurred. In verse one we read: *“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea”* (vs.1). Technically, this simply refers to the place in which Jesus was born (i.e. Bethlehem; cf. vs.5, 6, 16; Mic.5:2; Lk.2:4, 15). Initially, we see that the wise men came from *“the east ... to Jerusalem”* (vs.1; cf. vs.3). They had followed *“his star”* (vs.2) and arrived in Jerusalem.

From there, as we will see, after learning that the prophet had declared the *“king of the Jews”* (vs.2) was to be born *“in Bethlehem”* (vs.5-6), Herod sent the wise men *“to Bethlehem”* (vs.8). However, ultimately it was *“the star”* that actually led them to the *“place where the child was”* (vs.9). It seems likely that the wise men found Jesus in Bethlehem, perhaps while Mary and Joseph were visiting family.

### The government

- Notably, all this took place *“in the days of Herod the king”* (vs.1; cf. Lk.1:5). The Herodian dynasty was mired sin – murder, betrayal, incest, evil, corruption and hedonism.

Perhaps most notorious of the Herods was *“Herod the king”* (vs.1), or “Herod I” or “Herod the Great”, who reigned as the Roman ruler over Judea from 37-4 B.C. Herod was particularly superstitious, jealous, and merciless. About a year after Jesus’ birth, Herod had his own son (Aristobulus IV, father of Herod Agrippa I) executed on suspicion of treason. Worse still, after Jesus was born, Herod was the one who ordered the mass-murder of all Jewish boys two-years and younger, in and around Bethlehem, in his attempt to kill Jesus (see Matt.2:16).

Herod’s son, Herod Antipas, succeeded him as Roman governor of Galilee and Perea (Matt.14:1). Antipas was responsible for the imprisonment and death (beheading) of John the Baptist (Lk.3:19, 20; Matt.14:1-12).

The grandson of Herod the Great, Herod Agrippa I, ruled over all of Palestine from 37– 44 A.D. Agrippa is known as a persecutor of early Christians. He had the apostle James put to death *with the sword”* (Acts 12:2) and had the apostle Peter arrested (Acts 12:3). Because of his cruelty and blasphemy, Agrippa was slain by an angel of the Lord (Acts 12:20-23).

Agrippa’s son, known as Agrippa II (the great-grandson of Herod the Great), would later rule over parts of Galilee and Perea (among other territories). The only reference to this Herod in the New Testament occurs in Acts 25:13–26:32, which deals with Paul’s imprisonment in Caesarea. Agrippa listened to Paul’s defense, but the apostle appealed to Rome. Agrippa had no power to set him free.

- To put it bluntly, at the time of Jesus’ birth, and subsequent New Testament era, Jerusalem (Palestine) was hardly under godly rule. The Jews were under Roman occupation, being ruled by evil and cruel tyrants. It is important to note that it was into this political and spiritual darkness that Christ was born.

**2 Cor 4:6** ~ “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

**John 1:4-5** ~ “In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

**John 8:12** ~ “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

**John 12:46** ~ “I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.”

## 2. The wise men (vs.1b-2)

- The wise men came to Jerusalem asking, *“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?”* (vs.2). While we do not know a lot about these “wise men”, we know that they came to Jerusalem looking for Jesus. While they most likely did not know His name, they knew something about Jesus that many never understood or acknowledged: that He is *“king of the Jews”* (vs.2).
- This is a major theme in Matthew’s Gospel [the word “king” (*basileus*) and “kingdom” (*basileia*) are used 22 and 56 times respectively, almost 80 times combined].

**Matt 27:11** ~ “Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ Jesus said, ‘You have said so.’”

**Matt 27:27-31** ~ “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. <sup>28</sup>And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, <sup>29</sup>and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ <sup>30</sup>And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. <sup>31</sup>And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.”

- At the morning of Christ’s crucifixion, the Jewish leaders adamantly denied and vehemently rejected Jesus as their king, declaring their allegiance to “Caesar” (i.e. Roman emperors) as their only king (see Jn.19:14-15). However, much to the outrage of the Jewish leaders, Pilate wrote an inscription declaring Jesus to be “the King of the Jews”, and placed it on the cross upon which Jesus was crucified.

**Matt 27:35-38** ~ “And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. <sup>36</sup>Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. <sup>37</sup>And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, ‘This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.’”

John 19:19-22 ~ “Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.’ <sup>20</sup>Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. <sup>21</sup>So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, ‘Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but rather, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’” <sup>22</sup>Pilate answered, ‘What I have written I have written.’”

### Their origin

- As we have seen, *“wise men from the east came to Jerusalem”* (vs.1). The true identity of these “wise men” is mostly unknown, yet they are the subject of much speculation, myth and tradition. The bible simply does not give us much information about these men – not their names, their number, their mode of transportation, or even the specific country/countries from which they came. There is no biblical basis to conclude that they were either kings or Oriental (“We Three Kings of Orient Are”), only that they were wise men from the east.

We know that the Greek word translated *“wise men”* (*magos*), sometimes “Magi”, generally referred to someone who possessed special knowledge or ability (like a magician, sorcerer, or diviner). Our English words “magic/magician” are derived from this Greek word. So, it is presumed that these men were a class of Babylonian/Persian men, and possibly priests, who were interpreters of sacred writings, dreams, special signs, particularly in astronomy and/or astrology.

### Their sign

- There has almost been as much speculation and folklore concerning the star the wise men followed as the wise men themselves. All we are told in Scripture is that they *“saw his star when it rose”* and, after seeing it, they came from the east to Jerusalem *“to worship him”* (vs.2). They somehow knew that this star signaled the birth of the *“king of the Jews”* (vs.2).

There are some who believe it was an actual star, others believe it to be comet or supernova, some think it was a planet, some think it was a supernatural light from God, and still others think it was the light from the angels who appeared to the shepherds (Lk.2:8-9). Short answer? We do not know. What we do know is of the utmost importance: we know that God orchestrated this star to lead the wise men to Jesus.

#### Their purpose

- If we are not careful, lost in all our curiosity about the wise men is the purpose for why they came to Jerusalem: *“we ... have come to worship him”* (vs.2). The Greek word translated “worship” (*proskyneō*) is a common word for worship in the New Testament. It literally can be translated “to kneel down or bow before something/someone.” The trip to Palestine was not a vacation for the wise men. They were not tourists. They had come to Jerusalem for one explicit purpose: to worship *“He who has been born king of the Jews”* (vs.2).

### 3. The king and his kingdom (vs.3)

- Herod, consumed with pride and fear, was none too pleased to hear this announcement from the wise men. In fact, Matthew records for us that the visit of these wise men greatly upset both *“the king”* and *“all Jerusalem”* (vs.3)

#### The reaction

- Obviously, Herod found the news of another king in his kingdom troubling. Matthew recorded for us that *“he was troubled”* (vs.3). The Greek word translated “troubled” (*tarassō*) literally means to be stirred (Jn.5:7), and figuratively refers to be moved to excitement, agitation, or distress (see Matt.14:26; Jn.13:21). In this context, it seems as though Herod was greatly distressed by this news.
- It is perhaps surprising to read that *“all Jerusalem [was troubled] with Him”* (vs.3). The simple point is that the message from the wise men caused quite a stir for the king and his kingdom.

#### The reason

- The reason for this distress was the news that there was ‘a new king in town’, that someone had arrived who would eventually/potentially dethrone Herod. The threat of this caused quite a stir among all those who heard it.
- It is interesting to note that the Greek construction of what the wise men said (“saying” is a present, active, participle emphasizing continual action) suggests that they may have been repeating this question and statement – *“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”* (vs.2) – throughout Jerusalem until someone finally pointed them to where Jesus was.

### 4. The religious leaders (vs.4-6)

- Now Herod too wanted desperately to know *“where the Christ was to be born”* (vs.4). He called for *“all the chief priests”* (vs.4; who were mostly Sadducees, and had oversight over all the temple activities), and *“scribes of the people”* (vs.4; who were mostly Pharisees, and were the official interpreters of Old Testament Scripture).

#### Their assignment

- Their assignment was simple and straightforward, they were to tell Herod *“where the Christ was to be born”* (vs.4). Whether they had to look this up, spending time in research, or whether they knew immediately we are not told. It would seem that they had this information readily available if not memorized.

Their discovery (see Micah 5:2)

- Clearly, these Jewish leaders knew that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. They declared what was written *“by the prophet”* (vs.5) Micah: *“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”* (vs.6). This prophecy was written some 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ:

**Mic 5:2** ~ “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”

It is interesting to note that, in his divinely inspired Gospel, Matthew added the phrase: *“who will shepherd my people Israel”* (vs.6) which is not in Micah’s prophecy. In fact, it may be that Matthew added what we have in verse six for the readers of his Gospel. This would make Micah’s prophecy immediately accessible to all those who would read Matthew’s Gospel. In any case, Matthew clearly added the clarification that the *“ruler”* (vs.6), who is the Messiah, to be born in Bethlehem would *“shepherd [God’s] people Israel”* (vs.6; cf. 2Sam.5:2; “good shepherd”, Jn.10:11, 14; “great shepherd”, Heb.13:20; “chief shepherd”, 1Pet.5:4).

- Clearly, these Jewish leaders knew that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. They mistakenly believed Jesus to be born in Nazareth of Galilee (see Jn.7:41-42; 52). But, true to prophecy, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and (also true to prophecy) He lived in Nazareth.

**Matt 2:23** ~ “And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.”

- Even his brief stay in Egypt, as he fled Herod’s murderous rage, was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy:

**Matt 2:13-15** ~ “Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’<sup>14</sup> And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt<sup>15</sup> and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I called my son.’” (see Hos.11:1)

## 5. The king’s plot (vs.7-8)

- After finding out from the Jewish leaders where the Messiah was to be born, Herod turned his attention back to the wise men. He *“summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared”* (vs.7).

His instruction

- He told them to go to Bethlehem and to *“search diligently for the child”* (vs.8). The word “diligently” (*akribōs*) refers to a carefulness and thoroughness. The implication was that Herod did not want them to return until after they had found Jesus. Then, after they had found him, the wise men were to report that location back to Herod (vs.8).

His motive (see vs.13)

- This passage does not explicitly state why Herod sent the wise men to find Jesus, except to state that he said he wanted to *“come and worship him”* (vs.8). We know, however, from God’s Word, that Herod was lying and actually wanted to kill Jesus [remember: “Scripture always interprets Scripture”, and “The Bible is the best commentary on the Bible”].

**Matt 2:13** ~ “Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’”

➤ Tragedy upon tragedy, horror of horrors, we read that Herod ordered the mass murder of all the Jewish boys “*in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under*” (Matt.2:16).

**Matt 2:16** ~ “Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.”

## 6. The wise men’s wisdom (vs.9-12)

➤ The wise men did as they were instructed, they began searching diligently. But God graciously intervened and led them directly to Jesus.

### Their discovery

➤ In verse nine, we read: “*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*” (vs.9). The time the wise men spent in Jerusalem was more or less a fact-finding mission. They had to deal with Herod, and the Jewish leaders, when what they wanted is to worship Jesus Christ. We can imagine their delight when, after leaving Jerusalem, they once again saw that they had been following all along.

### Their reaction

➤ In fact, we do not have to imagine too much or too long for we know that “*When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy*” (vs.10). Matthew used many vivid words to describe the wise men’s reaction. They were not just happy. They did not merely rejoice. They did not even rejoice with great joy. They “*rejoiced exceedingly with great joy*” (*chairō sphodra megas chara*). These words are piled up to show us that these men were overcome (ecstatic, euphoric) with joy.

✓ **Illust:** “*sphodra* is an adverb that increases the intensity of the accompanying verbal concept. For example, when the wise men saw the star, they were not only happy, but “exceedingly” happy (Mt.2:10). When the disciples saw Jesus transfigured, they were not just frightened, but “terrified” (17:6; cf. 27:34). When Jesus told his disciples that one of them would betray him, they were “very” sad (26:22). In the expansion of the NT church, it increased “rapidly” (Acts 6:7)” (Mounce, W.D. (2006).

*Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words; p.310).*

➤ However, in the flow of the narrative, this reaction was not about the star itself – for they had seen this star before (vs.2, 9) – but about the fact that the star finally “*came to rest over the place where the child was*” (vs.9).

**Luke 2:10-11** ~ “And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup>For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’”

**Luke 24:52-53** ~ “And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, <sup>53</sup>and were continually in the temple blessing God.”

**Matt 28:7-8** ~ “Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.’ <sup>8</sup>So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.”

### Their worship

- This is for what they had been waiting and longing. This was the reason for their long, difficult, journey. We can imagine their awe and wonder as they walked *“into the house”* and *“saw the child with Mary”* (vs.11) – and we can imagine Mary and Joseph’s reaction when the entourage of wise men came bearing gifts for Jesus and worshipping Him.

This is exactly what they had set out to do: *“they fell down and worshiped him”* (vs.11; “worshiped”, *proskyneō*; see vs.2).

- Most likely, the idea of three wise men comes from the fact that they brought three gifts to Jesus – *“gold and frankincense and myrrh”* (vs.11). But this does not indicate that there were only three wise men. In fact, it does not even signify that they only brought three gifts, but three kinds of gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh. There may have been only a couple of wise men, or there may have been dozens. We simply do not know. But we do know that their gifts were appropriate for a king – specifically, *“the king of the Jews”* (vs.2).

Briefly stated, “gold”, of course, is considered one of the most precious and valuable metals. Gold was the metal of nobility and royalty. As the word implies, “frankincense” was a type of incense that was very expensive and desired. It was used by priests in worship as well as royal celebrations. The third time of gift was “myrrh”, which was a type of expensive perfume. It was often used for the anointing the dead.

Many biblical scholars believe that these three gifts symbolize three different aspect of Christ’s Messianic work: gold for a king, frankincense for a priest, and myrrh for his substitutionary death.

### Their warning (see vs.13-20)

- God’s sovereign providence is seen yet again as He intervened in the lives of the wise men: *“And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way”* (vs.12). The fact that God warned them *“in a dream”* (vs.12) is still more evidence that God has no difficulty governing and guiding His creation to accomplish His will (see Matt.1:20; 2:13, 19, 22).
- As we have seen, Herod was determined to kill Jesus (“the king of the Jews”; vs.2, 13, 16; cf. vs.13-20).

### Conclusion

- There are really only two responses to the Christmas story – to the proclamation that Jesus Christ is the (incarnate) Son of God: 1) to reject Him as Savior and Lord, or 2) to receive Him as Savior and Lord. Clearly, Herod and the Jewish leaders are examples of those who, whether by hostility or apathy, reject Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Equally clear is the response of the wise men who joyfully worshipped Jesus as the Christ. To truly receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is to worship Him as the one and only Son of God, and one and only Savior from God.

- The Christmas story must not be relegated to thoughts of baby Jesus lying in a manger. For it reveals and declares that He is the one and only Son of God, and the only and only Savior from God. Therefore, we – like the wise men – must fall to our knees in worship.



<b>A HARMONY OF THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS OF JESUS' BIRTH</b>			
<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Luke</b>
John the Baptist's birth foretold to Zacharias	Jerusalem (Temple)		1:5–25
Jesus' birth foretold to Mary	Nazareth		1:26–38
Song of Elisabeth to Mary	Hill Country of Judah		1:39–45
Mary's song of praise			1:46–56
The birth of John the Baptist	Judea		1:57–80
Jesus' birth foretold to Joseph	Nazareth	1:18–25	
The birth of Jesus Christ	Bethlehem	1:24, 25	2:1–7
Proclamation of Jesus' birth to shepherds	Near Bethlehem		2:8–14
The visit of homage by shepherds	Bethlehem		2:15–20
Jesus' circumcision	Bethlehem		2:21
Jesus presented in the temple	Jerusalem		2:22–38
Visit of the wise men	Jerusalem & Bethlehem	2:1–12	
Flight into Egypt and massacre of innocents	Bethlehem, Jerusalem & Egypt	2:13–18	
From Egypt to Nazareth with Jesus		2:19–23	2:39

(Adapted from *Nelson's complete book of Bible maps & charts: Old and New Testaments*; 1996)