

## December 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Message 2022

Christmas is about Christ. It was His first coming. When Jesus came to this earth and was born as a baby. I have always been amazed how different each gospel account handles Jesus' birth. Mark skips it entirely and starts talking about John the Baptist right away. The gospel of John describes the theology, behind Jesus coming, the Word becoming flesh. Luke has the traditional story with Jesus being laid in a manger and an angel telling the shepherds about his birth. We are going to spend some time looking at the details Matthew highlights. Matthew starts with a genealogy.

### Matthew 1:1 ESV

(1) The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, **the son of David, the son of Abraham.**

Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience. He has a very specific goal with his genealogy. He is showing how Jesus is descendant of Abraham, a Jew. He goes a step farther to show that Jesus is from the line of David, He is part of the royal lineage. Right at the beginning Matthew is declaring that Jesus has the right lineage to be the Jewish King. He continues this theme in chapter 2 describing the events after the birth of Jesus.

### Matthew 2:1 ESV

(1) **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,**

Chapter 2 Matthew introduces us to a group of mysterious men. They seem to show up randomly. These would have been gentiles. Matthew calls them wise men. Some translations use the word Magi. The Greek word is:

**μάγος**-it has Persian and Babylonian roots and was a wise man and priest, who was expert in astrology, interpretation of dreams and various other occult arts

We are told these wise men came from the east. And have travelled to the west towards Jerusalem. If you have been here at Sager this past year, we studied the book of Daniel. As I was reading the definition of wise men, I'm sure many ears perked up. There is no accident that the word magos has Babylonian and Persian roots. Babylon was famous for their wise men, sorcerers, enchanters, astrologers. Throughout the book of Daniel God shows that these wise men did not have true wisdom. God used Daniel to reveal Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel then was promoted to being the chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

### Daniel 2:47-48 ESV

(47) The king answered and said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."

(48) Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and **chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.**

These were astronomers, enchanters, magi. Daniel influenced them for years. He must have shared some of the scripture Daniel had access to and shared some of the vision he had. An Example is in Daniel 7.

### Daniel 7:13-14 ESV

(13) “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like **a Son of Man**, and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.

(14) And **to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom**, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Notice Daniel had a vision where he saw the Son of man, Jesus Christ. He saw Christ presented to the ancient of Days, God the Father. He proclaimed that Jesus would have an everlasting kingdom. As we studied Daniel, we saw Christ kingdom pointed to multiple times. This helps shows the connection to the wise men notice what they are looking for.

### Matthew 2:1-2 ESV

(1) 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,

(2) 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.**”

They were looking for the King of the Jews. These are gentiles. They knew who this King was and how important He was because of Daniel’s lasting impact on the wise men of Babylon. Daniel talked about the future King to come. Those prophecies must have been passed down through the ages. Then these Wise men from the same area come looking for that King.

### Matthew 2:3ESV

(3) When Herod **the king** heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him;

Herod was the one who claimed to be the King of the Jews. He was immediately threatened by this news. He desperately wanted to know who this long-awaited King of the Jews was.

### Matthew 2:4-6 ESV

(4) and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

(5) They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written **by the prophet:**

(6) “‘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.**’”

Notice how little Scripture Herod knew. But the religious leaders don’t hesitate, they knew the word well. They new exactly where the Messiah was to be born.

### Micah 5:2,4-5a ESV

(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.**

(4) **And He shall stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD**, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. (5a) **And He shall be their peace...**

Micah prophesied this around 700 BC. Christ coming is from old, from ancient days. A hundred years after Micah prophecies Christ will come from Bethlehem, Daniel is prophesying about His kingdom. Christmas, Jesus' first coming was no accident. God had given clear direct prophecy for hundred of years leading to the coming of the Messiah.

Herod shares this news that the messiah, the king was to be born in Bethlehem.

### Matthew 2:9-12 ESV

(9) 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.

(10) **When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.**

(11) 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.**

(12) And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

These wise men came to worship. This was the King they had been looking for. **They had brought gifts fit for a King, not fit for a baby.** When we celebrate Christmas time. We need to make sure that we don't keep Jesus in the manger. He was a baby, but not anymore. He was worshipped a King at His birth and He is still a king!

The **Gold** speaks of Jesus' divinity. He is fully God. And being an infant speaks that He is fully man. God the Son, who spoke all things into existence, the eternal Word, had taken on flesh. A baby was given gold to show, His divinity. Jesus is fully God and fully Man.

**Frankincense** is used as an incense for prayer, it is fragrant. Israel had been instructed to use Frankincense in some of the offerings.

### Leviticus 2:1-2 ESV

(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**

(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.**

The **Frankincense** was used to help the offering smell good and be a pleasing aroma to God. This grain offering was a picture of Christ perfect life. Israel missed the importance of these offerings and at times would practice them out of ritual. God was not pleased by this.

### Jeremiah 6:20 ESV

(20) **What use to Me is frankincense that comes from Sheba, or sweet cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing to Me.**

God tells them that just following the procedures is not acceptable. He was after their heart and a relationship. The **Frankincense** given to the baby Jesus represented the perfect pleasing sacrifice His life would be. He would not simply go through the motions. His life would be a pleasing aroma to God the Father. His life would intercede for us.

The last gift is **Myrrh**, it is also very fragrant. Myrrh had many uses, it was a perfume, used as pain medication, and used to embalm and preserve a dead body. It was offered to Christ on the cross to ease His physical pain.

### Mark 15:23 ESV

(23) And they offered Him wine mixed with **myrrh**, but He did not take it.

Christ was not willing to dull any part of the cross. It had to be experienced to its fullest extent. Once He had died, it was Myrrh that was used to prepare His body.

### John 19:39-40 ESV

(39) Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, **came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.**

(40) So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths **with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.**

These three gifts, show the gospel. This baby is fully human and fully divine. (**Gold**) He will live a perfect life that is pleasing aroma to the Father. (**Frankincense**) Because he has lived a perfect life, He was a perfect sacrifice. Jesus went to the cross to die for our sins, paying the punishment for our sins. His dead body was wrapped in (**Myrrh**). If you have never believed in who Jesus was, fully God and fully man and what He did by living a perfect life and dying on the cross **for you**, please believe in Him today!

These wise men came with amazing gifts fit for a king. It was not random that they showed up. Daniel's truth of a future King was handed down through generations. The amazing part is that the world will come to bring gift to Jesus at His second coming.

### Isaiah 60:1-2; 6 ESV

(1) Arise, shine, for your light has come, and **the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.**

(2) For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; **but the LORD will arise upon you, and His glory will be seen upon you.**

(6) A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. **They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.**

The King has come. He is in glory, and people are walking in His light. They bring Him Gold and Frankincense. He is fully God, and His life is still a pleasing aroma to God the Father. But notice what is missing the Myrrh. He is not coming to die this time, but to reign. The wise men held on to the truth that the king was coming. Let's hold on to the truth that our King is coming back! Let's live right now in a deepening relationship with Him.

**Isaiah 9:6-7 ESV**

(6) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

(7) Of the increase of His government **and of peace there will be no end**, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. **The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.**