

Matthew 2:1-12
Trinity Baptist Church

December 24th, 2025
Christmas Eve Services

An Encouraging Word From Dr. Tim Watson
Series- The Characters of Christmas #5 (Wise Men)
“What Time Is Christmas?”

A group of children were rehearsing a Christmas play that was to be performed in a few days at their church. Included in this play were all the major characters of the Christmas story: Joseph, Mary, the shepherds, angels, etc....

One parent who was observing this Christmas play rehearsal spotted a little boy off to himself, away from the other characters in the play. This lady asked the little boy, “And which character are you playing?” The little boy, evidently bored with all the rehearsals and preparation, crossed his arms and replied, “Oh, I’m playing one of those wise guys!”

The little boy approached his part in the play with a ho-hum, “I’m bored” attitude. And yet, in reality, the wise men (or wise guys) were major characters in the Christmas story. Yes, when you look at the Christmas story, you have to have Jesus, Joseph, Mary, the angels, and shepherds. But the Christmas story would not be complete without the wise men from the East.

Who were the wise men, and what part did these men play in the original Christmas story? **Look in your Bible to *Matthew 2:1-12***. We are continuing this series of messages titled THE CHARACTERS OF CHRISTMAS. This evening we will look at Christmas through the eyes of the wise men in a message titled, “What Time Is Christmas?”

Matthew 2:1-12 (NIV)

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 in the east and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ 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 be the shepherd of 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 make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

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 and of incense and of myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

We need to begin by asking the question, "Who were the wise men?" Bible scholars tell us the wise men were from Persian descent. Their ethnic group or nationality was Medes.

The Medes people lived within the Persian Empire, which is the modern day country of Iran. The wise men were teachers and instructors of the Persian kings. They helped educate Persian royalty.

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They were regarded as men of holiness and wisdom. They were skilled in the areas of philosophy, medicine, natural science, and astrology. They also interpreted dreams. They were considered holy men who sought truth.

Look at *Matthew 2:1, 2*—“*After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."* How did the wise men know a king of the Jews had been born? Why would wise men from the East (Persia) set out to find a king? Bible commentators tell us when Jesus was born at this point in history, there was a great feeling of expectancy of the coming of a king. There was a feeling among the people in the Middle East that a great king/ruler was going to come onto the scene. So there was a great feeling of expectancy. The wise men were aware of this.

In *verse 2* of our text, the Bible says the wise men arrived in Jerusalem and said, “*We saw his star in the east.*” We commonly refer to this star as “The Star of Bethlehem.” This is the star that led the wise men to the Messiah. We ask the question, “What important part does this star play?” During the time in which Christ was born, just about everyone in that part of the world (Middle East) believed in astrology. People believed they could predict their future by studying the patterns of the stars. Many people believed the stars and the solar system had a bearing/strong influence on a person’s life. More than likely, the wise men believed a man’s destiny was determined by the star under which he was born. Even today, many people believe the same thing. They rely on the stars and their patterns [EX: Ronald Reagan and Jeanne Dixon.]

The point is, when the Bible says a star appeared to the wise men in the East, they took this star seriously. It got their attention. Commentators and Bible scholars have speculated for years what star the wise men may have seen. Some have said the star was possibly:

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Haley's Comment

Saturn and Jupiter at this point in time were having some sort of cosmic disturbance (meteorites).

The bottom line is, we don't know what they saw.

Bible scholar William Barclay says, "We cannot tell what the wise men saw, but it was their job to watch the heavens, and some heavenly brilliance spoke to them of the entry of a king into the world."

With these things in mind, we get a better idea of how the wise men viewed the first Christmas. As we think about Christmas day, December 25, we ask the question that was answered by the wise men 2000 years ago: "What Time Is Christmas?"

What Time Is Christmas?

I. Christmas is a Time of Worship.

*Matthew 2:2 - ..."Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to **worship** him."* Their purpose in finding this baby, the Messiah of the world, was to worship Him. The word worship means: "To praise, adore, to show reverence." Worship in this context means, "acknowledging someone who is greater than you." These wise men were regarded as men of knowledge, wisdom, and truth. And yet, isn't it interesting that these respected men were here at the cradle of a baby worshipping Him?

Matthew 2:11 says that when the wise men “*saw the child with his mother Mary... they bowed down and worshiped him.*”

What a beautiful picture of these wise men worshipping Jesus on their knees. If you think about it, that’s really the only way to come to Jesus: On our knees. In humility.

As the wise men celebrated the birth of Christ, they approached this event as a time of worship. Let me ask you:

As you approach Christmas, do you see it as a time of shopping hassle?

Do you see it as a time of spending money that you really don’t have?

Do you see the month of December, filled with all its parties, dinners, socials as a Christmas merry-go-‘round that just keeps going, and you want to get off?

As believers in Jesus Christ, we ought to approach Christmas as the wise men: A time of worshipping the Savior! This holiday season ought to be a time when we slow down and thank God for sending His Son into the world. We cannot begin to understand with our limited minds what a sacrifice that was, that God would send His Son, Jesus.

Because of that ultimate sacrifice God made, Christmas should be a time of worship.

Worship Tips

(Things to Keep Your Family Focused on the Real Meaning of Christmas)

Read Scripture passages that speak of the coming of Christ (*Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:21*).

Read the different Gospel accounts of the birth of Christ (Matthew and Luke) on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Surround your family with Christian musical reminders. Take time to sing Christmas

carols with your family, or play Christian Christmas music as soft background music for meals.

Use the Christmas cards you receive as objects of prayer.

What Time Is Christmas?

I. Christmas is a Time of Worship.

But not only should it be a time of worship, it should also be a time of joy

II. Christmas is a Time of Joy.

*Matthew 2:10 - When they [the wise men] saw the star, they were **overjoyed**.* The *Living Bible* says that when the wise men saw the star, “*Their **joy** knew no boundaries.*” It was an overflowing, exceedingly great joy. For the wise men, Christmas was a time of great joy.

As you look to tomorrow, December 25, are you looking to this day with great joy and expectation? I sure hope so. But the sad fact is, sometimes, we get so wrapped up in all the activities, the externals of Christmas, that we lose sight of what we’re celebrating.

A few years ago, I was standing in line at a McDonald’s Restaurant in a crowded shopping mall. It was about a week before Christmas, and the mall was packed. I was standing behind a man who said to the girl at the counter, “Well, are you ready for Christmas?” The girl behind the counter said, “I’ll just be glad when it’s over and things return to normal.” At that point, that young lady did not see Christmas as a time of joy, but as a time marked by hustle-bustle, stress, strain, hurry, and worry.

Some of you can identify with the girl at the McDonald’s cash register. Maybe you’re wanting to see Christmas come and go, and you want things to return to normal, because society, the world, and the commercialization of Christmas has robbed you of

one of the most exciting holidays of the year. But it is my prayer you will see Christmas as a time of worship and Christmas as a time of joy because of what God has done for us by sending His Son, Jesus.

What Time Is Christmas?

Worship, Joy:

III. Christmas is a Time of Giving

Matthew 2:11b — Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense [frankincense] and of myrrh.

The wise men brought gifts that were appropriate gifts because these gifts represented different characteristics of Jesus and His work:

The Wise Men Gave Gifts of:

Gold – the gift for a king

Bible historians tell us that in Jesus' day, it was the custom that no one could ever approach the king without a gift. And gold, the king of all precious metals, is the right gift for a king.

Frankincense (Incense) – the gift for a priest

Frankincense was used in temple worship and at temple sacrifices. Frankincense had a sweet smell and aroma. The function of a priest in N.T. times was to be a mediator, a go-between—someone that mediated between God and man. The Latin word for priest is “Ponti-Fex,” which means bridge builder. The priest is the man who builds a bridge between God and man. This is exactly what Jesus did. He built a bridge between God and man when He died on the cross. His death on the cross made it possible for us to have a right relationship with God.

Myrrh – the gift for a person who is going to die.

Myrrh was a spice used to embalm the bodies of the dead. Jesus came into the world to die. This was an appropriate gift to give to the person who was going to die for the sins of the world.

Gold for a king, frankincense for a priest, and myrrh for one who was going to die.
These were the gifts of the wise men.

What Time Is Christmas?

Christmas is a time of **worship**, **joy**, and **giving**. And while those wise men gave their gifts to this baby, little did they know that this baby would one day give the ultimate gift to the world: the gift of His life!

Conclusion

Let me ask you: What are you going to give Jesus this year? We ask ourselves, “What can I get so-and-so for Christmas?” What are you giving Jesus this year? (Gold? Frankincense? Myrrh?)

I have a better suggestion.

How about your life? More than any gift, Jesus wants your life (time, talents, abilities, resources). And He wants to take our lives and use them for His honor and glory that others might know Him. The greatest gift we can give Jesus is our life!

