

Heartbeat

INDIAN HILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH

December 24, 2017

They Came to Worship the King

by *Gil Rugh*

The magi we sing about at Christmas were wise men or astrologers from the East. We are not told from how far east they came, but they could have been from Medo-Persia or from the area of Babylon. The title used to describe them was common for respected scholars in both regions.

As astrologers, they studied the stars and had great wisdom; they were greatly admired in their day. Daniel, the Old Testament prophet, fit within this class of wise men.

The Bible doesn't tell us how many came to worship Jesus. The fact that they brought three kinds of gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh—may have led people to assume that there were three wise men.

The Star

Some say the star occurred when certain planets converged but it seems appropriate to consider this a supernatural star; there is hardly any other way to explain it.

The magi saw the star in the East, which indicated to them that the King of the Jews had been born. The Scriptures do not tell us how the magi knew what the star meant. Perhaps God gave them special revelation. Perhaps the influence of Daniel 500 years earlier in Babylon had established an understanding of Old Testament Scripture regarding the Messiah.

Whatever their source of information, they were confident that the King of the Jews had been born.

Arrival in Jerusalem

It's likely that the magi traveled with a large entourage. The journey to see Jesus would have taken many months, and their arrival would have had an impact on all of Jerusalem. It was more than three men riding into town on camels—it was a major event.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they began asking, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in

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the East and have come to worship Him” (Matt. 2:2).

Because Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, the magi travelled there to find the newborn King. They expected everyone in Jerusalem to be aware of the Messiah’s birth. But the Jews already had a king—Herod.

The magi, however, did not come to worship Herod. They knew something of the special character of Jesus Christ and had come to honor Him. When Herod heard that they had come looking for the King of the Jews, “he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him” (Matt. 2:3).

Herod the Great

There are a number of Herods in the New Testament, but the one ruling at Christ’s birth is known as Herod the Great. Herod was an Edomite, a descendent of Esau.

Herod was despised by the Jews because he was not a Jew. He had received his position as king of the Jews because of his friendship with the Romans. Because he ruled under Rome’s authority, he only had as much freedom as the Romans allowed him.

Herod the Great ruled for 37 years. He was an exceedingly cruel, vile, and wicked man, and his character deteriorated even further at the end of his reign. Herod had ten wives, some of

whom he murdered.

A few days before his own death, Herod had one of his sons executed because he appeared anxious to replace him as king. That attitude helps us understand why he was filled with hatred when he heard that the king had been born in Israel.

Fulfilled Prophecy Met by Apathy and Hate

The Jewish religious leaders could describe in detail where the Messiah was to be born. They could quote all of the prophecies regarding His birth, but they showed nothing but indifference toward the One who was their Messiah.

Herod was a lot more interested in this newborn King than the Sanhedrin were. But he did not want them to know that he had any kind of interest because he had a plan.

After conferring with the Sanhedrin, Herod the Great pinpointed the place of the Messiah’s birth as Bethlehem. He also met secretly with the magi to ascertain when the star appeared, to narrow the time of this king’s birth.

“And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and

worship Him” (Matt. 2:8).

Herod had no intention of worshipping Christ; his intention was to kill Him.

The Magi's Persistence

Unshaken by the negative attitude of the Jews, the magi continued on their way. “After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” (vv. 9, 10).

After their experience in Jerusalem, the star reappearing as they headed toward Bethlehem would have been a tremendous encouragement to the magi. God was indicating that they were still on the right track.

The magi arrived at the home of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, which evidently was a humble dwelling, and they fell down and worshiped Him (see v. 11). There were no trappings of royalty and there was no great fanfare, yet, they were unshaken in their conviction of who Jesus really was.

Significance of Magi's Gifts

Then, opening their treasures, they presented Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. While these gifts were significant because they allowed Joseph to finance his family's trip to Egypt,

symbolism may have also been present.

Gold in the Scriptures is associated with deity and royalty. (You can read about the significance of gold in the description of the tabernacle in Exodus 25.)

Frankincense is associated with the service of Jehovah. Incense was used to worship Jehovah and symbolizes service to Him. It relates to the fragrance of Christ's life as He served His Father.

Myrrh is associated with sacrifice and death. It was used to prepare Jesus' body for burial after His death (see John 19:39).

The gifts given to this young Child at His birth emphasized His deity, the faithfulness, or fragrance of His life in serving Jehovah, and the sacrifice of His life for our sins.

Jesus Christ's deity is very crucial in the context of these gifts. It would have been idolatrous for these Gentiles from the East to bring their pagan ideas to Bethlehem and worship a mere human baby. The magi knew this child was not merely human, but deity and worthy of worship.

Which Group Do You Fit?

Even at the very beginning of His earthly life, Jesus received three different responses: apathy and indifference on the part of the Jews; hostility and hatred on the

part of Herod; and worship and adoration by the magi. He still receives these three responses from people who encounter Him today.

In which of these three groups do you fit? You may be one who is apathetic, indifferent toward Jesus Christ. None of this really matters to you. In fact, it may be somewhat of a bother.

The Scripture is clear that Jesus Christ is God's Son, who came to be King. He died on the cross to pay the penalty for sin and was raised from the dead. Is your response to those great facts one of apathy and indifference like the religious leaders?

Your response may be one of hostility. It aggravates you to be told that salvation can only be gained by believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

You may be upset to learn that you cannot be saved by your church or by your baptism, by the

sacraments or by your good works. You can only be saved by believing in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Does that grate on you and evoke hostility and resentment? If so, that makes you more like Herod.

Or is your response like that of the magi? Do you believe in Him who is the Son of God, the Savior of the world? Do you recognize Him as the One who is the King—God's Son?

We are privileged to worship the King of kings. The beginning point of worship is to recognize your own sinfulness and then to recognize who He is and what He has done. He is God's Son, the Savior. He died for you.

The moment you place your faith in Him, you are cleansed of your sins and brought into a personal relationship with Him. Only then are you privileged to worship God, to offer adoration to Him as the One to whom all worship is due.

Save the Date

Men's Seminar

February 16 & 17, 2018

Save the Date

Ladies Retreat

*True Wisdom Found: The joyful
mindset of fearing God*

February 23 & 24, 2018

Family News

Hospitalized. Bill Peery was a patient at Bryan East Hospital.

Death. Gary Dobernecker died December 18.

Children's Studies

Children's Sunday School. The children looked into Christ's birth.

Children's Church. The children looked into the Savior's birth.

Information

Church Building will be closed Monday and Tuesday in observance of Christmas.

Offering Envelopes for 2018 are available across from Sound Words. They are individually labeled in alphabetical order and may be picked up at your convenience. If you used an offering envelope during 2017 then a new one has been prepared for you. We tried to make sure no one got missed, but if we did, or if you want to start using an offering envelope for next year, please go to Sound Words and they will issue one to you.

Tax Savers. Non-cash gifts such as stocks, mutual funds, grain commodities, and IRA distributions provide excellent tax saving methods. Be sure to allow sufficient time to make the necessary transfer complete. Some of these

types allow you to both avoid capital gain taxes and use the full value for a tax deduction. Contact Jeff Horn or Carroll Lavalleur if you need any assistance.

End of Year Giving. A friendly reminder, all giving must be received by December 31 to qualify as an income tax deduction for 2017. December 31 falls on Sunday this year and the church building will be closed after morning service, so be sure to plan accordingly. Also, you may have heard that Congress is in the process of changing the 2018 formula for itemizing deductions. If they do, you may find it beneficial to move some of your giving into 2017.

Last Minute Giving. Using the church's website (www.ihcc.org) is a convenient method of doing last minute giving toward General Offering or Sound Words.

Used Toy Donations. Titus Tuesday will be holding a used toy swap for toys in good condition on January 16. If you are de-cluttering and would like to contribute, there is a drop off location by the second-floor elevator. Books, puzzles, and costumes are welcome. Questions? Call Jeri Moser at 402-805-1651.

Last Week's Message

December 17 AM. Gil Rugh. GR 2026. *Rejoicing in Heaven, Wrath on Earth.* Revelation 12:10-12

This Week's Events

Sunday

Christmas Eve Service 6:00 p.m.
Communion

Monday

Christmas Day
Church Building Closed
No Sisters 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday

Church Building Closed

Wednesday

Praise Team, Band 6:00 p.m.
No Orchestra 6:00 p.m.
No Awana 6:45 p.m.
No Choir 7:00 p.m.
No Junior High Study 7:00 p.m.
No Issues . . . World
No Wednesday Night Study

Thursday

Alpha Omega Study 7:00 p.m.

Future Events

December 31

Peter Barber Preaching AM
Building Closes at Noon
No Sunday Night Church

January 1

New Year's Day
Church Building Closed

January 3

No Wednesday Night Programs

January 7

Duane Nelsen Preaching AM
Bill Cooley Preaching PM

January 10

Wednesday Night Classes Resume

January 26, 27

Boys of Faith Lock-in

February 9

Girls of Grace
Daddy Daughter Date Night

February 10

Derby Workshop

February 16, 17

Men's Seminar

February 23, 24

Ladies Retreat

March 3

Pinewood Derby

April 7

Dodgeball Tourney
9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

April 8

Dessert Social

Heartbeat

Dec. 24, 2017 • Vol. 25, No. 48

Editor: Gale Engle
Publisher: John Scholle

Heartbeat is published each week by Indian Hills Community Church for distribution on Sunday morning.

Submission deadline is 10:00 a.m. Wednesday.

Copies of previous editions may be found in the acrylic holders in the north and south lobbies.

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