

What Do We Offer Our King? (Matthew 2:1-12)

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[0 : 00] Cool, and if we could open our Bibles, then we'll turn to Matthew chapter 2, verse 1 to 12. That's what we're reading from. And yeah, this is the time for you to search the answer of how many Magi has actually visited Jesus.

So follow along with your own Bibles. After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, the 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 when it rose and have come to worship him. 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 Messiah was to be born.

In Bethlehem, in Judea, they replied, for this is what the prophet has written. 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 shepherd my people Israel. When Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.

[1 : 23] After they heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose 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 worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

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

Christmas. What can you not have for Christmas? Christmas. Can I have the PowerPoint? What can you not have? Right. You've got to have gifts. Right. I think, William, yeah, I think you have many to prepare, I think.

[2 : 25] And for us, right, I think we all receive gifts. Now imagine if that, that's you receiving this.

Oh, wow. Wow, wow, wow. And then you unwrapped it. Some tips for you, William.

Now I think we all love receiving gifts. And often we love giving gifts. Right? Christmas season. Surely. Yeah.

Wow. And, but let's not forget, God is the one that gives us the greatest gift at Christmas time. Because God is, in His nature, He loves to give things. Because at, no, I've forgotten the verse. A verse in James 1.17.

[3 : 29] It says, Every good and perfect gift is from heaven. Come from above. Come down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

So God's nature, from the beginning to everlasting, He loves to give things to us. Because He's the giver of all things.

And it doesn't change. This is His nature. And the greatest gift He gives to all mankind, apart from the air that we breathe, the food that we enjoy, the health that we can have, He gives us the greatest gift of Jesus.

Right? So, I think, let's remember this at Christmas time. Not just about little gifts. Things that we can give one another. But the greatest gift that God gives to us.

Often, people don't realize, because the wrapping of the gifts isn't very spectacular. Right? Imagine if you see something of this lying around.

[4 : 37] You won't see this is a gift. You don't think this is even a gift. What? A newspaper? Actually, this is the one here. All right? In case you don't see it.

If you, you know, this is actually a gift. All right? And the giver, if it was me, a gift to anybody, is not because whoever deserves this.

A gift is a gift. All right? Julianne, I'd like to give you this gift for Christmas. Yeah. Do you want it? Sure? All right?

Take it. Yeah. And this is how attitude. God, really? Is this a gift? Is this for me? Have I done anything for you?

You know? A gift is a gift. And God gives to us despite how good or how bad we are.

[5 : 37] You know? Because God gives us a gift. And thinking of, in this season, I like us all to think, instead of just receiving the greatest gift from God, let us think, let us think, how we can offer something back to God.

Right? Every good thing comes from Him. Everything that we enjoy. In this Christmas time, we receive this birth of Jesus. The whole assurance, the completeness of the salvation, all come from Him.

Right? But how can we offer the little bit that He gives us, you know, the little bit of the greatness, the vastness of His gift that He gives to us, how can we offer that little bit that we can offer back to Him?

It's good that you had asked two questions about the Magi today. I wish you carried on. Right? And, you know, the Magi were the first ones to give gifts to Jesus.

Right? Question. How many Magis? There were three gifts, but we don't know how many Magis, right?

[7 : 06] So, this evening, I'd like us all to think, and maybe in your group today, to think a little bit how we can, what we can offer to Jesus this Christmas.

This can be very personal. During the couples fellowship this afternoon, we thought about this question as well. And then we kind of asked the couples to think, what we can offer to Jesus. And it came back with quite good answers. And we're going to share it in our group. Okay? You'll see it. You'll see there's some ideas. What kind of gifts we as a couple, as a family, we can give to Jesus.

Right? And you will have your own ideas. And I hope that God will inspire us. Maybe something that is special, that will be peculiarly to us, for us to offer our gifts to Jesus.

Okay? So, thank you, Frank, for reading that 12 verses for us. And, you know, the Magi came from, don't know where, from the east, to worship and offer the gift to the king of the Jews.

[8 : 19] Imagine, they were not Jews. They were some Gentiles, some heathen people from afar. And they just came, and they prepared the gift to offer to Jesus.

And what does, what does passage to us, what does it mean for us today? We as Christians, we live here in this 21st century. If we call him the king of kings and lord of lords, I mean, and, and, it's remembering his birthday.

All right? We can't come without a gift. Can you go, imagine going to a birthday party, eating and drinking, and singing, off tune, yeah?

And, and, and then, at the end, oh, whose birthday? I don't have an idea. I just came here, somebody, Julian invited me. I have no idea what the occasion is. And did you bring a gift?

No. Oh, can you borrow me the gift? I'll get to give it to you. You know? Can you imagine that kind of mentality, celebrating somebody's birthday? So, I really pray that each one of us, may God inspire us to prepare something.

[9 : 38] God doesn't need our gifts, right? But imagine if, if a child receiving all from his parents and creating something out of the resources that the parents have given, and a gift that's given to dad or mom, how happy they will be.

Mom and dad will just even give much more back to the children. Let us do that. Let us do that. But let us, let us kind of find out a little bit more.

These, these people, who were they? The Bible says they were magis. Some translation says they were magis.

But, but, but, what, what, what is a magi? What is it? Where? Now, some, in Chinese translations, imagine, they actually call boxy, you know, PhDs.

Really? There were any PhDs there at the time? Or, they call them kings, Sam Wong, three kings. And they said they were, they actually named number three of them because there were three gifts, which is not, which is not quite right.

[11:06] And, PhD certainly was not right. All right? So, the magis, who were they? They actually were some astrologists. And actually, they were sorcerers.

And they were of the eastern religions. But they were kind of officials. Because all these, either if they were from Persia or other nations, they could have been with their own religions, but, and the religions were official religions of the, of the nations.

So, all these, they could have been, you know, was sent, maybe from the royal courts. Okay? So, these were the key, these were the magicians or sorcerers or wizards or astrologers from the east. Okay? But why include these people? Why do account of, of the birth of Jesus would even include heathen priests?

That's quite interesting, isn't it? You know, you think about telling Christmas stories, everything will be very Christmas, very Christian. But why include these heathen, they, they, they don't, they didn't even know.

[12:24] They weren't even Jews. If they were a, they were proselytes, you know, and during those times there were a lot of heathen people that were attracted by the Jewish religion, they, they, they kind of, they, even though they, they, they belong to other nations, they're different nationalities, but they, they wanted to convert their religions to Judaism.

That's what they called proselytes. Okay? They weren't even proselytes. They didn't know nothing about Judaism. All right? They just saw that star, that phenomenon, and they just felt, in their, in their interpretations, they, they felt there was something very important.

So they came. Now this is very interesting, you know? It, it really says that even though Jesus was born as a Jew, he was not just for the Jews.

He was, you know, our gospel is all inclusive. It's not just, they don't exclude other people. Jesus was the saviour of the world, for the world, not just for the Jews.

King of kings, not king of the Jews. I'm not saying that we need to know, or we need to seek, and chase other religions, but I'm saying that God can use every means, and he includes everything in his creation in order all will be saved.

[14:08] Now you see in the Old Testament, you know, kings, Assyrian kings, Assyrian commanders, Babylonian kings, Persian kings, they were all used by God as his instruments.

They would serve as his servants to accomplish his will. And this is the inclusiveness of God, of the gospel.

Now I remember when I was little, I was about, I think I was about 12, I was in Hong Kong, right?

And mom came back from New Zealand to Hong Kong to try to get me here.

And I remember in that year, because during those times, I had no, I had no, even though I went through Catholic school for one year, but yeah, nothing here. We often try to, yeah, we want to try to joke about religions, about Jesus, and all this stuff, you know.

But when mom came back, and she was not a Christian, she was a Buddhist, and she took me to this, if you would come from Hong Kong, you would know Wong Dai Xin, you know, it was a goddess, and even influential enough, they would name that district as Wong Dai Xin.

[15:26] You know, it's an MTR station called Wong Dai Xin, you know, how influential that could be. And mom took me there, and she, she wanted, because she wanted to know how, what will I do when I grow up, okay, so she went to, and you know, those fortune sticks.

And I still remember she took me there, and you know, you've seen people in movies, you know, shake, shake, shake, shake, shake, shake, and there was one little stick that came out, and the interpreter was trying to see if it's is it best, is it average, or is it worse, you know, and try not to get the worst, worse, you know.

And when he opened up that stick with that little message in there, he read it, and he tried to interpret it.

And it was interesting, you know, I still remember his face, but I couldn't remember what he said. He looked a little bit perplexed. He said, he's gone to, according to this, he's gone to influence quite a lot of people.

A lot of people will follow him, but I don't even know what that is. Of course, he doesn't know what that is, because he doesn't know the King of Kings, and the Lord of the Lords.

[16 : 56] But you know what I mean? God was able to show these people the greatness of him. And I tell you what, that has something to do, God used that in a way to lead my mom to open up herself to know the gospel later on.

Because she wanted to find out what that thing is. What that fortune teller, the interpreter, couldn't understand how his son was going to influence a lot of people.

our God is inclusive, big enough to include all people. If we, as his followers, do we have a bigger heart to include others that can be different from us?

You know, we all have our standards. We all have our expectations. Who and who comes to this 430 English service, who speaks English well.

[18 : 10] Who, even though we don't name, this is a Chinese church, but we expect, you know, non-Chinese, you may not want to come to this church.

And there are people come, you know, and yeah, they're welcome, but I'm not going to talk to them, you know. Now, I think we need to, we need to, if we believe, if we, if we, if we worship the God who's inclusive of others, let us follow his example, we'll open up ourselves to people that are different from us.

So welcome, great to see, I forgot, forget your name now. Yeah, thank you. And great to see, I mean, Billy has been here for seven, eight months now.

Yeah, great to see. Great, it'll be, you know, God will bring us more nationality, more ethnicities, because the gospel is all-inclusive.

Right? Let's celebrate that. And, yeah, there is, these are the magis from the east, who came to New Zealand, came to Jerusalem, right?

[19 : 36] Yeah. But why did they come? Why did they come? Yes, they saw the star, yeah, and this, and they came with a purpose.

Where is the one who come? They asked, where is the one who has been born, the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east, and have come to worship him.

They didn't know, they didn't know who that king was, all right? They didn't know about the Judaism, and all this culture, and the religious practices, haven't seen him, but because they believed this, this king is special.

It's going to influence the whole world, that they wanted to come and worship him. And the king, Herod, heard about it, as we read, our friend has read to us, in verse 7, Herod called the Magi and found out about from them where the exact time the star had appeared, and he told the Magi, all right, once you find out, let me know, so that I can go and worship him too, really, actually, he wanted to kill him, because it was a threat to him.

We can't have two kings, all right? In the Chinese proverb, one mountain cannot have two tigers, all right? Your son cannot be a king, right?

[21 : 12] I'm the king, you can't have another king. So he was going to kill this king of the Jews who was to be born. And this star, this Bethlehem star, it was some astronomers kind of was thinking it was at the beginning, around about 7 BC, it was because of the two or three, even Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, and Mars was kind of overlapping.

So that became a very bright thing, bright star. And it happened at 1604, they call it phenomenon, called it supernova.

And it happened at similarly, they said it was back in the 7 BC. Okay? That could explain the star of Bethlehem.

And because these magi saw that, they knew something was important. And at that time, they went because they wanted to go and worship this king.

They came and tried to seek, who is this guy? Who is this king? But actually, God was seeking them. So when we come at Christmas time, we just come to worship him, to seek him.

[22 : 59] To seek him. The Lord promised to us, when we seek him, when we ask him, it will be given to us. When we seek, you shall find.

And knock, and it will be opened to you. Just like those magis in the first century. of course I know Jesus.

I've accepted him as Lord and Savior. But do I know him well? Or is this just a formality that I come to church?

I'm a second generation Christian. I've already baptized. But do I really know Jesus, the king of kings?

actually Matthew 7, what Jesus has said, it actually came from Jeremiah 29. God has promised to the Jews, then you will call on me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you.

[24 : 10] You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your hearts. So during this Christmas season, let me encourage you, you know, not just get too busy with parties and gifts, shopping, okay, all these are okay, these are fine, you know, go to trips, we need that, but let us not forget setting us time with our friends, with our family to worship and to seek the Lord because when we seek him, we'll find him.

And thirdly, what gift did they bring? You know, worshipping comes with gifts, can't come with empty hands, you know, when we come to worship him, we prepare gifts to worship. So, the three gifts, gold, yes, that symbolize royalty, yes. But what's frankincense and myrrh, what are they?

Now, I think gold is universally precious. Anybody can do with anything, you know, with gold. You give me gold, I'll be very delighted, right?

But what is frankincense? Not frankincense, but frankincense. What are they? What's the usage of frankincense? Anybody know?

[25 : 53] Anybody in the chemists and pharmacies? What is frankincense? Anybody know the usage of frankincense, really?

Frankincense, right? Actually, yes, it's incense, right? It's for mixing and giving aroma, good smell, right?

And it's precious. It came from some resin of some plants, all right? So, it was not actually in, it was not in Palestine.

It was imported stuff, so expensive, okay? What's myrrh? Anybody know? Myrrh is something that is also kind of from a plant, okay?

It also gives an aromatic kind of smell, okay? But mainly in the east, especially in Egypt, and also I think the Jews did that too.

[27 : 10] They used and embalmed people, bodies, okay? There are some cross-usages between frankincense and myrrh, okay?

But mainly the myrrh was used to bombing, okay? I don't know, when I prepared, I wonder, I wonder, why would these magis bring these gifts?

I don't know. Did they know the exact usage of it? I think perhaps they found it, they thought because they were precious, okay?

and they would think these would be, in their customs, it was good to give gifts, these sort of gifts, okay? Now imagine, if that myrrh was for embalming, how on earth do you give it to a baby?

Just born, right? So they could have some sort of symbolic application behind it. For Luther, he said, yes, gold was for his royalty, for his kingship.

[28 : 34] That was symbolic meaning. That was, these meanings came afterward. It was not original. We don't know what the original meaning or the purpose of these magis giving these gifts.

But Luther, Martin Luther said, yes, gold would symbolize royalty, the kingship. And Franken says, what symbolize his divinity, right?

And for myrrh, because for embalming, it symbolizes his passion. He's going to die for us. His body would be buried and people would embalm the body.

What may be some of the gifts that we can give to our Lord and Savior during this Christmas time? What would be some of the gold, the precious things that we can give to him?

Or other things that we think would be good to offer to him? we don't just come with verbal praises.

[29 : 56] We come and offer ourselves as living sacrifices. Living, not dead. When you offer a sacrifice, you don't offer already dead animals, a living, and you slaughter them at your altar.

God did not accept dead offerings. It's something that's lively, something that's now, something that is precious to us.

If we offer something that we don't need it anymore, that's not offering. God does not accept. But something that's precious to us, something we want to give it to God, an honor of his name, let's think about it.

I want to share my mother's testimony. Now she's passed away, over a year now. But something of her dedication to God really, really encouraged me.

She and I were baptized on the same day, 1979, 16th of December. It was a while ago. She liked to go to Hollywood.

[31 : 18] At those times, I would bring my mom to go to coffee, scones. She has simple tastes, but she just enjoy her cuppa. and when she was about 90, she was still traveling to Guangzhou with my brother.

She knew that would be her last time to travel to her own country to see some of her relatives. She was still walking walking and walking and walking and still had good health.

With all her years of hard working, like all Chinese older folks, they had money savings.

They had savings. Enough to look after herself. But because of her dedication to God, and she just told us, look, I'm going to offer some money to the church and to a mission organization.

Okay. And I said, mom, up to you. I mean, of course, we totally wholeheartedly agree. Yeah. But some non-believing family members, they were not too encouraging.

[32 : 43] Look, I mean, you're still walking about. You're prepared. You might have needs later on. But she just said, no, I think I want to offer it to God now.

So she did. And I was very encouraged because the money, the money she offered at that time, that was about 13, well, no, about 15, 16 years ago, right?

That was enough to buy a house. And she could have wait, but she just said, no, we offer living sacrifice now. And that really has influenced me of how do I offer myself?

How do I use the resources that God has given me? Time, money, health, whatever. So, yeah, let's ask the Lord, let's share in our groups what maybe some of the things that God will inspire us, right, to give as gift to him that he will gladly accept and he will gladly bless when we offer so willingly.

Yeah, what gift do we have to God? Your gold? Your frankincense? Your myrrh? Now, these may be some of the things, just guidelines, just for information.

[34 : 32] These are, I mean, all achievable, right, and it's very, yeah, you can, everybody can do that. We actually did, we gave this in our couple's fellowship, and they all responded in different ways, you know?

Now, don't copy, all right, you know, if there's something, if really God speaks to you, it's great. Let's do that. If you can do all nine of them, great, but let's be realistic, okay?

Okay? Quality, much better than quantity. If God really, really, really wants to tell you to care for someone who really needs caring, over this holiday, in this Christmas time, let's do that.

Okay? And someone in the couple's fellowship this afternoon has written, I'm going to, I'm going to share and tell someone that Jesus loves him or her, sharing the gospel by the end of the year.

let's pray for that, brother. I don't know how God will inspire you. I'm going to leave it up there later on, after we respond to the song, and later on, Chris, can you put this up at the very end?

[36 : 04] Yeah. And let's offer that to God. I'll pray. Father, thank you for being the giver of all gifts, and what we have, who we are, are all your grace.

The fact that I can stand here to speak your word, the fact that my brothers and sisters can sit here and hear your word, and we can worship you together, we can pray to you together.

Father, it's all your grace, Lord. And thank you for the greatest gift of Jesus, that we are able to be united again because of what Jesus has done.

We can be once again called sons and daughters of God. So, help us, inspire us, speak to us how we can offer ourselves to you.

In Jesus' name, amen.