

## The Gift of Worship - Matthew 2:11

**Introduction:** Have you ever thought of what we really know about the real Christmas story and what is just Christmas Traditions? There is a little test I used to give to my youth groups at Christmas time, and it had several questions on it that addressed this very thing. Here are a few of the questions:

### 1. How did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?

- A. Camel
- B. Donkey
- C. They walked
- D. Joseph walked and Mary rode on a donkey

### 2. What did the Innkeeper say to Mary and Joseph?

- A. You can sleep in the stable out back.
- B. There is no vacancy here
- C. There's no room in the Inn

### 3. How many Wise Men came to see Jesus?

(Fill in the blank)

### 4. Jesus cried when...

- A. Joseph slapped his little behind
- B. Jesus never cried
- C. When the little drummer boy started banging his drum

I don't know how you answered those, but the truth is, we don't know the answer to any of them, because they are not recorded in Scripture. And that is the reality of many of the traditions surrounding the Christmas story. That are just that - traditions. They cannot be substantiated in Scripture.

But here is something that is not a tradition. **Matthew 2:11 (NIV)** says, *“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.”*

In this verse we see the three treasures which the magi presented to Jesus - gold, frankincense, and myrrh - but do you see a fourth gift? The fourth gift was their worship. Before they ever *“opened their treasures”* they opened their hearts and gave the Christ child their worship. And that was the best gift they could give, because it was truly from the heart. It was offered in humility and submission. It was a gift that would forever touch the heart of God.

From the worshipful attitude and action of the Magi, we can learn some things about what it means to worship the Christ this Christmas. First:

### 1. You Have to Be There.

Think about it. As far as the gifts are concerned, the Magi could have just sent them donkey express I guess.

But the truth is, they believed this baby to be the Messiah, and they wanted to go there and see Him for themselves.

There is something about being in the presence of God that inspires us, challenges us and sometimes even convicts us, but it always evokes worship.

For the magi, being in the presence of God meant an interruption from the routine of their daily life, yet they still came. It meant an inconvenience from their comfortable lifestyle yet they still came. It meant setting out on a long, hard, and dangerous journey. In fact, they could have been killed, had they not returned another way other than through Herod's territory. They had to overcome obstacles and fatigue to get there, but they came. We could learn a lesson from these magi: You can't really worship God like you should from long-distance. You can't really worship like you should sitting in front of a TV or in front of a campfire out in the woods where there are so many distractions. You have to be there!

Secondly, we can learn from the worship of the Wise men that when you worship the Christ:

## **2. You Come As You Are**

The Magi were what we would call astrologers or star gazers. They were more interested in what they saw in the sky, rather than what was happening in the political realm. And also, they were not necessarily religious leaders. They didn't exactly have the proper credentials to set out on a religious expedition.

What this teaches us is that anyone can come to God from where they are. People can have different approaches and motivations to get to where God is, and He'll take them as they come. You don't have to be purely religious or have holy motives to get to God. He takes you as you are, so He can make you what you need to be.

You might have come to church initially out of curiosity, or out of habit, or perhaps because you were made to. A lot of teenagers come because it's where they can find other teenagers.

But what we need to learn is that how or why people come to Jesus is not the issue. To me, it doesn't matter if a person comes to church because of a Thanksgiving meal, or a Trunk or Treat candy give-away, a Baby dedication, or a Football Sunday. The important thing is that they have been shown the love of Christ while they are here. Have they had an opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus Christ and how it can change their lives? So, come as you are, so Jesus can change who you are, so you can go where you need to go when you die. That is the bottom line.

The third thing we can learn from the worship of the Wise Men is that when you worship Christ:

## **3. You Experience Joy and Awe.**

Matthew says of the Magi in vs. 9-10 (NIV), "*...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.*"

Now I picture these men as being rather dignified men, but I can also see them in my mind's eye jumping for

joy, high-fiving each other, and maybe even doing a back-flip off their camels as they realized their long and arduous journey was over and they had found the one they were looking for. But when they came inside the house, they bowed down in worship.

True worship evokes all kinds of emotions. Some folks, when they truly worship God, will burst out in shouts of joy, while others will sit in silent meditation. Some folks will cry uncontrollably, while others will weep silently. Some folks will lift their hands in praise, while others will close their eyes in reverence. But whatever way your worship is expressed, God will receive it as it all comes together in a chorus of praise and worship when we come to God's house.

Finally, we can learn from the worship of the Wise Men that when you worship Christ:

#### **4. You Come to Give**

When the magi came into the presence of Jesus, they couldn't help but give Him something. It's almost as if Matthew is saying that they didn't know exactly what to expect before they found Jesus. But once they did, they were touched by the magnitude of what they were experiencing, and their hearts were moved to give Him something. So they reached into their treasures and offered the most expensive, costly, and meaningful gifts they could find. They gave their best.

When we come into the presence of God to worship, let us not forget that giving is just as much a part of that worship as singing praises; just as much as praying; just as much as learning. Giving is one good way to show adoration and a very appropriate way to express thankfulness.

This Christmas, when you think of the wise men, think of not just the three familiar gifts they brought. Think also of their gift of worship. Think of how they gave it: in His presence, with great joy, and when they did, it motivated them to give more. That is the true essence of the gift of worship.