

Gifts for the King

When I was growing up, every year at Christmas time my church would set up a large nativity scene off to the side of the altar. I remember how much I enjoyed looking at the figures set amongst the hay in the crèche. The face of every statue, even the animals, was intently focused on Jesus; everyone was straining to see the newborn King!



After mass my father would take me up to the manger scene to look at the baby Jesus. Next to the manger scene a basket was set out in case someone wanted to leave an offering—a gift—for the Son of God. One year, I remember looking into the basket to see how much money had been given and to my surprise, nestled amid all the bills and coins was a toy car. The yellow paint on the car was chipped and scratched as if the toy had seen many hours of use. Others had noticed the car and were whispering to each other about this extraordinary gift. My parents were greatly moved by the heart behind this simple yet meaningful sacrifice. Out of the treasure of his heart, one little boy gave Jesus the most valuable gift in the basket.

Please prepare for study by asking the Holy Spirit to ready your heart to receive fresh revelation from our text.

Please read Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem who came to see Him?

We have heard the terms *Magi* or *Wise Men* so often that they cease to mean anything to us. The original word for *Wise Men* used in this passage is *magos* which means an Oriental astrologer, a teacher, a sorcerer, a wizard...a false prophet. The word was originally applied to Persian priests.

According to verse 1, where were these Wise Men from?

What did the Wise Men see that brought them to Jerusalem?

They did not see just a star, but they saw His star. The Amplified Bible adds that they saw His star “at its rising.”

Where did they see this star?

They saw His star “in the east.” Prior to studying this passage for this lesson I had always assumed that the Wise Men saw His star *in the east*; east being used as a directional word such as, “The Wise Men looked eastward in the sky and saw a star.” This does not make sense however as the Magi had to travel west to reach Jerusalem. After reflection and studying the text I now think the phrase “...we have seen His star in the East...” meant that while the Wise Men were still in the East they saw His Star shining off in the western sky— perhaps directly over Israel.

Consider the lengths that God went to in order to bring the Magi to Israel. I love that God purposely placed a star in the sky for the *Wise Men*, miles away in Persia, to see. A star was the very thing that was sure to catch the attention of astrologers, to draw them to His beloved Son in Bethlehem. Would God put a star in the sky just for a few men to come to belief in Him? Yes He would! Thousands of years before the birth of Christ, God planned to place a star in the sky just for the Wise Men. By this star, God specifically called the Magi, who were possibly even sorcerers, to come, if they were willing, to see the King of Kings. *Sorcerers* invited to meet the Son of God? How scandalous! I’m very glad that God is not afraid of a scandal or two!

What did God do to specifically call you? Who had to be in place to speak to you? What circumstances just happened to fall into place?

The Wise Men, doing what seemed to make sense, travelled in the direction of the Star and went to the capital city Jerusalem, and began to ask around about the new king. (I also have reason to believe that the Magi did not literally follow the star every step of the way from the East to Jerusalem as some popular Christmas carols would lead us to believe. We will discuss that concept when we reach verses 9 and 10.) Isn’t it ironic that a group of pagan priests from hundreds of miles away were more in tune with the heart of God than the Jewish priests and scribes of that era? Why weren’t the temple priests looking for the Son of God?

In verse three who else became suddenly aware of the birth of the new King?

Whom did Herod call to meet with him upon hearing about the new King (verse 4)?

What vital piece of information do the scribes and Pharisees relay to King Herod?

What does Herod do with this new bit of information?

In all my years of reading this passage of scripture I never clued in to the fact that it was actually Herod who enabled the Magi to find the Newborn King Jesus. Herod had a very evil motive, straight from the pit of hell, in directing the Magi to Bethlehem. But our awesome God is Sovereign over everything. He takes what the enemy means to destroy us with and uses it to our benefit! What Herod meant for evil God meant for good! Alleluia!

Please write verse 9 in the space below.

The NKJV reads:

“When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was.”

. The Greek word for *went before* used in this verse is *proago* which literally means to lead, to precede, to go before, to bring out. It also means “...to lead for from a place from which one was hidden from view...to lead or bring forth as from a prison” (*BLB*). I love the last two parts of the definition of *proago*! Why didn’t Herod notice the star? Did God hide it from his view? Also, consider the possibility that God was using the star to lead the Magi out of their prison of false beliefs to glorious freedom that is found only Christ.

What does verse 10 say the Magi did when they saw the star?

The word used for *seeing* in this passage does not just refer to a physical seeing with the eye. It also refers to understanding and perceiving what one is seeing. The Magi knew this wasn't an ordinary star. It seems unlikely that the Wise Men would be rejoicing to see the star if they had just seen it the day before when they were en route to Jerusalem. I'd like to present as a theory that the Magi, using their astrological knowledge, travelled west, from perhaps Persia to the place where they thought they saw the star appear one night months earlier. Then they went to the capital city of that region, found the palace— a logical place to look for a King— and spoke with Herod about the new King. When the Wise Men left Herod's presence they were overjoyed to experience a reappearance of the star which then literally led them from Jerusalem, to the house where Jesus lived in Bethlehem.

Please read verse 11 again. What did the Magi do when they saw Jesus? Check all that apply:

- They rejoiced.**
- They worshiped.**
- They fell down.**
- They prayed.**
- They gave him gifts.**

We, like the wise men, spend our lives searching, looking, serving, and seeking Jesus. We too will one day come face to face with our King.

What treasure would you like to lay before your King when you finally see Him face to face?

I wondered why the author of this book of the Bible used two different words to describe the presents the Magi brought for the new King. As

you probably expected I had to look up *treasures* and *gifts* to find out what was up. I was surprised and intrigued when I discovered the meaning behind the Greek word for *treasures*. Let's take a look and see what insight we can gain about our treasures.

Record what comes to your mind when you think of *treasures*.

Like me you may have conjured up images of diamonds, jewels and gem-studded brooches. However, the Greek word for *treasures* is *thesaurus* which means to put, to set, a deposit, collected treasure, riches, anything collected laid up. *Thesaurus* is derived from another Greek word *tithemi* (this is where the definition becomes very interesting) which means to put down, lay down or bend down, to sink down, to kneel down, to commit." Based on these definitions it is easy to see why Jesus warned us about our treasures. What we choose to treasure will be the center of our lives. If poorly chosen, our treasures will rule over us and causing us to stumble.

Doron the transliteration for the word *gift* used in this verse means "a present, a sacrifice, gifts offered to God, used of gifts given as an expression of honour" (*BLB*).

We see in verse 11 that out of their treasures—the things that were essential to their lives, the Magi chose gifts—offerings that were sacrificed to give to Jesus.

Please list the gifts that were given to Jesus.

The Wise Men gave Jesus out of their own possessions; they did not fabricate a gift or buy something new for Him. They gave Jesus out of the treasure of their hearts. They laid before the King of Kings that which held first place in their hearts perhaps signifying that Jesus was now the treasure of their hearts.

What gifts do you have that you can lay before the King?

Are you willing to let God use them for His kingdom?

Do you have a dream of something you'd really like to do to serve the body of Christ?

What's holding you back?

Have you spent any time praying over this dream?

Tell God about your dream right now and ask Him to start opening and closing doors if He wants you to serve in this capacity, at this time. Ask Him to give you a burning passion for the ministry opportunities that He wills for your life.

Do you feel that God may be closing the door on a current ministry in order to move you in a new direction?

Perhaps you think you are not greatly gifted in anything therefore you have shied away from offering your talents for His use. God's Word promises that we all have been given gifts (Ephesians 4:8). Sometimes these gifts need a little developing! God has given me the gift of teaching but I was not ready to begin teaching when I was 8 years old. Before I could enter the classroom I went through 12 years of grammar school, 4 years of college and then my student teaching. My first few years of teaching were dotted with successes and disappointments. Some of those learning experiences were hard and painful; all of them were valuable. And God continues to hone my skills with each year that passes.

What steps can you put in motion at this time to better equip you to use your gifts? Do you need to take a class, find a mentor, quit your current job or volunteer for a ministry in your church?

God has given you very particular gifts that are greatly needed in this generation. He wants to greatly use YOU! There is no one else who can fulfill the hope of **your** calling. Some of you may be waiting for the right time to come. For some of you the right time is here, now!

In closing, please write Isaiah 6:8 in the space below:

Keep praying.

By Mary Kane

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