



LIFEWork — Week of January 7, 2018

13th Day of Christmas

Matthew 2:1-12

Happy New Year! Please begin with a prayer asking God's Holy Spirit to guide you in His truths.

Spend a few minutes reflecting on any insights from this week's message.

Though it rightfully takes a back seat to celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, many churches each year celebrate the visit of the wise men on January 6, also known as Epiphany, or the 13th day of Christmas. Matthew 2:1-12 gives the incredible account of these men who sought to bring Jesus gifts. I love this story, and I (used to) love to sing the carol "We Three Kings of Orient Are." Maybe you do too—it remains a classic that's sung every Christmas season.

But, there are a few details found in the carol that are not listed in the Scriptural account or disagree with the account. True, these details do not contradict Christian doctrine, so truly no big deal, but if we're going to tell the story of the wise men to those who don't know it, we should be careful to share what Scripture—not the carol—teaches. So start by reading the words of the hymn and then read the words of Matthew 2.

We three kings of Orient are;
Bearing gifts we traverse afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.

*O star of wonder, star of light,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.*

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain
Gold I bring to crown Him again,
King forever, ceasing never,
Over us all to reign.

Frankincense to offer have I;
Incense owns a Deity nigh;
Prayer and praising, voices raising,
Worshipping God on high.

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom;
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone cold tomb.

Glorious now behold Him arise;
King and God and sacrifice;
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Sounds through the earth and skies.

Matthew 2:1-12 (NASB) ¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

⁶ 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'"

⁷ Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸ 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." ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

Some points to ponder as you compare the two texts:

How many wise men (magi) are there?

How many kings are there? (hint – verse 1)

Where are the magi from?

As politically incorrect as calling someone an “oriental” has become, it is not derogatory, and neither is it inappropriate in the hymn verse. Literally, it means of the Orient (the rising of the sun) or of the East, as opposed to of the Occident or of the West. We believe that they were likely from Persia or Babylon. Following the Babylonian exile, many Jewish communities remained and established synagogues where certainly scriptures were read and perhaps even other writings that God made sure those magi had that led them to Bethlehem when the star appeared.

Read slowly the words of the refrain and discuss their meaning.

As you read of each of the gifts that the magi brought to Jesus, the hymn verse implies the purpose of those valuable elements. Hear is an explanation from the gotquestions.org website:

Gold is a symbol of divinity and is mentioned throughout the Bible. Pagan idols were often made from gold and the Ark of the Covenant was overlaid with gold (Exodus 25:10-17). The gift of gold to the Christ child was symbolic of His divinity—God in flesh.

Frankincense is a white resin or gum. It is obtained from a tree by making incisions in the bark and allowing the gum to flow out. It is highly fragrant when burned and was therefore used in worship, where it was burned as a pleasant offering to God (Exodus 30:34). Frankincense is a symbol of holiness and righteousness. The gift of frankincense to the Christ child was symbolic of His willingness to become a sacrifice, wholly giving Himself up, analogous to a burnt offering.

Myrrh was also a product of Arabia, and was obtained from a tree in the same manner as frankincense. It was a spice and was used in embalming. It was also sometimes mingled with wine to form an article of drink. Such a drink was given to our Savior when He was about to be crucified, as a stupefying potion (Mark 15:23). Matthew 27:34 refers to it as “gall.” Myrrh symbolizes bitterness, suffering, and affliction. The baby Jesus would grow to suffer greatly as a man and would pay the ultimate price when He gave His life on the cross for all who would believe in Him.

Pastor spoke of the GLORY OF THE LORD. Read the following verses: Exodus 24:17 --- Exodus 40:34-35 --- Ezekiel 8:1-4, 11:22-25 and then read again the account of the shepherds in Luke 2. Discuss how this may very well be connected to the star that the magi followed.

Epiphany is the Christian celebration of Jesus being revealed as God incarnate to the gentile Wise Men/Magi and in some Christian denominations it is also connected to Jesus’ baptism. Why do you suppose?



On the 13th Day of Christmas
Matthew 2:1-12 - January 7, 2018 – Pastor D R Hilken

The Twelve Days of Christmas → Epiphany

Five Truths to glean from Matthew's Magi account

1) Jesus is MESSIAH and KING

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity. ... And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God." Micah 5:2 & 4

ruler ~ shepherd
strong leadership ~ tender care

2) The Messiah has come for ALL

3) Yahweh is god over ALL

4) Jesus demands a RESPONSE

INDIFFERENCE

HOSTILITY

WORSHIP

5) Worship defined: authority ~ honor ~ sacrifice

On the 13th Day of Christmas my True Love Gave to Me

The GLORY of God

FOR PERSONAL STUDY AND LIFE GROUPS THIS WEEK,
PLEASE USE THE LIFEWORK AVAILABLE AT SJLCHURCH.ORG/SERMONS
OR THE LIFE GROUP KIOSK.