

## The Visit of the Magi

Matthew 2:1-12 New American Standard Bible

**2** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, 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** And 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 from you will come forth a Ruler  
Who will shepherd My people Israel.””

**7** Then Herod secretly called for 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 on their way; and behold, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on ahead of them until it came to a stop over the place where the Child was to be found.**10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. **11** And after they came into the house, **they saw the Child with His mother Mary; and they fell down and worshiped Him.** Then they opened their treasures and **presented to Him gifts** of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. **12** And after being warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

## Introduction

Often times, the Christmas story is not complete without the story of magi. Three Kings. Three wise men from the East. They visited Jesus not simultaneously with the shepherd at the time of Christ’s birth. They visited Jesus’ family sometime after Jesus’ birth. Scholars believe that between one or two years after His birth. E.g. Herod ordered to kill all the baby boys under the age of two in the region of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16).

## Content

Anyway, most of us are familiar with their story, so I won’t repeat. However, I would like to draw three lessons from their visit to Jesus’ family in Bethlehem.

**Search for the King:** The magi in their homeland would look into the night sky and study the movements of stars. They would try to understand times and seasons according to the changes in constellation. One night they saw an unusual appearance of a very bright star. They studied, examined, and discussed among them the meaning of it. They

concluded that it was the star of a newborn King of the Jews. They wanted to witness it in person. They wanted to pay a proper homage to the newborn King. They travelled hundreds of miles for many days. At last, they arrived in Jerusalem and asked King Herod where the newborn king was. That shocked Herod. *A newborn king?! Unacceptable! I am the King here!*

Anyway, to make the long story short, they eventually met the newborn king, didn't they?

After the long study, examination, and search, they finally met the King. Even today, those who diligently seek Jesus in pursuit of truth and life, will meet Jesus. E.g. One bumper sticker says, *The wise men still seek. Seek Jesus, and you will find Him.*

**Worship Jesus only:** *they saw the Child with His mother Mary; and they fell down and worshiped Him* (v. 11). They finally arrived at the house where the baby Jesus was staying with His mother Mary. They fell down and worshiped Him. The Scripture doesn't say, they worshiped Him *and His mother*. Let me repeat. They fell down and worshiped **Him**. Not the mother. Only the child. Him alone.

I don't want to criticize or disappoint our Catholic brothers and sisters. However, one thing they do wrong is to worship and pray to Mary. We worship only Jesus, not Mary, not the mother of Jesus. Only Jesus. Mary, as much as she was blessed as God's chosen vessel to bear the holy Child, she is not our object of worship.

Jesus made it very clear too. Once, Mary and her children from Joseph wanted to see Jesus in private. That day, Jesus was very busy in ministering people; healing, teaching, and preaching. A crowd said to Him, *Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.* Jesus didn't go out to see His mother nor His brothers. Instead, He said, *"Who are My mother and My brothers?"*<sup>34</sup> *And looking around at those who were sitting around Him, He said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!"*<sup>35</sup> *For whoever does the will of God, this is My brother, and sister, and mother* (Mark 3:33-35)."

Another day, Jesus once again was ministering people with teaching. Out of nowhere, *"one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that carried You, and the breasts at which You nursed!"*<sup>28</sup> *But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and follow it* (Luke 11:27-28)."

Whenever people brought their notion that somehow Mary was very special in God's Kingdom as the mother of Jesus, Jesus repeatedly corrected them saying, those who hear the Word of God and do it are truly blessed.

I don't think Jesus was demeaning or putting down His mother here. Rather, He warns us not to put Mary on a pedestal to worship her and pray to her. As much as Mary was blessed to work with God, as much as she was called the mother of Jesus, even in the early days of Church, *the Mother of God*, in God's eyes, and in Jesus' eyes, she was just an

ordinary woman of faith, like you and me. What really matters in God's sight is to do His will. Worship Jesus only, not Mary.

**Offering after worship:** Finally, let's talk about worship and offering. Worship precedes offerings. Heart precedes gifts. Take a look at verse 11 one more time. (The magi worshiped Jesus the Messiah) *Then they opened their treasures and **presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh*** (v. 11). Notice here that the magi didn't give the gifts to Jesus before they worshiped Him. They opened their hearts to Jesus, recognized Him as their King, and worshiped Him first, then they opened up their treasures and presented Him with gifts. Open heart, worship, open treasurers, and offerings. In that order.

Same thing goes with our Sunday offerings to God. You see, some church goers are stingy with offerings to God. Some of them are even critical of offerings, particularly on the misuse of the offerings. Well, to a degree, we take the responsibility for that. That's why I always pray that our church would use the offerings without waste.

Such human error doesn't negate the offerings in the Church. No, in fact, it is God's command to bring offerings to His temple. Please don't get me wrong. God is not in need of your money. He is rich. Everything in the universe is His. Yet, the same God specifically commands God's people, not the world, to bring their offerings to God's Church to carry out God's mission without ceasing.

Please know this about your offerings. What God is really interested is not the offerings itself but your hearts. Have you ever tried to give your gifts to someone whom you don't know/love or to the church you don't belong? You actually feel reluctant to give any, even a dollar, because your heart is not there. Remember, where your heart is, there's treasure. E.g. Parents would give anything to their children because they know and love their children.

Remember. Like the magi, you worship Jesus first, then give your best to the Lord. Not the other way around. E.g. There are some churches who practice this principle of worship first. To the visitors, they would announce, please don't feel pressured to give Sunday offerings, because you are our guests. That makes sense, doesn't it? When you go to your friend's house for dinner, for instance, you don't do anything besides the visit. The host does everything, food preparation, decoration, and cleaning. You just go and enjoy the fellowship together. However, it is different for the host family. Likewise, once you become a member of the family, in our case, Church family, then you become part of the church and you participate in its ministry through your presence, prayers, gifts and services. Remember: Heart before gifts. Worship before offerings.

## Conclusion

That's it, folks. Seek Jesus, and you will find Him. Worship Jesus only, not Mary, not anybody else. Give your heart to Jesus in worship, then offerings. Not the other way around. Amen.