

BAHRAIN REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

The Visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12)

August 22, 2024

Wrong: “*Nang si Criso ay sinilang, may tatlong haring nagsidalaw, at ang bawat isa ay nagsipaghandog ng tanging alay*”

Correction: At the birth of Jesus, wise men came to worship and offer gifts to Him...

- The wise men (Gk. *Magi*) were not kings but advisors to kings... i.e. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
- *Wise men*: The Bible does not specify how many wise men visited Jesus at His birth.
- Tradition: [*Excerpta Latina Barbari*] = Bithisarea, Melchior, and Gathaspa.
- Western Tradition: St. Balthasar (king of Arabia); St. Melchior (king of Persia); St. Caspar (king of India).
- The reference to 3 kings is based on the three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh

1. The Sovereign Calling of God to the Wise Men

Note: The wise men were wise but typically pagans.

- The wise men who visited Jesus were pagans from the East who worshiped false gods... Mt 2:1
- The wise men believed in astrology – giving meanings to every event in the sky.

Reminder: Studying the sky (astronomy) is not wrong — giving superstitious meanings to it is prohibited by the Bible...

e.g., Zodiac sign/Horoscope (Isa 47:13-15; Jer 10:2)

Remember: All events in human life or the entire universe are under the sovereign control of God... Col 1:16-17.

God's Unique and Special Action

- (a) God used the star to guide the wise men to Jesus... Mt 2:2.
Point: God uses anything in creation for His holy purpose... Jon 4; Num 22-24.
- (b) The wise men were pagans but were called by God as an announcement of His arrival... Num 24:17.

Note: Christianity is not a religion for 'good people;' it is for sinners called to follow and trust in God... Jn 15:16; Act 9:1ff.

2. King Herod the Great

Note: Herod (the Great) of Palestine was 'king of the Jews' (72 BCE – c. 4 BCE).

- Due to the Jews' desire to have their own king, Herod, as the Roman governor of Judea, was granted the title 'king of the Jews.'
- Herod overthrew the Hasmonean dynasty in a 3-year war between 37-34 BCE.
- He's primary task was to follow Rome to maintain peace and order in Jerusalem
- He was recognized as great and a hero of Israel for rebuilding the Temple of Jerusalem.

The Evil of Herod

Note: Herod, thought to be a blessing to the Jews, was actually a false belief.

- He killed 46 members of the Sanhedrin, his own wife, brother-in-law, son-in-law, and some of his childrens to keep the throne for himself – (*Antiquities*, 18)
- Thinking that Jesus might be a rival to his throne, he sought to kill Him by deceiving the wise men... v.8, 13
- Herod was troubled by the wise men's search for the birth of the 'King of the Jews' – v.2, 3.

Aftermath: Because Joseph, Mary, and Jesus fled to Egypt (following the angel's warning in Joseph's dream), Herod ordered the killing of all male children in Bethlehem.

3. The Chief Priests (Sadducees) and the Scribes

Scribes: Conservative teachers of the Scriptures.

Chief Priests: Roman loyalists who sought to protect their power and wealth.

Note: The chief priests and scribes knew the Scriptures but did not follow the commandments... Mt 2:6; cf. Mic 5:2.

- They were not pleased with the Lord's arrival—they knew the Scriptures but did not join the wise men.
- They served the false 'king of the Jews' rather than the True One.

4. The Three Gifts

Note: The three gifts symbolizes the nature and work of Christ Jesus.

Gold: Symbolizes the divinity of Jesus... Ex 25:10-17 = *The Ark of the Covenant*.

- It might have been used by Joseph for their journey to Egypt.
- Frankincense: A type of perfume symbolizing the holiness and righteousness of Christ Jesus.
- It is a fragrance often used in offerings and worship to God... Exodus 30:34.
- It represents the Lamb of God who will pay for the sins of the world.
- Myrrh: A bitter and aromatic spice used in embalming.
- It was used for embalming the dead... Jn 19:39.
- It symbolizes the suffering Jesus would experience at Calvary.

5. Challenges and Questions

- True peace is not achieved by trusting in those with power but in the One who gives all power
- God holds human life; mystical ideas of predictions should not be believed.
- Instead of listening to God's Word, Herod listened to himself... this is clear rebellion against God.
- Salvation is not achieved through knowledge of the Word or good deeds; it is by faith alone in Christ alone
- Even though the journey of the wise men was long and difficult, they endured it to offer gifts and worship God... How about you? How is your worship of God?

Those who trust in the Word of God, who constantly seek Christ, and have true worship and obedience to Him, are the true wise men