

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Intro

I guess it's only fair in this day and age that we give Matthew a chance to share his side of the story.

We've been spending our time with Luke – hearing of Annunciations to Mary and Elizabeth – and of course, the story of Jesus' birth we hear each year at Christmas.

But today on this SEVENTH Day of Christmas, on this SECOND Day of the New Year, we hear Matthew's tale of the "Visitors from the East" who have come to worship the new born King.

Often, when we set up our NATIVITY Scenes we blend the stories together and have the Shepherds and Wiseman giving their adoration at the manger.



But we need to take care, when we do that that we don't blur the images each Gospel writer is trying to tell.

### I. Matthew's Story

A. So, this is Matthew's story.

1. Gone are the Shepherds and Angels - the Inn and the Stable and all the other familiar trappings we attach to the Christmas story.

2. Matthew wants to tell a different story.

3. Matthew is writing for a different audience.

4. He was writing to a group of Jewish Christians who had been banned from the Synagogue and forbidden from practicing the only religion they've ever known;

- Gone are their traditions, their heritage, they are cutoff from their families,

5. Matthew wants to show them that Jesus FULFILLS the Law and the Prophets; that Jesus is God's Messiah; and their fellow Christians are their NEW traditions, their NEW heritage, and their NEW family.

B. Matthew wants to demonstrate **Jesus' Royal Birth**; his purpose is to show that Jesus IS the King of the Jews.

1. Matthew begins his Gospel with Jesus' Genealogy, linking Jesus to David and other Kings of Israel.

2. Matthew has Jesus born in Bethlehem – the City of David – he is an heir to David's throne.

3. Mary and Joseph LIVE in Bethlehem – there is no census to cause them to return there – when the Magi arrive they “enter the house”.

4. Jesus is visited by these Eastern Sages who have come to find “the child who has been born king of the Jews. For [they] observed his star at its rising...”

5. And they bring royal gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh.

6. Truly, for Matthew, Jesus is the one who is born King of the Jews.

C. For, in a way, Matthew's story is the whole Gospel in miniature.

1. Herod and the Religious Authorities have the same signs – indeed they go researching through the holy books – and yet they miss everything.

2. Yet, it is these Foreign Astrologers who bring the news of a newborn King.

3. Those who have the scriptures – who can see what the Prophets have said – don't come to worship the new-born King – they conspire to kill the Messiah – to kill “God Saves.”

4. Instead Jesus is worshiped by GENTILES, representing the world.

## II. Expectations

A. For too many, Jesus doesn't fulfill their expectations.

1. Was Jesus what the Magi were expecting? What Herod was expecting? And what of this poor fellow? **[Go get]**



2. The Magi may have had an idea of what was going on, but what of him, the poor simple Camel Driver who came as their servant?

3. Indeed, if you look on the cover of the bulletin you see there was a whole train of unmentioned servants whose job it was to keep this train on the road and see the Magi to their destination – what did they think?

4. Here, this poor simple Camel Driver was told he was going to see the King of Kings – The Messiah.

5. He expected a powerful King in a big palace with servants, and tapestries, and fine food.



Tissot, James, 1836-1902. Journey of the Magi, from *Art in the Christian Tradition*, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://digitallibrary.vanderbilt.edu/act-imageLink.pl?BC=56277> [retrieved December 29, 2021]. Original source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Magi\\_tissot.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Magi_tissot.jpg).

6. And instead he finds a Baby in a stable – well, actually at the back of a poor humble Carpenter's shop.

7. **[Hold up]** It must have been enough for him to think, "I walked all the way from Mesopotamia for this?"

8. He just couldn't accept what he saw.

- He couldn't accept Jesus because He wasn't what he was looking for.



B. How many people today are in the same place?

1. How many people miss out because they don't see Jesus the way they expect to?
2. They miss him in the people around them because they don't feel his love.
3. And what does that say to us who are called to bring Jesus to those we meet?

### III. Bringing Gifts

A. But the Magi did come – and brought their gifts – expectations or not.

1. And what did they bring:
  - GOLD – the gift for a King
  - FRANKINCENSE – the gift for a Priest – for it was the job of the Priest to open the way to God
  - and MYRRH – used to embalm the bodies of the dead.
2. Strange gifts to give a baby – but together they tell what Jesus came to do:
  - He was the King who died to build a drawbridge between us and God so that we could cross over sin and enter a new relationship with God based on love.
3. And we bring our gifts to Jesus too, when we put them to work helping people by sharing Jesus' love and helping them to know Jesus.
4. We have a choice:
5. We can be like the **Camel Driver**, and be disenchanted because our expectations aren't being met;
  - Or we can be like the Magi and search for Jesus in the lives of those around us and rejoice when we find him.

### Conclusion

The Magi left everything to follow the star.

In your journey toward God, how are you like the Magi?

- Have you had to leave anything to follow Jesus?

What is the “Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh in your life?

-What are the gifts you bring to Jesus?

We bring to Jesus the gifts of our lives;

- Jesus takes our lives and uses them to tell others about the love of God.

How is God using the gifts of your life?

Let Us Pray

O God our Father, as You led the Magi to your Son by the light of a star; draw us ever closer to You by the light of faith. Help us to search for You as ardently as they did. Give us the grace to overcome the obstacles that keep us far from You. And may we, like them, offer you our greatest gifts to use in Your service; all this we pray, through the same Jesus Christ, Our Lord. **Amen.**

(GBL adapted)