



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Winter 2017-18 Leader Commentary

Unit 1: Everything Belongs to Him
Session 4: Treasuring Christ (see pp. 114-117)

The Question: What does Jesus' birth have to do with my treasure?

The Point: Treasuring Christ leads us to give Him our treasure.

Background Passage: Matthew 2:1-12

Focal Passage: Matthew 2:1-11

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, "What does Jesus' birth have to do with my treasure?" and to drive home this one truth: Treasuring Christ leads us to give Him our treasure.

Focus on These Points

Treasuring Christ Reveals My Priorities
(Matt. 2:1-8)

The opening verses of Matthew 2 give people today models to help them in their quest to worship Jesus Christ. The context of these verses points out that people who are open and receptive to God can find Him.

What contributed to Jesus' being born in Bethlehem? The Romans had ruled that everyone had to go to his place of origin to register for the census. Luke 2 gives the details. Joseph was a descendant of David, who was a son of Jesse of Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph made the trek there along with numerous others.

Herod the king was Herod the Great who ruled the Jews under Rome from 40 B.C.-4 B.C. He was of mixed descent—half Idumean and half Jew. Herod was unacceptable to most Jews, many of whom hated him.

Wise men (magi) probably were astrologers from Babylon. Some Bible students have suggested they were from Persia. Matthew 2:1 refers to "the east." The magi interpreted the appearance of a new star as a sign of unusual importance. They knew what they were looking for, and they were determined to find Jesus.

The priorities of the wise men contrast greatly with the priorities of Herod. The wise men's visit upset Herod and others. Herod was a ruthless and insecure leader. He ordered his sons Alexander and Aristobulus put to death. In 35-34 B.C., he ordered that his beloved wife Mariamne be killed. Five days before his own death, Herod ordered that his son Antipater be

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killed. He also knew that people would rejoice when he died, so he ordered that on the day of his death, a number of Jews were to be killed. He wanted the nation to weep and not to rejoice. Understandably, this order never was carried out.

If a political Jewish king had been on the scene, Herod would have lost his power. That is how he interpreted the news the magi brought. He feared that an earthly king would overthrow him. The phrase “the chief priests and scribes” (v. 4) may refer to the Jewish Sanhedrin, a kind of Supreme Court of its day. More likely the phrase referred to a general assembly of chief priests and scribes (teachers).

Herod called on this group to help him determine the meaning of the star and of the visitors from the East. He was alarmed and confused about the talk of the One born King of the Jews. Herod asked the religious leaders to interpret their signs and prophecies to determine where the Messiah was to be born. The Jews anticipated the coming of the Anointed One, the Christ. They had some knowledge of where the birth would be but not when it would occur.

In answer to Herod’s inquiry, the chief priests quoted from Micah 5:2. Micah prophesied that Bethlehem would produce the Messiah, although neither the term *Messiah* nor the word *Christ* was used in the prophecy. Micah foresaw the coming of a “ruler over Israel.” The religious leaders’ quotation in Matthew 2:6 mentioned a Ruler and One who would shepherd Israel. Herod seemed to miss the meaning of Micah’s prophecy. The One recently born in Bethlehem was not a military leader but a Shepherd King. A shepherd protects and feeds his flock.

Herod commissioned the wise men to find the King and to send him word of this King’s location. His intention was not to worship but to murder. The wise men were sent to Bethlehem with Herod’s instructions to find the child and to report to him. They did find the child, but they were warned in a dream not to reveal His whereabouts to Herod. Some people want to find and to worship Jesus while others only want to scoff at Him or to ignore Him. God can use unlikely sources of guidance in the lives of people whom He leads.

Treasuring Christ Results in Worship ***(Matt. 2:9-11)***

The star guided the wise men directly to the place where the infant Jesus lay. The wise men were Gentiles who searched for the Jewish King. That indicates God’s message of salvation in His Son is meant for all people in all ages.

The travelers were excited to find the subject of their search. They rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. The occasion was one of emotion and homage. On finding Jesus the wise men fell to the ground and worshiped Him. The magi paid homage to Jesus in a way that would befit such a royal person. They may not have understood all of the theological implications of the One whom they had found.

They offered three kinds of gifts. Gold was, and is, a precious metal. Frankincense was an odorous gum. Myrrh was another type of gum used as perfume, medicine, embalming, and spice. These gifts were the kinds given to a king. They knew that Jesus was special. Worship and giving gifts were appropriate responses by people who experienced God’s guidance. These

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two actions are still applicable. He guides us through His written Word and through the Holy Spirit.

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