

Fools and Wise Men, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 2:4–12

Code: 2184

Let's pick up where we left off last time, as we examine...

II. THE AGITATION (vv. 3-6)

A. The Response Of Herod (v. 3a)

B. The Reaction To Herod (v. 3b)

Herod was so troubled when the Magi arrived because of the potential threat to his throne that they posed, he knew that he had to do something. A devious solution was sought with...

C. The Request Of Herod (v. 4)

"And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where the Christ should be born."

Isn't that interesting? Because Herod demanded to know the birthplace of the Christ, Herod must have known that Child was more than a human king. He apparently knew that this was the Messiah, the Anointed One, that the Magi were seeking. Living in a day when the hope of deliverance through the arrival and work of the promised Messiah was in the hearts and on the lips of many, Herod knew that the King of the Jews and the Messiah of Israel were one and the same. Like the Wise Men, he was aware that there was more than humanity in view here--he knew there was deity involved as well. It's amazing that his reaction was so different from the Magi's, isn't it? Whereas the latter decided to worship, the former decided to murder the One that was sought out of panic and anger. But Herod was too shrewd to actually kill the Magi and probably too impotent since there were likely a thousand Persian soldiers there while his own army was away on some other skirmish. Besides, if he killed them, he would lose the source of his information about the Child, who was a potential king. Furthermore, the Magi themselves were not his primary concern. All he wanted was to get rid of the Child, so he hatched his plot in verse 4 as he gathered the chief priests and the scribes of the people together.

1. THE MEN HE CONSULTED

First of all, let's look at...a. The Chief PriestsIt would be helpful to have some background about who the priests were. In the Gospels, the word priest is restricted to the Jewish caste which ministered in the Temple. The tribe of Levi had a special ranking in Israel, since they constituted the priesthood. In fact, if you weren't part of that tribe, you didn't have any right to minister in the Temple. They essentially ran the country of Israel, which God had designed to be a theocracy where He ruled through His agents. Politics and theology were inseparably linked in Israel's theocracy. Now, within the priests at the time of Christ were several groups. First of all, there were...1) The High PriestsThough there was supposed to be only one high priest at a time, there was often a plurality of them at the same time. The high priest was the only priest who was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement, known and celebrated today as Yom Kippur. Inside the Holy of Holies, the high priest would sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat to make atonement for the sins of the whole nation for that year. Bells were attached to his robe, so that those outside could hear if he was still moving around inside, because if he ever went in there with sin in his life, he could be divinely executed on the spot. So, when the bells stopped ringing, they knew something had gone wrong. Now, by virtue of that privilege of entering the Holy of Holies, he was the muckamuck in Israel. He served as the president of the Sanhedrin, the group of seventy ruling elders (similar in function to

our Senate and Supreme Court), who made and upheld the laws in Israel. Consequently, he had tremendous political and religious power. This is seen in the Bible where the high priest presided over such trials as that of Jesus and the early Apostles, Stephen and Paul. As can be expected, the high priests were sometimes removed from their offices for political reasons, depending upon whom the Romans felt could best serve their interests. When Jesus was arrested, two people were identified as the high priests: Annas and Caiaphas. Though Annas had been deposed and Caiaphas had taken his place, Annas still retained his title and a measure of authority as a high priest. And there may have been others around as well. A tremendous aristocracy of power and political prestige was attached to this office.

Secondly, there was another kind of priest who was called...2) The Captain of the Temple

Next in importance to the high priest, the Captain of the Temple assisted the high priest with the sacrifices and served as the chief of the Temple police, with the power to arrest. And because he was appointed by the high priest from the high priest's family or from one of the leading families, he could be manipulated as a puppet of the high priest.

3) The Chief Priests

Not actually an official position, the chief priests were composed of the high priest and all ex-high priests, the captain of the Temple, and any other priest from the aristocracy, a select group of Temple overseers, and the treasurers and administrators of the Temple. The members of this group of chief priests all had seats in the seventy-member body called the Sanhedrin, so what you really see in the chief priests are the aristocracy, the brain trust, and the political power of Israel.

4) The Ordinary Priests

These priests, who were not from the aristocracy, were organized into twenty-four groups, which limited their individual ministries in the Temple to one week, two times a year. If you were a priest, you lived somewhere else and had an occupation such as carpentry, masonry, or shepherding. By the way, historians estimate that there were probably eighteen thousand such priests at the time of Jesus. And it is probably from this group that many became believers in Christ. Acts 6:7 says, "And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." In many ways, compared to the other priests, these were the "good guys."

Now, at the bottom of the totem pole, so to speak, even under the ordinary priests, were all the rest of...5) The Levites

This was the lowest level in the priestly hierarchy. Also divided into twenty-four groups, the ministry of the Levites was music and other various services connected with the Temple. The Jewish Mishnah, which tells us a lot about Jewish history, says that they were the Temple policemen. They didn't function in the sacrificial ministry apart from their music.

Now these priests were essentially the officers of the whole Jewish country. And of course superimposed over this whole hierarchy was the Roman government, which had made a chattel state out of Israel. By the time of Jesus, the chief priests had become nothing more than an organization of corrupt politicians seeking their own gains. Consequently, their intrigues in the Temple are incredible, and from their very introduction in Matthew 2 in the New Testament until finally He dies on the cross, they are in conflict with Jesus Christ, who seemingly is a victim of their lies, plots, subterfuge, and politics. This conflict is nowhere more dramatically seen than at the beginning of His ministry, when Jesus went right into the Temple in Jerusalem, made a whip, and cleansed the place out (Jn. 2:13-17). That confrontation set the continuing conflict in motion, because He was hitting at the very core of Israel's religious abuses and the perversion of God's truth.

Now notice that Herod also gathered...b. The Scribes

The scribes were scholars and authorities on the law, who had spent their life studying the Old Testament. In fact, one scribe, Ezra, had even memorized the entire Old Testament so that he could sit down and write it down from Genesis to the very end from memory. Some of the scribes joined the Pharisees because they were literalists and legalistic fundamentalists, who believed in everything the law said. On the other hand, some of them joined the Sadducees because they were liberals, who denied scriptural truths such as resurrection and angels. So, those were the two theological parties--the fundamentalists and the liberals of that day--and both of them had their scribes. But regardless of what party they were in, they were forever challenging Jesus, trying to trap Him in His words. By the way, the scribes later

became known as rabbis. However, a rabbi today is not somebody in the Levitical priesthood line, because no one is able any longer to trace their lineage to a particular tribe. So, Herod called the politicians and the theologians together. It must have been very disturbing to them to have to learn about this new King secondhand. Their lack of knowledge about their own King allowed them to be upstaged by a bunch of Persians who arrived from hundreds and hundreds of miles away, and who came in right under their ignorant noses and announced to them that Israel's own Messiah had just been born. They were completely oblivious to the event of the ages!

2. THE MOTIVATION HE CONCEALED

Now, Herod's interrogation of the aristocracy and the brain trust of theologians, about where the Christ was to be born, shows how subtly deceptive he really was. It's amazing to me that Herod asked this question, not really because he wanted to know where Christ would be born in order that he might take the knowledge of that truth and apply it properly, but so that he might use the information for his own devious ends. And I never cease to be amazed how many people seek certain information from the Bible to be used for their own ends rather than to be used in the manner that God has designed it. That is not right. Herod inquired of God's Word to use it sinfully against the will of God. The Bible is not to be thus approached. It is to be approached with a sense of sacredness, a sense of awe, and a response of obedience. But Herod did not want to know for the right reasons. He should have known without asking. Do you know that it was common knowledge where the Messiah would be born? Everybody knew that...there wasn't even any question about it, as John 7:40-42 shows: "Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" But maybe Herod did know it and he just wanted to be sure. Without wanting to waste any time, he sought an official declaration from the brain trust, who amazingly enough, gave it to him.

D. The Reply To Herod (vv. 5-6)

"And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule My people, Israel."

1. THE ANSWER FROM MICAH

The chief priests and the scribes quoted Micah 5:2 to Herod, informing him that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. That was the official word of the prophet. It's amazing that they knew that, and yet paid absolutely no attention to the events in Bethlehem, which by this time had occurred months before. Furthermore, the shepherds had probably let it be known that such had occurred. Micah was a prophet who thundered denunciations. He was not one of those guys who just shows up to tell everybody how nice they are. Micah was not an affirmer; he was a denouncer, and he thundered against the false rulers of his time. He looked down through the ages and prophesied about the true ruler who would come in the person of the Messiah. This King would be born in the little town of Bethlehem, once called Ephrathah, where David had been raised. The voice of Micah is also the voice of a prophet, who uttered the sob of a nation that wept and wailed for its King. And Micah said, "He'll come and all the false rulers will be put aside. The true ruler will be born in Bethlehem."

2. THE ADDITION BY MATTHEW

I love what Matthew does. He adds a little touch at the end of verse 6. It may well be that the chief priests and the scribes merely said verse 5 and that Matthew added verse 6, because there is an addition at the end of the verse that is not in Micah 5. Such an addition probably would not have come from the chief priests and the scribes, but might have been used by Matthew, who similarly quoted other Old Testament passages. This Governor is identified by Matthew (and possibly Herod's consultants as well) as one "that shall rule [shepherd] My people, Israel." This ending phrase does

not appear in Micah 5:2. Why don't New Testament writers quote the Old Testament exactly? Because the New Testament writers were equally inspired by God, they had a right to alter those things of the Old Testament into conformity to that which the Spirit of God was newly revealing to them at the time. They would take a portion of an Old Testament truth and would add a special clarification which the Spirit of God desired to make.

a. A Loving Shepherd There is a wonderful message in what Matthew had added about how the Governor would rule. As One who would shepherd His people, He would be a vast improvement over Herod. In effect, he was asking, "How would you like to trade in a Herod for a Shepherd? How would you like to trade in a demagogic murderer and hateful plotter, for a Shepherd, who will love and care for His flock?" They knew the difference.

b. A Literal Savior Every Jew in history is faced with the explicitness of Micah 5:2. The prophet said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem...and Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Even the chief priests and the scribes--the leading politicians and the leading theologians--said that He would be born in Bethlehem, just as Micah had said. So, when some Jewish people come along today and say, "Well, the Messiah is not a person, it's an attitude," all I can say is that they didn't think so in Jesus' time. The ancient rabbis said it was a person because an attitude can't be born in Bethlehem--only a person can. Similarly, those who say that the idea of the Messiah is the idea of the perfection of a Jewish kingdom, are faced with the same inconsistency. You can't have the perfection of a Jewish kingdom born one day in Bethlehem, either. The Messiah is a person, not a nation or an attitude, and His birth had to occur in Bethlehem. Furthermore, if the Messiah was not to literally be born in Bethlehem, then what were Micah and the scribes and chief priests talking about, not to mention Matthew, who was a devout Jew? They all agreed that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, precisely where Jesus was born. And interestingly enough, God used a Roman decree to get Joseph and Mary to return to the very town where the Messiah was supposed to be born. It's amazing that these orthodox literalists had perfect head knowledge, but were never touched in their souls. (Such indifference is the deathblow of legalism. No wonder the Bible says, "...for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" [2 Cor. 3:6b].) It didn't take long before the indifference of the chief priests and scribes issued in the hateful plotting of Christ's murder. From the indifference of Matthew 2 to the plots and the murders at the end of the Gospel, they had full knowledge of all the prophecies being fulfilled by Jesus Christ, and yet they rejected them with full information. Jesus Himself even reminded them that all they had to do was to check the Scriptures which they were supposed to be so expert in: "Search the Scriptures; for...they are they which testify of Me" (Jn. 5:39). As we have studied the birth of Jesus, maybe you have realized how people can be classified according to...

The Three Different Responses to Christ

1. Hostility

Herod was afraid that this little baby would interfere with his life. Jealous and fearful, he sought to eliminate Him. And some people still felt that way thirty-three years later, successfully completing Herod's original plot. Some people feel that way today. Jesus is an interference in their life. He bothers them, upsetting their plans, and if they had their choice, they too, would eliminate Him. Like the book of Hebrews says, those people know all about Christ and still reject Him, in effect, "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame" (6:6b). Jesus cautioned His disciples about the hatred and the hostility of the world toward Him and His servants: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you" (Jn. 15:18). "...the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (Jn. 16:2b). And, of course, we see the hatred and the hostility exemplified by Herod. The second category of responses is that of...

2. Indifference

This response is characterized by the chief priests and the scribes, who were so engrossed in their bandying about theology, so engrossed in their political intrigues and their games to get power, and so engrossed in making money in the Temple at the expense of the people, that it didn't even matter to them that their Messiah had been born. There are many who are indifferent like that today. I always

think of Lamentations 1:12, where Jeremiah cries out to Israel and says, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?..." In other words, "How can you possibly be indifferent?" This may be the worst of the responses. Studdart Kennedy's poem satirically captures the seriousness of modern-day indifference:

When Jesus came to Golgotha
They hanged Him on a tree
They drove great nails through hands and feet
And made a Calvary. They crowned Him with a crown of thorns
Red were His wounds and deep
For those were crude and cruel days
And human flesh was cheap. When Jesus came to Birmingham
They simply passed Him by.
They never hurt a hair of Him,
They only let Him die. For men have grown more tender--
They wouldn't give Him pain,
They only just pass down the street,
And leave Him in the rain. Still Jesus cried, "Forgive them,
For they know not what they do,"
And still it rained the winter rain
That drenched Him through and through. The crowds went home and left the streets
Without a soul to see,
And Jesus crouched against the wall
And cried for Calvary. But thirdly, there is the response of...

3. Adoring Worship

This was characterized by the Magi. Worship is clearly the best of the three choices that can be made with regard to Jesus. Having seen the arrival and the agitation, let's consider...

III. THE ACTING (vv. 7-8)

A. Summoning The Wise Men (v. 7)

"Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared."

I call this acting because this has got to be one of the biggest acts of hypocrisy in all the Bible. This guy was so clever that the Wise Men were completely unaware of his real intentions. Though Herod's first meeting, with the priests and scribes, was public, this second one was secret, because Herod had a sly plan in mind, and another public meeting would arouse suspicion. Very subtly, he chose not to ask how old the child was, but rather when the blazing forth had appeared so as to play up to their interest in astrology and astronomy. His false interest in the star concealed his real interest in killing the little baby the Magi had come to find.

About this star that was seen in the East and was now no longer visible, Herod "inquired of them diligently [exactly]." Wanting to know precisely when the baby was born, Herod figured that if he killed every child in Bethlehem two years and younger, he'd get Him for sure, just in case the star was a little late. Matthew 2:16 records how he determined which ones to slay: "...from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men." After inquiring of the Wise Men the information he wanted to know, this hypocrite is seen...

B. Sending The Wise Men (v. 8)

"And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also."

Such treachery is very ugly, isn't it? Here was the blessed, glorious, and majestic Son of God, sought by the fool of fools, who, instead of falling at His feet, desired to take His life. What a fool he is who would kill the only Savior! And so the Magi became unwitting tools for the destruction of the Messiah, thinking they were being helpful. But Herod's plot only serves to show that Christ is truly a king, not

only by His lineage or by His homage, but by His rejection. If He weren't really a king, do you think Herod would be so upset about His birth? No. He's the King, and Matthew hits it every way he can. Fourthly, we come to...

IV. THE ADORATION (vv. 9-11)

A. The Reappearance Of The Star (vv. 9-10)

"When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy."

The Magi had seen that star in the East, but it had gone away. They had come all the way to Jerusalem and didn't know specifically where to go or what to do next until the Shekinah of God appeared again, reassuring them that they were on the right track. With the revelatory sign from God and the Word of God from Micah 5:2 converging on Bethlehem, the Magi were led to the very house. That's why I say it couldn't be a real star, because it would be pretty tough for a real star to get down on top of a house without burning up the whole earth. The Shekinah of God descended just as it did in the Old Testament, right down on top of that house. Its guiding work caused them to greatly rejoice.

B. The Reverence Of The Son (v. 11)

1. THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP (v. 11a)

"And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary, His mother, and fell down, and worshiped Him..."a. His ResidenceBy this time, Jesus, Joseph, and Mary were in a house, rather than a stable, implying that the baby was a few months old and that the family had found a place to stay until they could gain the strength to go wherever God would tell them to go. Joseph and Mary knew that it was a new life for them--they were to raise the Son of God, and they couldn't just go back to their normal way of life unless God had so desired.b. His ProminenceYou will notice that when Mary and the baby are mentioned in this verse and in verses 11, 13, 14, 20, and 21, the baby is always mentioned first, because the main concern is with the Child. Charles Wesley put it this way: "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity." When they came into the house and "saw the young Child with Mary, His mother... [they] fell down, and worshiped Him" as King. Jesus was the object of worship, not Mary. They fell on their knees and worshiped Jesus, a response reserved only for God, and not rightfully belonging to any other. When the people of Lystra tried to worship Paul and Barnabas, they were forbidden to do so by those apostles (Ac. 14:11-15). Likewise, when Cornelius tried to worship Peter in Caesarea, Peter responded similarly (Ac. 10:25). And to John who had knelt down in worship, the angel said, "...See thou do it not!..." (Rev. 19:10b). But when the Magi worshiped Jesus, there was no rebuke--none at all, because they were doing what they ought to have done. Nobody said, "Stand up, stand up!" because this was God, the King. The Magi were correctly worshiping Christ, something that I think the American church has forgotten how to do.

2. THE OFFERINGS OF WORSHIP (v. 11b)

"...and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."The Wise Men worshiped by giving, and that's a great way to worship. You say, "Oh, no! We're going to break the spirit of worship to take the offering." I used to think that way, attempting to find a way to get the offering out of the service, because it's so mundane. But that does not break the spirit of worship--it is actually one of the greatest expressions of worship! When the Wise Men came to worship, they didn't bring a big organ or drag in a stained-glass window to look at. They worshiped in a very tangible way by giving.a. The Identification of the Gifts1) GoldGold was a super valuable commodity, as it is today. It was used for only the best purposes, such as in the construction of the Temple and all of its contents (1 Kgs. 5-7; 2 Chr. 2-5). It was worn as jewelry, and even used to make utensils for the rich.2) FrankincenseLiterally, the Greek says "pure incense." This incense

came from a white juice that was extracted from the bark of a certain tree growing in Arabia, its Old Testament equivalent also being derived from the meaning of white. Frankincense was used as a fragrant scent in the meal offerings for the scent that was symbolically rising to God (Lev. 2:1), and as a perfume in wedding processions (S. of S. 3:6).³ Myrrh Myrrh came from a little tree that was also located in Arabia, and which gave forth a beautiful perfume. It was used in Proverbs 7:17 to perfume a bed and in Psalm 45:8 to put on clothes. As a prototype of deodorant, myrrh was used by Esther when she was getting all dolled up to come in to the king (Est. 2:12), and also was used in the same bridal procession of Solomon where frankincense was used. Mixed with wine in Mark 15:23, it served as an anesthetic, and in John 19:39-40, it was used in the preparation of Jesus' body for burial. So, there was precious gold, frankincense, a beautiful-smelling incense, and myrrh, a lovely ointment and perfume. But the significance went way beyond the natural use of each gift: b. The Interpretation of the Gifts I personally believe that Joseph and Mary, who were especially poor now that Joseph was temporarily not working in his trade, were able to use these gifts when they were sent by God into the foreign culture of Egypt. Because it would have been difficult for Joseph to establish himself there, I am very confident that the gold, frankincense, and myrrh were the resources they used to support themselves until they finally made their way back to Nazareth.¹ Gold Gold is associated with a king. When Joseph was in Egypt as the vice-regent next to the king, he was given a gold neck-chain. Daniel was also given a gold chain as he was made third ruler in the kingdom of Babylon. Kings in the Bible had crowns and scepters of gold. Solomon had gold all over the place, illustrated by the fact that a description of Solomon's wealth in 1 Kings 10 mentions gold ten times. Because gold was the gift for a king, Matthew is telling us that Jesus is King. Receiving Christ as King When you come to Jesus for salvation, you must acknowledge Him as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10). You come as a subject to a King, not as an equal. Lord Nelson, the great admiral, always treated his vanquished opponents with great kindness and courtesy. After one of his naval victories, the defeated admiral was brought aboard Nelson's ship and onto Nelson's quarterdeck. Knowing Nelson's reputation for courtesy, this defeated admiral thought that he could take advantage of Nelson's courtesy, and so he advanced across the quarterdeck with his hand outstretched as if to shake hands with an equal. But Nelson's hand remained by his side as he said, "Your sword first, sir, and then your hand." And so it is: Before we can be friends with Christ, we must be subjects of His Lordship.² Myrrh Myrrh was the gift that spoke of Christ's mortality, since it was used to embalm the bodies of the dead. From the very beginning, it was clear that He would die. A famous picture by Holman Hunt illustrates the fact that He was destined to die: Jesus is seen as a little boy in the carpenter shop. As the sun is setting in the west and Jesus stands at the door stretching His arms after a hard day's work, the sun casts a shadow on the back wall in the form of a big cross. That was Holman Hunt's way of saying He was born to die as a mortal.³ Frankincense The great scholar and early church father, Origen, said, "This is a gift to God." Frankincense speaks of deity, because incense was always offered to God as a pleasing fragrance. In the Old Testament, it was stored in the front of the Temple in a special chamber and was taken and added to the offerings and used in front of the Holy of Holies so that the sweet savor would rise to God. Exodus 30:34-38 tells us that the incense was for God, not the people. Ezekiel 16:18 also identified it as belonging to God. And so the Wise Men came with the gold saying He was a King, with the myrrh saying He was a man destined to die, and with the incense saying He was God. Now maybe they weren't aware of the complete significance of those gifts, but we do see a beautiful symbolism as we look back at the event. Finally, let me just mention...

V. THE AVOIDANCE (v. 12)

"And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."

God took over and thwarted Herod's plot, wanting these wonderful Magi to take the message of the new King, the Messiah, back to Persia. He not only protectively cared for the Savior, but for the Magi

as well. And in the next lesson, we will see how God cares for the little family as they go into Egypt.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What did Herod do which implied that the Child was more than a human king?
2. Who were the chief priests with whom Herod consulted? By the time of Jesus, what had they become?
3. Though the aristocratic priests would have generally been antagonistic to Christ, what kind of priests in the priestly hierarchy were most likely amongst those who became "obedient to the faith" (Ac. 6:7)?
4. Who were the scribes?
5. Describe Herod's motivation behind learning where the Christ would be born.
6. According to John 7:40-42, from where did many of the Jews expect the Christ to come?
7. What Old Testament prophecy predicted the birthplace of Christ?
8. What is the addition that Matthew makes at the end of the prophecy? How does it describe the promised Governor?
9. Why can the Messiah not be an attitude, or the perfection of a Jewish kingdom? Who were the ones who were convinced that the Messiah was a person?
10. What did the indifference of the chief priests and the scribes ultimately develop into?
11. What are the three responses to Christ? By whom is each response exemplified in the account of Christ's birth?
12. In what did Herod pretend to be interested in his discussion with the Wise Men? What action of his proved his real intention?
13. What are the two divine elements that led the Wise Men to the house in Bethlehem in which Jesus was residing?
14. What are the implications of the family being in a house rather than a stable when the Wise Men arrived?
15. Why is the baby Jesus mentioned first in connection with His mother?
16. Kneeling down and worshiping is a response reserved for whom?
17. What is one of the greatest expressions of worship?
18. What were the gifts that the Wise Men brought used for? What is their significance in relation to Christ?
19. Besides their personal welfare, what is another reason that God desired to protect the Wise Men from Herod?

Pondering the Principles

1. Are you among those who seek certain information from the Bible to be used for your own ends, rather than in the manner God designed it? For instance, if you feel that wealth and success is of primary importance, do you look for the verses that emphasize the blessing and victory available in God, and at the same time overlook the mention of contentment and trials that are part and parcel of every Christian's life? Make sure that the conclusions you draw from Scripture and apply in your life take into consideration the context and the true intent of the inspired writer.
2. Why do you think that indifference to Christ may be worse than hostility towards Him? Why did Jesus condemn the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:14-19? Which response would probably think about Christ more? Are you aware of your spiritual health? What would be the danger in being self-deceived into thinking that by attending a church, you were automatically a Christian? If you had a brain tumor and didn't know it, but were taking aspirin for it because you thought it was a headache, would you call a doctor? To have Christ do His necessary work in our lives, we must be aware that the Great Physician can meet the needs which we have. Are you willing to let Christ give you a routine spiritual checkup, even though it may mean some radical surgery? List and pray about those

things you would like Him to operate on.

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