

Message 4: The Commitment of Worship

SUGGESTED PASSAGE: MATTHEW 2:1-12

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, 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.” ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They 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 out of you shall come forth a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.”

⁷Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸And 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.” ⁹After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

MESSAGE GOAL:

The purpose of this message is to understand that God is worthy of our full commitment to Him. Such a commitment will mean a commitment of our time, a commitment of our talents, a commitment of our treasures, and a commitment of our trust. In our worship, we bring all these before Him.

INTRODUCTION:

Some passages of Scripture are too rich in content to be limited to study at one time of the year. This passage about the visit of the wise men is normally looked at only during the Christmas season. But it has a message about worship that is relevant all year long.

When you need to determine the value of your home, the person you need to call is the appraiser. He or she has been trained to evaluate what a piece of property is worth. They consider the neighborhood in which your home is located, take into account its age and condition, and carefully inspect every inch of your dwelling, paying attention to all the modifications and upgrades you have made or the places where neglect has brought about deterioration. Once they have all that data in hand, they can make an estimate of the value of your home.

In worship, something like that comes into play. When I think of appraisers and appraising, I think of worship. For God has invited each of us to appraise Him—to examine Him and assess His worth. When we do that, He knows the conclusion to which we must come. He knows that in all honesty we can never give a low appraisal of God and His work. In fact, the Bible instructs us to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). That is an appraisal. He says, in effect, “come and check it out for yourself. Find out whether I am worthy of praise. Make an appraisal of My actions, My character and My very being, and see whether you think I am deserving of praise and worship.”

God is asking us for a commitment, and He can do that because He can be appraised. And when we appraise Him, we discover that He is abundantly worthy and deserving of everything we can offer Him—everything He asks from us. Such an appraisal calls for an ever-deepening commitment to our God. One of the outcomes of spending time in God’s presence is that we discover that our appraisal will lead us to worship with all our hearts.

When we look at the story of the wise men (the Magi) who come from halfway around the world to kneel before the infant King of kings, as found in Matthew 2:1-12, we can learn some



important lessons about the commitments we need to make in relation to worship. Let's look at the four crucial commitments of worship that we find in this story.

SERMON POINTS:

1. GOD IS WORTHY OF A COMMITMENT OF YOUR TIME.

- You cannot worship without a commitment of your time.
- The Magi made a long and time-consuming journey to come and worship Jesus.
- The example they set for us should be clear: they were willing to cover whatever distance was necessary to get them to the place where the Savior was.
- The Magi were busy people, with many responsibilities, and yet they set everything aside and adjusted their schedules to seek Him.
- David wrote in the Psalms that he meditated on God day and night. In Psalm 145 he says that every day he blessed the name of the Lord.
- Making the effort to come and worship with others will mean making a choice about how you are going to use your time.

2. GOD IS WORTHY OF A COMMITMENT OF YOUR TALENTS.

- We commonly refer to the Magi as "the wise men." They were intelligent and highly educated in the areas of science and law. They were scholars who carefully studied the movement of heavenly bodies, similar to astronomers or astrologers.
- The Magi were highly religious people, but their religion was not the true faith. Still, when they came to understand who Jesus was, they bowed down to Him.
 - * They were rich and educated and powerful, but these Magi bowed down before a toddler.
 - * They overcame their religious misunderstandings because of what the true God revealed to them.
- When we come before Jesus, we must humble ourselves as the wise men did.

- * We must put our own successes and gifts and talents on the altar, bowing down in humility and offering them to God.
- * We should give honor where honor is due, but remember that even the most esteemed must bow before Him.
- * We should not be threatened by the Herods who have power in our lives. The wise men feared God and His will more than they feared Herod.
- * You are never too much of a big shot that you do not need to bow down!

3. GOD IS WORTHY OF A COMMITMENT OF YOUR TREASURES.

- In verse 11, the wise men offer very significant gifts to Jesus.
 - * Gold is the most valuable commodity that exists. It is the gift you give to royalty. Through this gift, they recognize His kingship.
 - * Frankincense is a fragrant scent that would be poured on the altar whenever an offering was made to God (see Leviticus 2:2). It covered the smell of the burning of the sacrificial animal and transformed it into a sweeter smell. Through this gift, they recognized His divinity. He is the One who makes us sweet in the presence of God through His own sacrifice.
 - * Myrrh is both an embalming fluid and a painkiller. On the cross Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh (Mark 15:23), but He refused it. He went through the agony of the crucifixion without any pain relievers. Through this gift, they recognized that He was born to die.
 - * When you know who Jesus is, you bring your gifts and treasures with you and lay them at His feet.
 - * The Magi give their best because they are giving to the best.

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4. GOD IS WORTHY OF A COMMITMENT OF YOUR TRUST.

- The Magi see the unique star—a personalized star—and they know it is like no other.
- Numbers 24:17 said that there would be a star that would come from the nation of Israel for all God's people.
- Theologians believe that this star was a manifestation of God's shekinah glory—a visible manifestation of the presence of God. A place where God shows up and you can see His glory.
- The Magi respond to the revelation of God that they see in the unique star.
- The star doesn't give them all the details. But they recognize it as a sign. They don't have all the specific information they desire, but they take a step of faith to follow.
- In fact, the Magi get further guidance to find Jesus from sinners. Sometimes Jesus uses sinners to help us get to Him.
- Sometimes guidance is supernatural, but sometimes it comes from a very natural source. God uses people.
- Then God's guidance comes in a dream to warn the Magi. God's guidance is not only for leading, but for protection.
- God's direction often takes us in a different direction than we planned on going. You have to be ready for your plans to be interrupted.
- At every step the wise men have to trust in God. And to obey His leading.
- God is worthy of our time, our talents, our treasures and our trust.

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

CROSS THE GOAL LINE

The Magi were a little like a football player who is trying to get to the end zone. The great player is the one who is always aiming for the end zone and making every effort to get there. Nothing can stop them. They will push through, using every ounce of strength to cross that goal line. The Magi went through many struggles along the way to reach their goal of finding Jesus, and so should we. Keep your eye on the ball. Keep your eyes on the prize.

HELD HOSTAGE

When the American hostages came home from Iran on January 20, 1981, the first thing they did when they got off the plane was to bow down and kiss the ground. No matter what kind of achievement or status they had before their capture, they put their lips on that dirty tarmac. They knew where they were and where they had been. If we stop bowing down, it is because we have forgotten where we have been. It is because we have forgotten that we have been hostages in Satan's territory.

THE TAJ MAHAL

The Taj Mahal in India is one of the wonders of the world. It is literally breathtaking when you get your first full glimpse of its magnificence. Historians tell us that it took 20,000 men to build it, and that the construction lasted 22 years. Its purpose? A gift of the shah of India to his wife. A powerful statement of love and commitment. When the architect finally finished the building, the shah had him blinded so that he could never build another building like it. There is no price tag or time limit on a gift given for the one you love. Jesus has given us a never-to-be-repeated gift that makes this wondrous palace pale in comparison. He has given Himself.

QUOTES BY DR. TONY EVANS:

"We live in the time of instant generation. Instant oatmeal. Instant cereal. Microwavable food. You pop it in, pop it out, and you have got it. God's presence doesn't work that way. The effort and the wait are worth your while and worth your effort."

"Is there any skill, any victory, any talent, any knowledge, any degree, any giftedness that you still own? Or have you bowed down? Have you thrown them all down at His feet in recognition of who He is?"

"Trust me, God has got a hundred and one ways to buckle your knees. That is why the Bible says to humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God and He will exalt you. Because if you don't humble yourself, He will have to do the humbling for you."

"The will of God knows exactly where it is going, down to the particular stall."

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