

## The What and the Why of the Wise Men at Christmas

**Matthew 2:1-11** Why are they here and what do they mean to Christmas? Understand that these guys are placed into the story for a purpose; we are supposed to know them and who they are as well as what they are.

### 1. Magi lore

- ✓ There are all kinds of myths and assumptions surrounding these guys. Notice it doesn't say in the text that they were kings, that there were only three, that they rode in on camels. Some say they are the three representatives of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth.
  - ✓ They actually acquired names in church history: Gaspar, Balthasar, and Melchior. The Magi were a people group whose morals and practices elevated their status through numerous kingdoms to the position of King makers.
  - ✓ Throughout the Babylonian, Median, Persian, Parthian, and Achaemenid dynasties, no one became king without their approval. They were trusted to wisely choose a successive king, thus the name Wise Men.
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### 2. The Magi are all over the Bible, not just in Matthew, Jeremiah 39:3

- ✓ **Acts 13:8** "Sorcerer" is the English translation of Magus of Magi.
  - ☞ **Daniel 5:11** The word isn't actually "magician," but the Hebrew word for Magi referring to a class of people. This is how they knew about Jesus and His star.
  - ✓ These guys were the king makers of the middle east; they are pagans and star worshippers, but Daniel became their chief for several decades.
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### 3. The Magi were a powerful ruling class.

- ✓ I think we mostly consider these Wise Men to be a benign trio dressed in fancy clothes, riding camels, harmless, and hapless wonderers.
  - ✓ **Verses 2-3** Doesn't fit the text and it doesn't fit history; these guys were major power brokers known throughout the world for their prowess.
  - ✓ King makers of the most powerful kingdoms up until the time of Christ. They represented the combination of our senate and supreme court. They were Parthians, and The Parthians had had 3 major wars with the Romans in the 60 years leading up to Jesus' birth.
  - ✓ For these Magi to ride into Jerusalem would have been like an invasion which is why Jerusalem is so stirred by them. This stirring tells us several things. There's almost no way there were three of them; they wouldn't have been riding alone, flanked possibly by several thousand mounted soldiers along with numerous servants, slaves, cooks, etc.
  - ✓ Tells us they wouldn't have been on camels because this adventure would have military consequences and threats, so, they would have been on steeds of warfare, horses.
  - ✓ **Verse 3** The word there is "Terrified." Of course, Herod was terrified!
  - ✓ "King of Jews" was Herod's title; he bought it from Rome; now these power brokers are demanding to see the real "King of the Jews."
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#### 4. "Following Yonder Star"

- ✓ What was the star these Magi followed? **Numbers 24:17** The word in Hebrew is used to refer to actual stars, but also to angels and even to God Himself.
  - ✓ It has unusual characteristics that don't fit any celestial body. Its characteristics eliminate most options except for this being an angel or angels or the shekinah glory of God Himself.
  - ✓ Remember **Matthew 24:30**; it's otherwise described as a bright shining of His glory announcing His coming. What this appears to be is a similar shining and announcement, albeit smaller and unique to the Magi.
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#### 5. The Magi's mission

- ✓ They weren't as opposed to Herod's fears, they're on a political mission, they were there to identify and worship the King.
  - ✓ Hats off to the prophet Daniel because he so instilled in these Gentile men that they needed to be looking for the ultimate King so that 500 years later they were still ready.
  - ✓ **Verse 11**, "the house" Not the stable or manger; worshipped, the word for worship is to lay completely flat on your face. What you are seeing including the gifts and accepting the worship is the way they set apart kings.
- ↪ Christmas always brings us face to face with this King and there are always three responses to Him.
- 1) Herod, see Jesus as a threat to your ambition, interfering with your plans pushing His will upon what you've already decided to do. You resent His placement as the ultimate king.
  - 2) Like the Jews, could tell you where He was to be born, saw the response of others like the Magi to a sign, but they themselves don't even bother to walk 6 miles to see Him, indifference.
  - 3) Response of the Magi. When they saw His star, they rejoiced!
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