

## IX – MAGI FROM THE EAST

### LEAD OFF

Let's play a game of Myth Busters **(IMAGE OF TRADITION NATIVITY SCENE EDITED)**

Let's put up an image of a traditional nativity scene. Okay, you have all of your traditional elements included in this scene.

- I'm going to ask you a question, and then we are going to vote... Truth or Myth.

Okay, here we go...

1. The baby's name in the crib is Jesus
  - a. Truth
2. Jesus was born on December 25<sup>th</sup>.
  - a. Most likely Myth
    - i. Christmas wasn't even celebrated until about the 7<sup>th</sup> century and even then it's suggested that Christmas was celebrated to supplant pagan festivals that happened during that season.
    - ii. We see in the Gospel of Luke that shepherds were watching their flocks at night when Jesus was born. They wouldn't have been doing that in December, but in Spring. They would have been watching their flocks during lambing season in March or April.
      1. I'd like to suggest Jesus was born on April 3<sup>rd</sup>... my birthday.
3. There were wisemen present at the time of Jesus' birth
  - a. Myth
    - i. Most nativity scenes have the wisemen depicted at the scene of Jesus' birth, but we know from Biblical record that King Herod ordered to have all boys under the age of 2 killed after he had calculated the time that the star had been guiding the wisemen. It had to be sometime during Jesus' first 2 years, but highly unlikely that the Magi from the east would be able to travel so far in enough time to get at his birth.
4. There are three wisemen that came and saw Jesus as traditionally depicted.
  - a. Myth, but could be truth
    - i. Often nativity scenes depict 3 wisemen, but that's not explicitly stated in Biblical record. The Bible doesn't mention how many of them there were, only uses the plural version of the word.. so we know at least 2.
    - ii. Many have often thought there were 3 because there were three gifts, but that's not necessarily proof that there were 3.
5. These wisemen are kings.
  - a. Cannot be proven as either Truth or Myth
    - i. Some would suggest there is a Scripture in the OT that validates these men are actual kings, but it's not specific, and you'd have to read into that verse or jump through a lot of ridiculous theological hurdles to prove your point.
    - ii. I always subscribe to the method of interpreting Scripture that if it's not super crystal or confirmed somewhere else, it's probably not something you want to wager your life savings on.

Our last one jumps away from the nativity scene a little.

1. The term Xmas is an attempt by modern secular culture to remove “Christ” from the holiday season?
  - a. Myth
    - i. The usage of the term Xmas is actually as old as Christianity itself. It’s origins lie in the fact that the first letter of the Greek word for “Christ” is ‘chi’ and the Greek letter for ‘chi’ is represented by a symbol similar to the letter “X” in the modern Roman alphabet. Hence ‘xmas’ is indeed perfectly legitimate abbreviation for the word “Christmas” that’s been used for centuries.
    - ii. This isn’t tell you that you don’t have a right to miffed at the term Xmas in modern day, but it’s meant to communicate that it’s original meaning was not offensive.

## SERIES INTRO

Hence the name of our new Christmas series we are launching today called: iX.

iX is short for iXmas or iChristmas.

iX takes a different approach to Christmas by looking through the lens of those people that were actually there. It’s a way to see Christmas as you’ve never seen it before.

- Obviously in the Birth of Christ we have a lot going on.
- The overall picture of the nativity scenes and the lyrics of our favorite Christmas carols bring warmth to souls, but what we have to understand that even though it was a calm night in the physical realm, the spiritual realm was armed for massive war with eternal implications for all mankind.
- Darkness understood that the greatest light to ever enter the world was there.
  - It’s like those dramatic movies scenes when someone says, “I think it’s coming for us.”
  - \*Dramatic Pause\* - No, Steve, it’s already here.

Today we are going to hone in on a group of individuals that are a part of the story, but aren’t centrally focused on too often... the magi from the East, also known more traditionally as the wisemen.

## THE MAGI

The Gospel of Matthew is the only account of Jesus’ birth that mention the Magi from the East. The word Magi is where we would later get the English word magic.

- So what exactly do we know about these guys...
  - PAUSE SILENTLY
  - That’s about it. That’s all we know for sure.
- There is a lot of conjecture and speculation as to their royalty, whereabouts, and origins, but most it seems the Scriptures gives us what we really need to know... their purpose.

Whoever these people are, wherever they come from... they had a distinct purpose... worship the King.

Matthew 2:1-12 NLT

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, 2 “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.”

3 King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem.

4 He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

5 “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote:

6 ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,

are not least among the ruling cities of Judah,

for a ruler will come from you

who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’ ”

7 Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. 8 Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

9 After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! 11 They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

12 When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

## TWO KINGS

So the song talks about three kings, but it’s obvious that there really are only two legitimate proven kings in the context of this story: King Herod and King Jesus.

- The objective here is choose which one you want to submit to
  - You have one king in King Herod that ordered the massacre of innocent children later on in Matthew 2... a king that rules by force, aggression, and cruelty.
    - A king that slaughtered the last remnants of the dynasty that ruled before him, put to death half of the Sanhedrin, killed 300 court officers, executed his wife and mother-in-law and three sons, and as he lay dying arranged for all of the notable men of Jerusalem to be assembled and killed as soon as his own death was announced, so people would weep on the day of his death instead of rejoice.
  - OR, you have King Jesus, who right now isn’t to intimidating as a baby, and doesn’t have any political and governing authority.

- He's not heir to any earthly throne and he was just born to two poor people that couldn't find a good hotel to birth their baby in
- But you have a King that will grow to rule with love, compassion, and the cross of his own sufferings.
- Who was made to suffer and did not threaten, but rather bore the sins of the world in his body on the cross.

Seems that the decision would be easy, right? Then why in the world is the wise men the only one's that go to worship Jesus? Why would the entire population of Jerusalem rather stay under the domain of King Herod?

- Why does the townspeople not give a care about the fact that the real King of Kings has been born?
- They are more worried about his arrival than excited.

The arrival of the Magi seems to alert the town of Jerusalem of the arrival of Jesus and there are two ways to react: Indifference or Worship.

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## 1. INDIFFERENCE

The craziest reaction to me is indifference.

- The Jewish religious leaders who knew all of the Scriptures knew that all of the conditions were being met for the arrival of the Messiah.
- Everything that was talked about was happening, and they didn't care!
- Why were they in Jerusalem instead of high tailing their lazy carcasses to Bethlehem to see what all the fuss was about?
  - Even if it was all wrong, they would have at least been curious enough to check it out.
  - It wasn't just the religious scholars, Matthew gives the impression that the whole town knew and they did nothing!
  - The Magi from the East traveled these great distances and there they are right next door doing nothing about it.

Seems crazy that people would respond to the King with indifference, but is it really all the different from today?

- If we heard that Jesus the King of Kings was walking the streets of Rogersville (panhandling for New Life Church), how many people would actually get up and go check it out?
  - "I'll just see if I can buy a picture on Amazon."
  - "Ah, but the playoffs start today."
  - "I'll just check social media."
  - "But, the shoe sell is this direction."
- Okay, so maybe Jesus isn't going to show up physically like that.
  - But there are times that God wants us to do something
    - or get excited about something,
    - or go talk to someone,
    - or give something to someone,
    - or help someone
  - And we are ... eh... indifferent.

- Ehh, prayer doesn't sound all that fun.
- Ehh, I'll let someone who makes more money take care of that need.
- We become indifferent to the voice of God pushing us to do something he wants us to do.

## THE REASON FOR INDIFFERENCE

The reason why indifference exist... hang with me this is was a punch in the gut to me... we are indifferent to God even as Christians, because we live as though there is no King upon the throne but us.

- We are our own king.
  - It's about our time, our schedule, our resources, our purgative, our comfort.
  - God forbid that he asks for any of those things in a sacrificial degree or we maybe become unhinged.
    - Why do we become unhinged, because we made ourselves king.
    - "God can't ask for my time, I'm the boss."
    - "God can't ask for my money, I'm the boss."

We may not feel indifferent to God... until we are pushed out of our comfort zones and asked to release the grasp of something in our life sacrificially.

These people in Jerusalem didn't need a King of Kings... they were their own king.

- They already possessed the knowledge and resources they needed to the point where not it had become an inconvenience for them to travel to Bethlehem to see if it was true.

The wisemen got it. They response to Jesus wasn't indifference, it was worship.

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## (2) WORSHIP

The only thing that the Magi wanted to do was worship.

- That was their intention from the beginning.
- That's why they traveled such great distances from the East
- That's why they followed the star.

Whether they were kings or not... we don't know, but they came to worship the King of Kings and bring him gifts.

- The Magi weren't concerned about their own comfort, their own agenda, or their own anything.
- They inconvenienced themselves across thousands of miles, so they could bring gifts to Jesus and worship the King.
- They were not so concerned about being on the throne, as they were making sure that God was on the throne.

The Magi don't seem to hold a large significant piece in the story line of Jesus' birth.

- Only one of the four Gospels mentions them, and Matthew doesn't spend a lot of time setting up the scene.

- So why even bring it up...?
  - Because the Magi are far more important than we think.
  - The Magi represent us.
  - The Magi were the representation that Jesus wasn't just God of the Jews, He was God of all.
  - The Magi represented that God invited everyone to come worship Him.
  - And that is the hope of the Christmas season... that God isn't limited to just reaching the next door neighbors, he's capable of reaching magi from the eastern lands... he's capable of reaching the world.
  - He uses these nobodies from the East to worship him. He reaches out to the nobodies.. the us.

## CLOSING

Will you let Jesus... the King of King rule your life?

- Will you approach him from a place of worship instead of hostility or indifference?
- Can you posture your life to place God on the throne?

As many of you know I spent Thanksgiving week in the hospital.

- Something happened while I was there that was probably one of the more scarier moments of my life.
- The doctors or nurses overhydrated me.
  - They pumped too many liquids too fast creating a condition called water poisoning.
- I've never struggled with high blood pressure and all of the sudden mine began to spike.
  - Every time the nurse took a new reading, my blood pressure was higher.
  - Until it peaked at 190/130 which is what they call stroke zone.
    - This is where you either have a stroke, seizure, or heart attack... take your pick.

They gave me medication and it wasn't working.

- What can you do? Just sit there and hope that if something does result from this the doctors can fix it.
- Sometimes it takes being put in a situation where you have no control to realize who's been in control the whole time.
- I got out of my hospital bed and pushed my stupid IV cart around the hallway for what must have been 20 times through the whole floor praying until I ran out of words to say.

God is on the throne... whether we like it or not. He doesn't necessarily need to be put there by us. We don't have that authority.

- We can either live like He is and trust Him, or live like he's not and be miserable.
- He desires to sit on the throne of our lives.
- Worship is living with the reality that God is on the throne.