

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS: THE MAGI

(Epiphany 2019)

THE EXAMINATION

- ___ 1. The star at Jesus birth was prophesied in the Old Testament
- ___ 2. How many things are wrong with the song title: “We Three Kings of Orient Are”?
- ___ 3. The Magi came to the stable after the shepherds
- ___ 4. The Magi went to Jerusalem assuming a “king” would be born in the capital city and (King) Herod would be aware of the birth
- ___ 5. The religious leaders Herod summoned told the Magi where Jesus would be born
- ___ 6. The Bible tells us the Magi arrived on camels
- ___ 7. When the Magi came, they saw Jesus and Mary; the Bible doesn’t mention Joseph being present
- ___ 8. Frankincense and Myrrh are perfumes from tree saps in either powder or oil form
- ___ 9. Frankincense and Myrrh were considered more precious than gold
- ___ 10. Herod gained much of his wealth by trading in spices
- ___ 11. Magi did not tell Herod about the child as Herod requested because:
 - a. An angel told them not to
 - b. Mary and Joseph encouraged them not to
 - c. They were in a hurry to get back
 - d. They were warned in a dream
- ___ 12. The Magi took the same route home they took coming to Bethlehem

THE EXPLANATION

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.”

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their

treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. (Matthew 2:1-12)

A. Magi – Who they are

1. Magi specialized in astronomy, divination, magic, astrology and medicine
2. These “spiritual advisors” often acted as ambassadors for their king

B. Magi – How many there were

1. Current tradition places their number at three
2. Early tradition pictures a large caravan

C. Magi – Where they are from

1. Persia [Today’s Iraq]
2. Babylon [Today’s Iran]
3. Sheba [Today’s Yemen] (Isaiah 60:6; Psalm 72:4-5, 8-10,15)

D. Magi – The star they followed was perceived as a “spiritual” event

“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star rises from Jacob; a scepter comes forth from Israel.” (Numbers 24:17)

1. A Planetary Conjunction
2. A Comet
3. A Nova

E. Magi – The gifts they brought (1 Kings 10:1-2,10)

“When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relation to the name of the Lord, she came...arriving at Jerusalem with a large caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold and precious stones...She gave the king 120 talents of gold, large quantities of spices, and precious stones. Never again were so many spices brought in...” (1 Kings 10:1-2,10)

1. Gold was an expensive royal gift, signifying Jesus’ kingship
2. Frankincense was burned on the altar; signifying Jesus’ priesthood
3. Myrrh underscores his kingship as the “*anointed one*.” (cf. Psalm 45:7; Songs 3:6)

THE ELUCIDATION

A. Underscores the impact Christ’s coming had on the spiritual world

B. Underscores the impact of Christ’s coming on the Gentile world

“And Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.” (Isaiah 60:3)

C. The Magi’s visit changed everything and opened the door for you and me