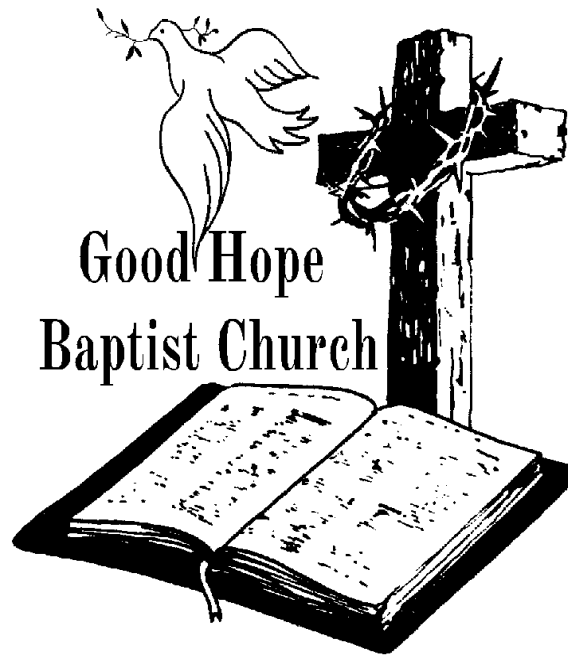


The Star of Christmas

Matthew 2:10-11



Good Hope
Baptist Church

Living Together In The Love Of God

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FOCAL Read Together Matthew 2:10-11 ^(KJV) When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Webster's dictionary defines the word MYTH - m y t h - as "a traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon". In other words, "myth" literally means something that is the *opposite of truth*. A fable, a legend, an embellishment, but not the literal truth. It's an "interesting story that was created to explain what really happened". To illustrate, you can use the word "myth" in sentences like:

It is a **myth** that money brings happiness.
Contrary to popular **myth**, this not a ghost house.

A **myth** is an interesting tale, something that springs up in place of but cloaks the real truth.

Illustrate Some people build their lives on **myth**. For instance, back in the 1990's when the riots occurred in Los Angeles an interviewer for a local radio station talked with one of the looters. This man had just stepped out of a record store carrying an arm full of stolen cassette tapes. The interviewer asked "What have you taken?" The man replied, "Gospel tapes. I love Jesus!"

Did the man really love Jesus? He said he did, but he didn't.

Illustrate I also read the other day about a guide dog named "Lucky". His trainer said, "**Lucky is basically a darn good guide dog. He just needs a little brush-up on some elementary skills, that's all.**" To date this guide dog has led all four of his previous owners to their death. The trainer said, "**I admit it's not an impressive record on paper. He led his first owner in front of a bus, and the second off the end of a pier. He actually pushed his third owner off a railway platform just as the Cologne-to-Frankfurt express was approaching, and he walked his fourth owner into heavy traffic, before abandoning him and running away to safety. But, apart from epileptic fits, he has a lovely temperament. And guide dogs are difficult to train these days.**"

A guide dog that guides its blind owners into their deaths is no guide dog. A man who steals Gospel tapes is no Christian. These are "myths", not realities.

Jesus said "**If you love Me you will keep My commandments**" (John 14:15, 23; 15:10). He said "**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you**" (John 13:34). The Apostle John said that this was a foundational teaching of Christ. He said "**I am not writing you a new commandment, but one that we have from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to His commands** (2 John 1:5-

6). It is not "love" to steal from your brother, nor to speak ill of your brother, nor to hate your brother. This young man doesn't love Jesus - that's a myth. He *thinks* he loves Jesus, but there is no love in his heart if he robs his brother. Jesus said "**If anyone loves Me, he will OBEY My teaching**" (John 14:23). The early Church understood this foundational teaching. That's why their assemblies were marked with Biblical obedient love. The Bible says "**all the believers were together and held all things common. They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need. Every day they devoted to meeting together, and broke bread from house to house, eating their food with joy and humility, praising God and getting along with one another**" (Acts 2:44-47).

1 The Biblical account we're looking at today is true, not myth. The popular telling of the Bible story has a few "myths" in it – but these myths aren't in the Bible. We have all sang

*We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar.
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.*

*O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect Light.*

and we've gone to childrens Christmas programs where three "Wise Kings" show up at the manger of Jesus. The

truth however is that

The Bible doesn't call the "**Magi**" who come to see Jesus *kings*, nor does the Bible say that there were three of them. They brought three gifts to the child Jesus, but the Bible doesn't say how many "**Magi**" there were.

Dr. Charles Stanley suggested that this unknown number of "**Magi**" were very probably astronomers who lived somewhere in **Mesopotamia near the city of Babylon** (In Touch, December 2011 pg 8). Five hundred years before the birth of Christ to Mary, the Prophet Daniel lived in Babylon and spoke about the Coming King. In **Daniel 9:24-26** he prophesied that **the Messiah - God in the flesh - would be crucified after 69 Sabbatical Years (or 483 years) after the decree was given to rebuild Jerusalem.** These Magi knew of Daniel's prophecy of the Coming of Messiah and His subsequent death. They had been watching the skies for signs of the Savior, knowing that the Scripture says that God put the stars in the skies not only to provide light for the earth, but also "**to serve as signs**" (**Genesis 1:14**). These "**Magi**" or Wise Men came seeking the Messiah. The Scripture tells us:

Context **Matthew 2:1-2** ^(KJV) **Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.**

One of the BIG MYTHS in the world today is the myth of "inclusivism". This myth teaches that there are many ways to God.

People believe that good Christians and good Buddhists and good Hindus and good Muslims are all going to the same Heaven. Though Jesus Christ clearly said:

John 14:6 ^(KJV) "**... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**"

and the Apostles – those who sat under His teaching – affirmed:

1 John 5:11-12 ^(HCSB) **And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn't have the Son of God does not have life.**

People still – both inside and outside the Church – believe that there is hope of salvation outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says:

Hebrews 10:14-20 ^(HCSB) **For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified. 15 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. For after He says: 16 This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws on their hearts and write them on their minds, 17 He adds: I will never again remember their sins and their lawless acts. 18 Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. 19 Therefore, brothers, since we have boldness to enter**

the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way He has opened for us through the curtain (that is, His flesh) ...

It is “by one offering” man has been saved. The Bible says that “**God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16).** The Bible testifies again and again that there is no other way by which someone may be saved from damnation – only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The world trots out that worldly question,

"Well, what about those who have never heard? How can they be saved if Jesus is the only Way unto God, and no one tells them about Jesus?"

Look to the Magi!

a God has promised in His Word that those who seek Him will find Him, those who want salvation will be saved. These men were in a far country, far away from the Holy Land and immersed in the Babylonian Pagan and godless culture. They had no access to Bibles. They were men who studied nature, the stars, that which the theologian calls “God's Book of Nature”. They studied these things, and by studying them realized that there was a God and that He was not represented in Babylonian religion. He is not in the lotus blossom with Buddha, nor is he found in the Tao or the other books. These Magi began to search for God, for they saw His handiwork in nature.

b God is immense - He is everywhere - and God sees the human heart. God led these Magi to where Jesus was so that they could worship Him and Him alone. God watches every soul, and He watched these Magi. Though there was no Billy Graham or Chuck Swindoll or Charles Stanley near them, God moved things about in response to their seeking hearts. God caused a star to shine brighter than any other, giving the Magi such a clear sign that they were led to Jerusalem to ask:

Context Matthew 2:2 ^(KJV) ... Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

These men were not just giving gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the Lord. They were there **to worship Him**. They brought to the Lord the gift of themselves!

A missionary to Africa explained to the children in her Bible class the true meaning of Christmas, that it's not about giving gifts but about celebrating what God gave to us when He came into this world. When Christmas day came a young boy brought the missionary the most beautiful seashell she had ever seen. **"Where did you ever find such a beautiful shell?"** The boy told her that he had to travel a long way – all the way to the coast on foot – to find the shell. The missionary said, **"What a beautiful gift! I hate that you had to go so far to get it."** The boy replied, **"long walk was part of the gift".**

God came a long way for us. He came from immortality

to mortality. The Bible tells us in **Philippians 2:6** that **Jesus Christ always had the nature of God**. We are told in

Colossians 1:16-17 ^(HCSB) **For everything was created by {the Lord Jesus}, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together.**

He came from a throne to a manger. He came from the adoration of angels to being despised of man. He came from the loving caress of Heaven's hosts to the lowest place possible so that He could save all who will believe in Him!

For the Magi, the long road and their surrendered lives was part of their gifts. For the Lord, His long road and His surrendered life was part of the gift. Those who are saved are drawn to the one and only Savior and are obedient to Him.

2 Another prevalent myth that Christians often hear is that the world will accept Christianity if we will only compromise with it. Everyone has seen the COEXIST bumper stickers. Those who put these things on their cars say “If all religions would just compromise, we could all get along”. But that's not true. We read:



Context Matthew 2:3-8 ^(KJV) **When Herod the king had heard [these things], he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 6 And thou Bethlehem, [in] the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. 7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. 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.**

Christians are not, by nature, belligerent or warring. We were from the beginning commanded by our Lord Jesus:

Luke 6:27-35 ^(HCSB) **... Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If anyone hits you on the cheek, offer the other also. And if anyone takes away your coat, don't hold back your shirt either. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and from one who takes your things, don't ask for them back. 31 Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them. 32 If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. 33 If you do what is good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. 34 And if you lend to those from**

whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to be repaid in full.

35 But love your enemies, do what is good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is gracious to the ungrateful and evil.

Love is the Law that drives us. As Jesus was driven from Heaven to a manger, from glory to Nazareth, we are driven to love. But the world does not operate according to these rules.

Our Lord told us that **“we would be hated for His name's sake” (John 15:18; Mark 13:9-13)**. Why? Because the world and the worldly loves power – but for us there is no power but of God.

Herod heard through the grapevine that our Lord and Savior was born. All of Jerusalem was talking about these Eastern Magi, and how they were looking for **“Him that is born King of the Jews”**. The lost soul does not want the Lord to reign over him. Herod despised the thought of it! **“A king that is not me? Oh no – we'll not have that!”** That's the sign of lostness, and unwillingness to follow the Lord. **“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19)**. Or as Jesus told the rich young ruler:

Luke 18:22-23 (HCSB) ... Sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.” 23 After he heard this, he became extremely sad, because he was very

rich.

Sell it all? Give it all away? Oh no - I MUST BE IN CHARGE! The Bible says **“Herod was troubled”**, and every unconverted heart is **“troubled”** when Jesus calls them to follow Him. Yet the Way of salvation is to follow Jesus. True faith, like the Magi, goes where God leads. **Abraham in Chaldea** will not be blessed, but **Abraham following God to the Promised Land is blessed**.

God followed us to earth. **“Of His own free will He gave up all He had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness” (Philippians 2:7)**. Jesus Christ did this to save us, and did so by **dying for us**.

As Christ gave Himself for me, I give myself to Him. This is the way of salvation. The lost pay lip service – like Herod – to worshiping Jesus. The saved don't mind stepping out of their comfort zones to worship the Lord.

Herod *said* that he wanted the Magi to find Jesus and then **“come back and tell me so I can worship Him with you”**. Herod had no intention of worshiping Jesus. He just wanted the Magi to find where Jesus was so that he could have Him killed. This actually happened later. Something that has always puzzled me is **why didn't Herod go with the Magi?** And then I realize – the lost will do as little as possible to serve the Lord. **“Let someone else do it”** is what their cold hearts cry.

Illustrate What is the difference between the saved and the lost soul? The saved soul was saved because it moved toward the Lord Jesus Christ. The lost soul clings to its old way of life. Herod wouldn't move, but sent others to move to Christ. He never began the journey of faith. I heard a humorous story of two fishermen who decided to go out fishing at night. They got to the boat unprepared and realized they didn't have their light. Getting carefully into the boat they rowed and rowed. After about an hour they stopped. About that time the moon came from behind the clouds and they discovered they were still sitting in the same place, tied to the shore. Row all you want, but if you don't raise your anchor you'll get no where.

Herod wouldn't stop what he was doing to travel just *six miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem*, whereas the Magi had traveled ten times that distance through dangerous lands to get to the Lord.

3 **Saved people worship the Lord Jesus Christ!** I never worshiped Jesus when I was lost. I sat in Church and sang the songs. I went along with the crowd, dropping a pittance in the plate when it passed. I took the Lord's Table, and was even baptized. But it was not until I was genuinely saved that I worshiped the Lord. These Magi

Focal **Matthew 2:11 ... when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.**

I want you to notice the *order* of the text here.

a **“When they were come into the house”.** Herod and his advisers stayed in Jerusalem, but these Magi *followed the call of God to Jesus*. Oh, how Jesus calls out today. He calls! In **Matthew 22:1-14 Jesus talked about how God calls people to salvation**. Paraphrasing the Lord Jesus, He said **“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a King who sends out slaves to invite many to His banquet. But they wouldn't come!”** God sent out His prophets. He sent out His Word. For the Magi He sent out a star and, by signs and wonders, invited them to come. To Herod and his advisers God sent out the Magi who wisely sought the Lord. And God the Father sent out God the Son, and today sends out Preachers and Missionaries and Pastors who – with weeping and shouting and pleading beg them **“Come! Come to the King! Come to Jesus and see Him!** Yet when the invitation is given many of you will not come. You will shrug your shoulders. You will turn away to do something more important, like weeding your garden or going to a movie. Some of you are so focused on eating lunch that you cannot hear the Gospel message. You would rather fill your bellies than fill your souls.

b **“when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down”.** These men saw Jesus, and in response to seeing Him **they fell down**. They prostrated themselves. A soul cannot be saved while it stands upright before the God of Creation. We fall down.

We fall down

**We lay our crowns
At the feet of Jesus
The greatness of
Mercy and love
At the feet of Jesus
We cry holy, holy, holy
We cry holy, holy, holy
We cry holy, holy, holy
Is the Lamb.**

There is no pride in the presence of the King! A lost person will say, **“Oh, I can't be baptized. That's something that kids do!”** The he saved fall down. **“Oh, I can't tell anyone that I love Jesus. They will think I'm a fanatic.”** The saved fall down. **“I can't do this job – it's beneath me.”** The saved fall down. Satan stood in the presence of God and said, **“I will be like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:14).** But Isaiah, looking into Heaven and seeing God falls down, saying:

Isaiah 6:5 (HCSB) ... Woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts.

C **“and worshiped Him”.** Oh Jesus, take all of me! We worship You and only You.

We bring You gold. The **“King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Revelation 17:14)** deserves gold. I will not worship money nor things, but I will give you the best and the first fruit of what I own. **The Lord God is my inheritance – and I store up treasures in Heaven, for**

there my heart is (Matthew 6:19-21) – not on this earth!

We bring You frankincense. The priests used frankincense in the worship of the Temple. They sprinkled frankincense on the coals of the golden altar and its smoke rose to Heaven, symbolizing our prayers going up to God. The Lord Jesus Christ is our High Priest, and every Christian is a priest before Almighty God. As our High Priest He stands between us and the Great God. By **His Blood He has made a once and for all offering for our sins (Hebrews 9:11-14).** Jesus Christ is **the One Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5).** We are acceptable to God because of Him.

We bring You myrrh. Myrrh was both a drug as well as a costly perfume, and was used mainly in Jewish burials.

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this earth to be our Savior. The angels cried out to the shepherds:

Luke 2:11 (KJV) For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

Humans are sinners, but God is sinless. There is a wall between God and man because of the evil we do and that we continue to do. Yet the Bible says:

Romans 5:8 (HCSB) ... God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!

Our Lord Jesus came to this earth in that manger to “seek and to save those who are lost” (Luke 19:10). How did He do this? The Bible says that Jesus went to a place called Golgotha. Crucified there, they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink. He refused to receive the myrrh – for to take it would take away some of the pain as that drug clouded His mind. Jesus went to that Cross and paid the full weight of your sin and mind. The Bible says “It is appointed unto men once to die – and then to be judged by God” (Hebrews 9:27). “For this reason Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:28).

As a baby Christ could not reject the myrrh, but as our Offering for Sin He rejected it. He felt every pain. He felt every bruise. He felt the nails that tore at His flesh, and felt the fist of God striking His soul as He paid our debt in full.

When Jesus Christ died the Bible says that His disciples took His body down from that Cross, and **covered Him with myrrh and aloe (John 19:39-42)**. He was born in a borrowed manger. He died on a borrowed Cross. He was laid to rest in a borrowed tomb. But He rose again on the third day to rule as King over His people.

Do you know Him? **Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church** has said:

“That is the result of Christmas: Jesus is Lord. We need to rediscover this phrase that has been used for centuries as the test of a believer: JESUS IS LORD.

It’s what it means to be a believer: “If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9^{TEV}). You may think evil is winning, but Jesus is Lord. You may think you can’t go on because circumstances are piled up against you, but Jesus is Lord. You may think your problems are too big for anyone to handle, but Jesus is Lord. When you’re discouraged, say, “Jesus is Lord.” When you’re tired, when you’re worried, when you’re afraid, when you’re lonely say, “Jesus is Lord.” Say it when you’re grieving and you don’t understand why someone you love just died. Say it when you don’t think you can go another mile. Say it this Christmas and make it the theme of your life: Jesus is Lord!

The Star of Christmas is the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know Him?

FOCAL Read Together Matthew 2:10-11 ^(KJV) When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Webster's dictionary defines the word MYTH - m y t h - as "a traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon".

John 14:15, 23; 15:10; John 13:34; 2 John 1:5-6; John 14:23; Acts 2:44-47

1 The Biblical account we're looking at today is

Daniel 9:24-26; Genesis 1:14; Matthew 2:1-2; John 14:6; 1 John 5:11-12; Hebrews 10:14-20

a God has promised in His Word that those who

b God is immense - He is everywhere - and God ____

Matthew 2:2; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:16-17

2 Another prevalent myth that Christians often hear is that the world _____
Matthew 2:3-8; Luke 6:27-35; John 15:18; Mark

13:9-13; Matthew 4:19; Luke 18:22-23; Philippians 2:7

3 Saved people worship _____
_____ Matthew 2:11

a "When they were come into the house". _____
_____ Matthew 22:1-14

b "when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down". _____
Isaiah 14:14; Isaiah 6:5

c "and worshiped Him". _____
Revelation 17:14; Matthew 6:19-21; Hebrews 9:11-14; 1 Timothy 2:5; Luke 2:11; Romans 5:8; Luke 19:10; Hebrews 9:27; Hebrews 9:28; John 19:39-42; Romans 10:9

Additional Notes



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