

Matthew 2: 1-11; “Opening Their Treasures”, A Christmas Sermon
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on December 22nd, 2019,
in the Morning Worship Service.

I want to speak to you at this hour about how God in His providence led these wise men, not only by the star that He sent to guide them, but by His Spirit’s working in their hearts and their minds to consider and believe in the Person and the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ. They came to honor Him with their gifts. They came to know of His saving value to themselves, and thus they brought Him gifts that showed forth their reverent worship of Him. Their gifts indicate that God had providentially given them the ability to see certain wonderful things about Him, His glory, and the great salvation which He came to bring to them personally. And so, in order to open this blessed truth up to you now, for your personal benefit, I want to speak of the 3 treasures of God’s providence which relate to the gifts that these men brought to honor Christ with.

1st – The treasure of Gold; of these wise men providentially being able to spiritually see the truth of Christ’s Deity. 2nd – The treasure of Frankincense; of their being able, providentially, to see the truth that Christ would become the only Mediator between God and man. And 3rd – The treasure of Myrrh, their being able providentially to see the truth of Christ’s sufferings and resurrection, and to conceive of His coming Kingdom, His Church. You and I, if we would be wise, we ought to seek to do the same thing as the wise men did; to honor Him by faith, and to bring to Him our gifts, the gifts which we desire to present to Him, by His grace; that of holy thoughts, words, and deeds which will prove our love for Him as our Savior and Lord.

1st – The treasure of Gold; of the wise men providentially being able to spiritually see the truth of Christ’s Deity.

There is no more important Person who has ever been born into the world than our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the King of glory, and Son of the Highest. He was sent into the world to be Savior of the World and the Ruler of all Nations. This righteous rule of Christ’s, these men understood, began with His being the King of the Jews. They knew that Jesus was born the King of glory; that in his birth He was no ordinary Man, but He was God made manifest in the flesh. How do we know that they knew this? Because they had come to worship Him, and to present their gifts to Him. And this is why they first presented Him with gold. They were saying that He was the most valuable of Persons that our race had ever seen. They were acknowledging that He was sent by God. Had they not seen His star? Had they not been led by this star.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they came to King Herod and asked Herod and his courtiers straight out – “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” And it says that Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Herod thought – Will this babe grow up to supplant me as king? I was appointed by the senate at Rome. But why should this baby be called the King of the Jews? Will I be able to continue to rule over my kingdom? But he did not understand that Jesus kingdom was not of this world. He did not understand that the kingdom of heaven was coming to earth. He did not understand spiritual things or the spiritual kingdom over which Christ rules. And so he wanted to kill Jesus before he could grow up and somehow overthrow his rule over him. He did not realize that the Lord Jesus Christ is spiritual gold for sinners; sinners everywhere in every place, and in every time.

I believe that these three wise men probably came from Babylon or Persia. And so, we must ask, how did they come by all of this knowledge of the Christ? I think that it must have been the case that they had read the writings of at least some of the Old Testament Scriptures. They somehow had access to these Old Testament writings. Perhaps copies of the Scriptures had been given to their ancestors by Daniel the Prophet, or others of the prophets, so that they came to

understand that there was a Messiah coming for the Jews. They somehow came to know by these Scriptures that God's Messiah would come to the Jews. They are called wise men; "Magoi" as it is the original Greek. Usually when we think of this word, we relate it to the word magicians, which has a bad connotation. We think of magicians and sorcerers and wizards and such people who dabble in the occult. But these men were undoubtedly godly men; men who knew the Lord, and it appears that they had come to know the Lord because they not only had access to the Scriptures of the Pentateuch and the Psalms and the Prophets, but they had come to believe in all of these prophecies, that they themselves could have a share in them.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. How could they possibly know that Jesus was to be born at that particular time, and that He would be a King? They were astrologers you say. Well, they no doubt did study the sky and said to Herod that they had seen Christ's star in the East, and that therefore they had traveled over some miles to worship Him, coming from the East. But studying the sky will not tell you specific things about the birth of Christ; when He would come, or that He would be King of the Jews, or even more that He would be the Son of God. They no doubt were led by a very unique and special star which God placed in the sky between the outer heavens and the earth. This star was Christ's star, and it well represented Him, for He Himself is a spiritual Star sent by God to guide seeking sinners to salvation which is only found in Himself.

Turn with me over to Numbers chapter 24, and verses 14-19. This is Balaam speaking prophetic. And he is speaking the truth about Christ even though he himself was a false prophet. He had the gift of prophecy, but he did not have the grace to have the prophecy fulfilled in relation to himself. But listen to what he says – "And now, indeed, I am going to my people." "Come, I will advise you what this people (that is the Jews) will do to your people (that is the Moabites) in the latter days." "So he took up his oracle and said: "The utterance of Balaam, the son of Beor, and the utterance of him who hears the words of God, and has the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, with eyes wide open." "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult." "And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, while Israel does valiantly." "Out of Jacob One shall have dominion, and destroy the remains of the city."

We see here that Balak, the king of Moab, had been trying to get Balaam to curse Israel for him, but that not only would Balaam not do that, but he actually was prophetically announcing that God would show favor to Israel (the elect nation of God in Old Testament times) in every way. He would do this through the Person of the Messiah, who is here called – A Star which would come out of Jacob. He is also called a Scepter rising out of Israel, who would batter the brow of Moab; that is, He would destroy all of Israel's literal enemies in both Old Testament and New Testament times. For, notice that Balaam is advising Balak about what the Jews would do to Moab "in the latter days".

This term may certainly refer in an Old Testament way of fulfillment to what David and other kings of Israel would do to the Moabites, to destroy them, later on in the time before Christ came. But Christ Himself, who is called the Star in this passage, is being spoken of as the One who would Himself batter the brow of Moab, and other nations; Edom, and Amalek and the Kenites. And so we it will be good if we can see that these nations who are mentioned represent all of the nations which will be enemies of Christ's Church in New Testament times. And indeed it has reference I believe to their utter destruction at the time when the Jews shall be converted and brought into the Church. This prophesied in many places in the Old Testament Scriptures.

But what we want to focus on now is Christ's being the Star coming out of Jacob and the Scepter arising out of Israel. For these wise men, they had probably heard the prophecy in Daniel chapter 2, verses 37 and 38, about Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon's being referred

to by Daniel as “the head of gold”. You, O king, are a king of kings.” “For the God of heaven has given a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all – you are this head of gold.” In other words, in saying that Nebuchadnezzar was the “head of gold”, Daniel was saying that he was the king of kings in an earthly sense. His was the first World Monarchy. His nation of Babylon; this city-state ruled over all the earth; power having been given to him by God to do so. His kingdom was gold and the head of all the kingdoms of the earth in that day.

But Christ, the Lord of Glory, is the Star come down from heaven to give spiritual light to all the earth. An earthly star has light in itself; light that has been given to it by God Himself. And it shines in the firmament of the heavens. But Christ shines with a Pure and Perfect Light in Himself, having been sent by God, to all the fallen world of men, and given to all who will receive Him. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not comprehend it; that is, unless the eyes of your heart are opened by God to see His glory. These wise men saw His star and they learned much about His deity from the prophecy in the book of Numbers concerning Him being the greatest Star; different from all the rest. Star differs from star in glory it says in 1st Corinthians 15: 41. So, our Lord is the greatest Star in the firmament; infinitely greater than any man or any created thing. This is why they brought Him gold as a present. Nothing better represented His value as the God-Man as this.

2nd – The treasure of Frankincense, of their being able providentially to see the truth that Christ would become the only Mediator between God and man.

In verse 5 it says that the wise men were told by the Jewish scholars that Herod brought in to answer their question – Where is He to be born? They said – “In Bethlehem of Judea”. “For thus it is written by the prophet: ‘But You, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.’” So, we see here, that these wise men did not know everything about the Messiah when they arrived in Jerusalem. They still did not know specifically about the prophecy in Micah; that He would be born in Bethlehem. They joyfully received the word by the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament which was told to them. They had a great desire to learn more about the Messiah, the King of the Jews.

So, this supernatural star had guided them to Jerusalem, and now they knew that they must go to Bethlehem. Verses 9-11 say – “When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was.” “When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.” “And when they had 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 gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” How thankful and full of joy these wise men were when they came outside, after talking with Herod, and they beheld the star once again. They not only had word of where the young King would be, but they continued to receive this supernatural guidance of the star which led the right to the young Jesus.

The gift of frankincense was the gift which spoke of their understanding the purpose for which the Lord Jesus came into the world. They knew that His life would be a sweet savor unto God. Frankincense is a white resin or gum which is obtained from a tree by making incisions in the bark of that tree, which causes the gum to flow out of it. It was the primary ingredient in the making up of the Holy Anointing Oil for the children of Israel in Moses and Aaron’s day. Exodus 30: 34-37 – “And the Lord said to Moses: ‘Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with these sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each.’” “You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, and holy.” “And you shall beat some of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony

in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. But as for the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition.” “It shall be to you holy for the LORD.”

This frankincense pictures Christ’s intercession on behalf of sinners, to bring them to God through the offering of Himself as a sacrifice unto God for their salvation, and His continual making of intercession in heaven for them now, so that they will be forgiven of all of their sins, and so that they will remain clothed in His righteousness. Listen to Ephesians 5: 1 and 2 – “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.” “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma.” And Revelation 8, verses 3 & 4 – “Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar.” “He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” “And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand.”

Christ is the angel of verse 3. He is pictured as taking a censor, coming and standing at the altar, and being given much incense, He offers it with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. The reason that His prayers are meritorious for you, dear Christian, is because He is God made manifest in the flesh. But it is also because He became a man and did all of His works of righteousness and obedience unto God, perfectly. He perfectly fulfilled all of God’s holy law. And because of His sacrificial death on the cross, all of your sins are washed away by His blood. And because He ever lives to make intercession for His saints, they shall none of them perish. And He becomes your Advocate with the Father, dear Christian; the One who undertakes your defense against all the schemes of the Devil.

In the Ethiopic version of Revelation 8: 3, it says that this angel came from the East. The wise men came from the East. The wise men came from the East, and they certainly needed to understand that this young lad Jesus who was the King of the Jews, would someday conquer sin and death and sit down at the right hand of the Father, and from that vantage point, ever live to make intercession for them. In this section of the book of the Revelation, it is speaking of the seventh seal being opened by Christ; His coming to deal with the scourge of Arianism which plagued the Church in that 2nd time period of the Roman Empire which was from 323 A.D to around 800 A.D. During this time period the smoke of the incense of His intercession ascended before God from His hand. It was His holy work alone which preserved the saints, and the truth of His word during this period of great spiritual darkness. But so it has always been, since Christ ascended to heaven after His resurrection.

Look also over at Song of Solomon chapter 3 and verses 6-11. “Who is this coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchant’s fragrant powders?” “Behold, it is Solomon’s couch, with sixty valiant men around it, of the valiant of Israel.” “They all hold swords, being expert in war.” “Every man has his sword on his thigh because of fear in the night.” “Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the King made himself a palanquin: He made its pillars of silver, its support of gold, its seat of purple, its interior paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem.” “Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart.”

Here we find in spiritual picture language, the Church (every individual believer) coming out of the wilderness. She is coming out of the world, having believed in Jesus Christ, and taken Him to be her husband. She is betrothed to Him. She sees this world as the City of Destruction. She has fled from the wrath of God and knows that the Lord has set her feet upon the highway of holiness. She has stepped into the Sedan-Chariot, the palanquin, which Christ has prepared for her and she is proceeding on her way to heaven where she will be married to Him forever. This is the way that it is for every true Christian who would be faithful. They know that the world is

crucified to them, and they to the world. The old things of sin and selfishness are passing away and the new things of walking in separation from sin and pursuing holiness in their walk with Christ have come. The King of Glory, the Lord Jesus Christ, has made a Palanquin which is perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, and with all the His powders. He made Himself through the blood of the New Covenant, an offering for sin. Christ took to Himself a body, and came in the likeness of sinful flesh. What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.

It is when you place your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross that you are saved. Dear sinner, have you seen that you have been invited by Christ to come up into this palanquin of His finished work and be saved? Have you seen that He would have you ride in it all the way to heaven, never doubting that His work will be sufficient to convey you there? You are secure in Christ. His work is perfect and completely accepted and acceptable to the Father. It will be sufficient for you. The Father sees you in Christ; perfect and complete, and holy in the Beloved. Do you in all sincerity see yourself, by faith, in this way? This was the intention of the Covenant of Grace and Redemption; for Christ to do all the work of righteousness, and to suffer all the punishment necessary to free you from sin and death and the condemnation of the law.

When you do get into the palanquin you will smell “the myrrh and frankincense and all the powders of the Merchant.” The merchant-man who brought these spices and powders is Christ Himself whose sufferings and righteousness mediate between ourselves and God the Father. He was raised from the dead by the Father and crowned with glory and honor so that the sweet-smelling savor of His life is upon your conveyance through this world, and all the way to heaven. When you have been in this palanquin for only a short time, you will find that the sweet smell of Christ will be upon your life. Christ is your Savior and He will save you from all your sins. He is your Lord and He will defend and protect you, watch over you and change You into His image and likeness and fit you for heaven so that your life will become a sweet savor to God, through His life, and His grace working on your behalf. That is what the gift of the Frankincense meant when the wise men brought it. That is what they would show forth in bringing it.

3rd – The treasure of Myrrh, their being able providentially to see the truth of Christ’s death and resurrection, and to conceive of His coming Kingdom, His Church.

Myrrh is closely related to Frankincense for both were used as principal ingredients in the holy anointing oil. It was a custom of the Jews to give those men who were condemned to death by crucifixion “wine mingled with myrrh” in to produce insensibility in them to their sufferings. But the Lord Jesus did not receive it, it says in Mark 15: 23. In other words, He refused anything that would have lessened His own sufferings, so that we would know the reality of our sins being forgiven and the reality of our spirits being refreshed, and revived, and strengthened in our walk with Him day by day. After Jesus died upon the cross, it was myrrh that Nicodemus brought with him, it says in John 19: 39. “And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.” “Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.” Myrrh is also used in the picture language in Psalm 45 to speak of the garments of the Lord Jesus.

Verses 6-9 – “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.” “You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than your companions.” “All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia.” “Out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad.” King’s daughter are among Your honorable women; at Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.” These verses are speaking of Christ coming out of the

ivory palaces of heaven, where He had always known the love and the delightful fellowship with His Father; His taking on human nature, and being filled with all the graces of the Spirit in His speech and conduct. In His public ministry He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Christ's garments were scented with the blessed way that He lived and the holy, loving, and courageous way that He died, being faithful to God in respect; doing all that He did on behalf of sinners. Therefore God highly exalted Him in His resurrection and ascension to sit at His right hand. The scepter of righteousness is the scepter of His kingdom. All of this is bound up in the gift of the myrrh by the Magi. All of the gifts that they gave were representative of who the Lord Jesus was, and what He came to do for sinners.

He came and lived and died in order to bring salvation to unworthy sinners, but also then to establish by means of His resurrection life, real tangible, close fellowship with each one of His saints. Song of Solomon chapter 1, verses 12 and 13 picture this so very well. "While the king is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance." "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, that lies all night between my breasts." "My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blooms in the vineyards of Engedi." This is speaking spiritually of the great need that all Christians have to hold what Christ has done for them, by His life and His death, close to them so that they will know the reality of His grace and peace ministering to them. The bundle of myrrh is the means of the believer's reminding themselves of Christ's dying love and His saving and sustaining grace which are always there for you. They are enough for you, dear Christian.

These gifts that the Magi brought; they were giving to the Child Jesus presents which showed forth their love for His having come down from heaven to do the will of the Father in their place so that they could be saved. They would honor Him for who He was and what He came to do, and what He came to bring to needy sinners everywhere. Myrrh is spoken of in Song of Solomon Chapter 4, verse 6, in this way: "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." What is being spoken of is Christ's kingdom as a mountain of myrrh and His Church as the hill of frankincense. And until the Day when He comes back, until the Last Day, the Day of His raising all men from the dead, He will be going His way to the mountain of myrrh; to be always caught up with the people who were purchased by His loving and painful sufferings. He will be present by His Spirit in all of the assembly of the saints, those hills of frankincense. He will secure the church in her enjoyments and take of her continual safety. Christ will build His Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. He will see the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

These wise men knew that Christ's kingdom would become very great and eventually Gentiles would be brought in, in great numbers. These men were the first fruits of that great harvest that is yet coming in the latter day of this present age. As it says in Isaiah 60, verse 4-6 – "Lift up your eyes all around and see: they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side." "Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you." The multitude of camels shall cover your land, the dromedaries of Midian and ephah; all those from Sheba shall come they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord."