

# Seeing & Worshipping Our God in a Manger Luke 2:4-7

Tonight, Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion is when we as believers get to relive that scene in the Stable, at the Manger, with the Shepherds and Wisemen.

In this quiet service, we come in the darkness to see the Light of the World who came.

As the Shepherds, we come eagerly, knowing that it is only Christ's blood that is our hope.

As the Wisemen we come unstoppably, knowing that we have one goal, and that is to worship Him. So, join me as we:

## Come to The Manger

Secluded in this quiet haven, we have gathered to make these moments, moments of worshipful lifting our hearts and voices before Him, and magnifying His name.

- Like the Angels: ***we ascribe glory to Christ.***
- Like Mary and Joseph: ***we adore Christ's beauty.***
- Like the Shepherds: ***we bow in utter unworthiness before our Wonderful, Merciful Savior.***
- Like the Wisemen: ***we cast our treasures at His feet.***

As the New Testament opens and we see Matthew's account, what does he record as the first reaction to Christ's birth? The Wisemen bow before Him and offer their personal worship.

Matthew takes us to that event, shortly after the birth of the Messiah, when Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, and inquired of king Herod where the *real* king of the Jews was to be born. The theologians of Herod's court knew the Scriptures well: in 'Bethlehem' they recited.

Ironically, though they knew the Scriptures, they did not believe them! They did not even bother to travel the five or six miles to Bethlehem to see their Messiah.

But Herod believed the Scriptures! That is why he sent a corps of butchers to Bethlehem, and slaughtered innocent children, in hopes of destroying this rival to his throne. But he was too late. The Magi had come and gone; and Jesus was by now safe in Egypt.

How firmly the Magi had believed the Scriptures. They had traveled several hundred miles to worship this Baby, guided to Bethlehem by a supernatural celestial phenomenon, and by the Scriptures. It appears that they, like their ancestors, had been instructed by Daniel the prophet, about the coming Messiah. So their journey was acting upon that belief.

When they saw the Child, they fell down and worshiped Him. This Baby was God in the flesh; and they could do nothing less than worship Him. So as they knelt we see them:

## **Giving Their Worship**

In Matthew 2 we see them give Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. This was an unusual present, by any standards. The gold, of course, we all can understand, but the frankincense and myrrh were odd. Perhaps they had read Isaiah's prophecy that "nations will come to your *light*, and kings to your *rising* . . . They will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news. . . ." (Isaiah 60:3, 6). This would possibly explain the frankincense, but not the myrrh.

We know that myrrh, like frankincense, was a perfume. But unlike frankincense, myrrh smelled of *death*. In the ancient world, it was used to embalm a corpse. Jesus Himself would be embalmed with this very perfume brought by Joseph and Nicodemus (John 19:39).

If the Magi were thinking of Christ's prophesied death when they brought the myrrh, they learned of it from Daniel's prophecy (9:24-27), where Daniel wrote that the 'Messiah will be cut off' and this 'will make atonement for iniquity' and ultimately 'bring in everlasting righteousness' (9:26, 24).

So, there in the Stable, at the birth of our Savior, the shadow of the cross is already falling over His face.

So that is why Matthew records the Wisemen's worship. Listen to the Holy Scriptures as they pull back the cloak of time. With vibrant freshness listen to Matthew describe this hallowed moment with such unforgettable words. God enters time and space as an infant, and these pagans from far away cast themselves down before Him! They give themselves, they pour out worship, and they offer their treasures as gifts for Him.

That dramatic moment in history is found in Matthew 2. Pause your mind, focus on this moment; and as you listen to Matthew 2:1-13, note the call to worship we can feel from kneeling before the Christ of Christmas.

Matthew 2:1-13 *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea **in the days of Herod the king**, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem [they came from far away], 2 saying, "Where is He who has been born **King of the Jews**? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."* [had a single minded devotion] 3 *When **Herod the king** heard this, 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 inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 6 '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.'* " 7 *Then **Herod**, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."* [they aren't daunted by false seekers] 9 *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. [they just keep on following God's leading] 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. [they continue to have great anticipation] 11 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. 12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to **Herod**, they departed for their own country another way.*

Note that Matthew's account points us to see that they gave:

## Gifts that Expressed Worship

Those treasures brought as gifts, visibly expressed their worship; and worship<sup>1</sup> is always to be a presentation of our gifts to God. We read that these wise men "presented unto Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh." The significance of these gifts is beautiful.

- Gold speaks of *Deity*, as a study of the Tabernacle makes plain.
- Frankincense gives forth its *perfume* only as it is brought into contact with fire.
- Myrrh speaks of *suffering*, and is associated with the death and burial of our Lord.

Thus these wise men, by the gifts they presented expressed:

- **Their declaration** of His Deity;
- **Their appreciation** of the fragrance of His sinless life which rose as a sweet perfume, to His Father; and

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<sup>1</sup> A. P. Gibbs, *Worship*, p. 45

- ***Their participation*** by faith in His coming vicarious sacrifice, by which God's loving offer of salvation was portrayed.

So, the Wisemen offered gifts of worship, so should we as we look again at Christ and:

## **See God In a Manger**

To see God sent to Earth as a Baby in the Manger this evening, please listen as I turn forward to Luke 2. There we see the scene in Bethlehem's stable where Luke describes how Jesus was laid in a manger.

Luke 2:4-7 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (NKJV)

Tonight we can look back through the eyes of faith, and see in God's Word the One we have gathered to worship. Our Father in Heaven has sent us His Son. We gather to adore our God's dear Son Jesus, born to be the Savior of the World.

Bow your heads, and open your hearts with me as we pray:

Jesus, you are the focus of this evening, and of this season. Open our eyes, stir our hearts, clear our minds of all but You.

We ask you dear Father, to reveal Your Son to us in a vibrant and life changing way this night. Help us to see and worship our Lord Jesus Christ in the three blessed ways He is pictured in Your Word. Lead us to worship Him as we:

- See His Hands of Love
- Look at His Face of Glory
- Ponder His Feet of Peace

That is why we came, fill us anew with Your Spirit and we wait before You tonight at this Table. Amen

Looking at that tiny infant, just as the Shepherds must have first seen Him, weak and helpless, and laying in a manger, with those excited and amazed shepherds, we can:

## **Worship Christ's Hands of Love**

The Angels said the Savior of the World had come, and all they saw was a baby. But worship Him they did, because they came in faith.

With a heart of faith you can behold and adore Christ's Hands of Love. Have you pondered the hands of baby Jesus?

*Those tiny infant hands had been busy once. Though now in pink perfection they clasp a mother's finger, they once flung out the curtain of the heavens. Sprinkled across space Christ's Hands made the myriads of stars, the countless galaxies, the mighty pulsating quasars, and the intricate beauty of the filmy nebulas<sup>2</sup>. Listen to the flawless historic record of that event:*

Genesis 1:16 Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. (NKJV);

Psalms 147:4 He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. (NKJV)

*Those miniature hands so soft and tender had already brought forth the craggy mountain heights and shaped their majesty. Listen to the only eyewitness record of that event:*

Psalms 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. (NKJV).

*Then those Hands dug deep into the fresh dirt of the garden, and scooped out the dust from which the first human named Adam, was fashioned in the very image of God. Those hands of Jesus the Creator of Genesis 1, lifted the lifeless dust and breathed into that bit of earth the breath of life. Listen to the God-written record of that event:*

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (NKJV)

Now move with me from mere intellectual truth, and make it personal by personally in your own soul:

## **APPLYING THESE TRUTHS IN WORSHIP**

Those hands that touched lepers with the touch of acceptance, love and healing: they are Your Hands that are holding onto each of us born-again believers gathered this very

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<sup>2</sup> These descriptions are paraphrased from Max Lucado's *Glory of Christmas* writings online and in his books.  
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night. Receive our grateful worship oh Lamb of God, **we confess in our hearts that YOU came to us in our pits of sin, and rescued us.**

Those hands that gave sight to blind and sightless eyes: they are the same Hands that have touched our eyes so we can see. We worship you oh Savior, **we confess in our hearts that YOU opened our eyes, saving us so that we can see Your Glory this night.**

Those hands that touched cold and lifeless ones and brought them to life: they are Your Hands that touched our sin cursed hearts and made us new, giving us life, and making our life an endless stream of days with a fresh new start. We worship you oh Redeemer, **we confess in our hearts that YOU touched our cold and lifeless hearts and diffused quickening life giving grace, that we might become Your sons and daughters.**

Next, here in this quiet eve of Christmas, we can:

## **Worship Christ's Face of Glory**

Let us behold and adore His Face of glory. Have you pondered the face of baby Jesus?

*That little babes upturned face so peaceful and gentle with the soft flush of a newborn, had already shined with the strength of a million suns in heaven. That face so unimaginably radiant had been the sole object of angels, seraphs and cherubim's wonderful worship.*

Daniel 7:9-10 And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. (NKJV)

That face now quietly slumbering had looked at Creation and said it was good. Then had seen the rebellion of Lucifer, the defection of a third of the angels and the fall of mankind. That face had for the past 4,000 years been brazenly cursed at, sinned against and fled from.

That pure, soft unblemished face nestled close to the warmth of His mother, would soon know sweat and dirt as the dusty hillsides of Galilee and Judea were tirelessly crossed. That face would know the adoring gazes of grateful ones healed and fed. The deceitful looks of plotting and betraying enemies; and the looks of wonder from faltering disciples. But most of all, the loving gaze of the Heavenly Father as with constant devotion the Father saw His one and only Son slip away for extended times of prayer, communion and reflection with Him.

Now move with me from mere intellectual truth, and make it personal by personally in your own soul:

## **APPLYING THESE TRUTHS IN WORSHIP**

Tonight let us worship our crucified Savior. That soft and creamy complexion in the manger, would be marred, more than any human ever was marred, He was marred, crushed, bruised, and broken for you and for me.

Isaiah 52:14 Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men; (NKJV).

That face so loving, so compassionate was twisted with thorns, beaten with sticks, defiled by spit, and hated by the very ones He came to save.

Isaiah 53:2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. (NKJV).

As we gaze upon the Baby in a Manger we see off in the distance the flashes of light and hear the peals of thunder from the Throne in Revelation. We can never forget that the baby in the stable has always been the Lord of Glory!

Revelation 1:14-18 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. 17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

Beautiful baby we worship you as the Lamb slain for our sins. Hands of Love, Face of Glory, and now:

## **Worship Christ's Feet of Majesty**

Let us behold and adore Your Feet of Peace. Have you pondered the feet of baby Jesus?

Those kicking, wiggling feet so soft would soon be callused. The dirt of the earth He had made knew its Creator. But the life breathed into clay humans did not.

Those feet that walked in Eden's splendor calling out for the hiding, fallen first family would crisscross the Promised Land seeking and saving lost ones. Then those feet would

be stopped. In the dead of night they would rise from kneeling and turn to face a scattering flock and a seething mob. Those feet would walk to phony trials, mock hearings and wicked dens of torture. Then with blood drops staining those feet they would trudge till they collapsed on the way to Calvary.

Those feet that had walked the wings of the dawn, that had stood in the chariots of the thunder clouds, that had walked with Enoch and Abraham, and had crossed the expanse of the universe. Those feet that had left the streets of heaven were now crudely pushed onto rough splintered wood. Pressed and held by the hands of one of His own creatures now stained with sin. The Holy One of God would be spiked to a tree He had created by a creature He had come to rescue.

Now move with me from mere intellectual truth, and make it personal by personally in your own soul:

## **APPLYING THESE TRUTHS IN WORSHIP**

With all our hearts and souls, we join all the Universe in that moment when: at Your feet all knees shall bow. As Paul declared:

Romans 14:10-12 You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" 12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. (NIV);

Philippians 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (NIV)

With hearts of gratitude, and mouths of praises we worship you oh Lamb of Glory. As John seeing Christ glorified tells us:

Revelation 5:8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (NIV)

Like the Shepherds, and with the Wisemen: at your feet we come, bow down and fall before you, just as with all the Redeemed we shall one day in:

Revelation 15:3 and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. (NIV)

The theologians<sup>3</sup> of Herod's court did not believe the Scriptures. They were fools.

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<sup>3</sup> ©1996 Daniel B. Wallace



Herod believed, but disobeyed. He was a madman.

The simple shepherds and the majestic Magi believed in this infant Savior--and it was reckoned to them as righteousness. May we follow in their train.

# 148 O Holy Night

- 1 O holy night! the stars are brightly shining—  
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth!  
Long lay the world in sin and darkness pining—  
Till He appeared, gift of infinite worth!  
Behold the Babe in yonder manger lowly—  
'Tis God's own Son come down in human form:  
Fall on your knees before the Lord most holy!
- 2 With humble hearts we bow in adoration  
Before this Child, gift of God's matchless love,  
Sent from on high to purchase our salvation—  
That we might dwell with Him ever above.  
What grace untold—to leave the bliss of glory  
And die for sinners guilty and forlorn:  
Fall on your knees! repeat the wondrous story!
- 3 O day of joy, when in eternal splendor  
He shall return in His glory to reign,  
When ev'ry tongue due praise to Him shall render,  
His pow'r and might to all nations proclaim!  
A thrill of hope our longong hearts rejoices,  
For soon shall dawn that glad eternal morn:  
Fall on your knees! with joy lift up your voices!

O night divine—O night when Christ was born!  
O night divine—O night, O night divine!

# 10 O Worship the King

O Worship the King, all glorious above,  
And gratefully sing His wonderful love;  
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,  
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.

O tell of His might, O Sing of His grace,  
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space!  
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,  
And dark is His path on the wings of the storm.

Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite?  
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light,  
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,  
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,  
In Thee do we trust, nor find Thee to fail:  
Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end,  
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend