

— Matthew 2.1-11 —  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent  
**Immanuel and the Magi**

Mt 2 <sup>1</sup> 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, <sup>2</sup> 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."

<sup>3</sup> When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> '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.'" <sup>7</sup> Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. <sup>8</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. <sup>11</sup> 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.

► Who were the "wise men," the Magi from the east? (2.1)

Dn 2 <sup>1</sup> Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams ... <sup>2</sup> Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

Dn 1 <sup>4</sup> young men ... gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. <sup>5</sup> And the king appointed ... three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.

Dn 2 <sup>48</sup> Then the king promoted Daniel ... and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. <sup>49</sup> Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon

Dn 6 <sup>1</sup> It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; <sup>2</sup> and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one

► What was Rome's experience with the Persians (Parthians)?

► What was Herod's experience with the Persians?

► How did Herod become "king of the Jews"?

► What kind of ruler was Herod?

► What can we glean about the Magi from ancient art in the catacombs and on vases and from ancient church tradition?

► How would Herod have taken the Magi's question, "Where is he who is the born-king of the Jews?", and why? (Mt 2.2)

► What does Herod do in response to the Magi? (3-8)

Micah 5.2 "But you, Bethlehem ..., though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."

► What leads the Magi to the house where Jesus is? (9-10)  
What is unusual about this star?

► Putting all this together, what is the irony of:  
— Where the King is born?

► What is the only biblical phenomenon that matches the behavior of this star?

— Jerusalem and its leaders vs the Magi?

*Eze 1<sup>4</sup> "I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating ... out of the midst of the fire ...  
<sup>13</sup> As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth ...  
<sup>14</sup> The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning"*

– Where the *Shekinah* leads the Magi, and where they worship?

*Exo 40<sup>34</sup> [T]he glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle ...  
<sup>38</sup> For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.*

► The message is unmistakable: Jesus is the true \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

*Exo 14<sup>19</sup> And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them.  
<sup>20</sup> So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.*

*Gn 28<sup>12</sup> Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it ...  
<sup>16</sup> Then Jacob awoke, and said, ...  
<sup>17</sup> "This is ... the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"*

*Isaiah 60<sup>2</sup> [T]he LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.  
<sup>3</sup> The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising ...  
<sup>6</sup> ... They shall bring gold and frankincense, and they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD.*

*Jn 1<sup>51</sup> "You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."*

► What was the significance of the Magi presenting Jesus with gold, frankincense, and myrrh?