

# ADVENT DEVOTIONAL #4: THE GIFT OF WORSHIP

## SOMETHING TO READ

Matthew 2.1-12

<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 saw his star when it rose 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 assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" <sup>7</sup> Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." <sup>9</sup> After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> **When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.** <sup>11</sup> And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

## SOMETHING TO CONSIDER

*Here is a dialogue between two people discussing the Christmas story. What do you think about their conversation?*

*"When was the last time you heard from him?"*

*"As a matter of fact, I actually spoke to him last week. I called him up. Randomly. Out of the blue."*

*"How is he doing?"*

*"The work in Japan is difficult. It's hard ground for the Christian message there, I think. He's been there a couple of years now. The church plant is still small. There's not too much fruit. It's qualitative, not necessarily quantitative."*

*"I admire his courage and endurance. He's always so upbeat."*

*"I know what you mean. I actually said to him on the phone last week: **'What's the secret of your great faith?—you know, to just keep going and going, sowing the seed year after year.'**"*

*"And what did he say the secret to his faith was?"*

*"He said that whenever he's discouraged he thinks of the wise men in Matthew 2."*

*"What a bizarre source of encouragement!"*

*"He said something profound. He said that it's one of the finest examples in the Bible of Jesus' drawing power. Or, to use his phrase, **the 'irresistible gravity' of Jesus.**"*

*"What?"*

*"He explained it like this: Jesus made the planets bend. He was born, and rich scholars from Arabia or Persia or somewhere noticed this disruption in the heavenly bodies. Whether it was a new star or Jupiter and Saturn aligning—who knows? And this 'star' guided them for hundreds, if not thousands, of miles to the very town and the very house Jesus was in."*

*"That's some gravitational pull—disrupting the course of heavenly bodies and drawing people great distances. I like it."*

*"And not just anyone—Gentile academics. Seemingly the most unlikely candidates for conversion."*

*"And these wise men see Jesus as a baby. **He's just like any other small child. Yet they offer Him these extravagant gifts—**"*

*"—It's not like they offered King Herod their gifts when they met him."*

*"Exactly. And the choice of gifts is completely incredible. They totally had a revelation about who Jesus really was. Gold: a gift appropriate for a king. Frankincense: the very symbol of a high priest. Myrrh: the stuff used to embalm the dead. A king. A priest. A death."*

***"The king; the priest; the child given to die for the world."***

*"And they fell down and worshiped Jesus."*

*"I can see why that is so encouraging to a church planter in Japan. If Jesus can draw Gentiles for miles across a desert to fall prostrate in worship before God as a baby, **then He can draw anyone, anywhere, anyhow.**"*

*"And to this very day Jesus is still drawing people to worship Him. One day in heaven the Persian wise men will be offering gifts of worship to Jesus. Next to them will be people from Japan—doing exactly the same."*

*"You know, when you put it like that, it makes me reconsider what a Christmas present is. **It's actually a gift of worship to Jesus Himself.**"*

*"And all because we got a Christmas present first. The original Christmas present is Jesus' gift of Himself to us."*

## **SOMETHING TO RESPOND TO**

*Here are some questions to help you meditate on the Christmas story:*

- Do you believe that God wants to draw people to Jesus from cultures other than your own?
- How can you be a 'star' that guides people to Jesus?
- With what gifts are you going to worship Jesus this Christmas? Would it be a thing? Is it a part of your heart or a behaviour you are holding onto and don't want to give up? How can you worship God in a new way this Christmas?

## **SOMETHING TO DO**

*Here are some suggestions for practical things you can do during this Advent season:*

- Prepare your hearts to come and adore Jesus at our Christmas Eve event tomorrow.
- Commit to reading God's Word as your daily act of worship. See here for reading plan ideas: [tinyurl.com/RHCbibleplans](https://tinyurl.com/RHCbibleplans)
- Consider hosting a meal at your home. Radical hospitality begins by seeing our homes as God's gift to use for the furtherance of his kingdom.
- Invite someone to take part in your family or cultural Christmas traditions.
- Plan how you will worship Jesus next year with your time, commitment, finances, and service.
- Consider reading a book from this list: [tinyurl.com/RHCadventBooks](https://tinyurl.com/RHCadventBooks)

## **SOMETHING TO LISTEN TO**

*Here is a playlist of songs to help you respond to the truths we have heard:*

Go to [tinyurl.com/RHCspotify23Dec](https://tinyurl.com/RHCspotify23Dec) to listen to this week's playlist.