

By definition, a Christian should be an enigma to every person who is not a Christian.

A man is not a Christian unless he can say with Paul, "I am what I am by the grace of God!" --Martyn Lloyd-Jones

The Baptist Catechism

AS PRINTED BY THE CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION IN 1813 *(Presented here as originally published – this does not constitute a full endorsement of the Riverside Baptist Church)*

12. Q. What is the work of creation?

A. The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good (Gen. 1 throughout; Heb. 11:3).

13. Q. How did God create man?

A. God created man, male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures (Gen. 1:26, 27, 28; Col. 3:10, Eph. 4:24).

14. Q. What are God's works of providence?

A. God's works of providence are his most holy, (Ps. 145:17;) wise (Is. 28:29, Ps. 104:24), and powerful preserving (Heb. 1:3) and governing all his creatures, and all their actions (Ps. 103:19; Mt. 10:29, 30, 31).

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Sunday Morning Bible Study -- 10:00 AM

Sunday Morning Worship -- 11:00 AM

Prayer and Bible Study Wednesday Evening 6:30 PM

WCWV 92.9 FM – 8:00 AM Sunday Morning

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST REPORT

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

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THE QUEST OF THE WISE MEN

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, 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. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (Matthew 2:1-3)

Men encounter great difficulty in separating tradition and legends from fact. Especially is this true of their dealings with Scripture and the additions and subtractions they make. We are warned against such practice and our Lord soundly condemned the Pharisees for “teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.” It may be thought that the errors so often attached to the account of the incarnation of our Lord relatively harmless. Amid all that has come to be associated with the observance of this holiday, men tend to lose sight of the fact that it is still the Word of God and is due the same reverence as all the rest of the Bible.

One of the most common errors is perpetuated in every nativity scene set up during this season. That is, the presence of the Wise Men at the stable along with the shepherds and the animals. Such are often quite ornate and beautiful, but not in accordance with the scriptural accounts. The shepherds had “...returned, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen...” And there is no mention of the presence of the Wise men in either account of the birth. The effect of this is that when the scripture is read, the minds of men are drawn to the images that men have created. Thus, many are given to “go with the flow” of conventional thought and much is lost as a result.

Certainly, our attention is drawn to the Incarnation of our Lord and always in such a way as to provoke worship. From the announcement by the Angel to Mary, the reaction of the unborn John the Baptist, the appearance of the Angel and the Heavenly Host to the shepherds, the rejoicing of Simeon in the Temple, and later the coming of the Wise Men – praise and worship of the newborn King has been the reaction of all. And such has been the reaction of all who hear and heed the call – “O Come let us adore Him!”

In addressing this passage, William Hendriksen said it well. “We know very little about the wise men mentioned in Matt. 2. We know, however, that, as their actions are here described, whatever they do makes them deserving of the name “wise men.” The best course for us to follow would appear to be to adhere strictly to the text, and to agree that these magi came from “the east...” So, we would deal with several assumptions made by men, but not mentioned here. One of the first things to be considered is when did they come? We are safe in assuming that they came from a considerable distance. Various time frames are suggested that it may have been several weeks to as much as a year. When they found the mother and the Child, they were in a house. Who were they? The word used here could be descriptive of many identities such as magicians,

astrologers, or kings. Again, it is enough that they are men of wisdom and learning and have sensed greatness attached to their quest. Owing to the fact that three gifts were mentioned, the assumption is that there were three. We are not told that. Some have thought there may have been a far greater number. There is the question as to how did they know? Due to our narrow scope of thought in reading the Old Testament we may underestimate the influence of men like Daniel who was associated with men such as these and to have passed their influence on to others. It is evident that their mission was not uninformed – they were driven to find this King. They knew that this was no ordinary child.

They had seen the star in the East and had come. What of the star? Men are always looking for a simple explanation when the miraculous occurs. Many astronomical explanations have been offered as to what might have happened. But just as surely as the Shekinah Glory was seen in the wilderness, and the pillar of fire and cloud guided the Children of Israel, we would believe that this was no less a supernatural occurrence for the benefit of bringing these men along. Again, no scriptural explanation is provided.

We would further quote Hendriksen: "This, moreover, is exactly what makes Matthew's story so beautiful and instructive. Everything else is left out of the picture in order that the full emphasis may be placed on this one thing, namely, 'We have come to worship him.'" Matthew would draw our attention to two things here. The first, of course being their desire to worship Him. The second would be to expose the impact that His birth has on the world. These men did not go to Herod to enquire about the newborn King. They asked

the people which created no small stir among them. This was Herod the Great, a man known for his oppressive wickedness. The people feared his reprisals and at the mention of a King of the Jews they may have feared. Word did get to Herod and he was troubled. He was not a Jew (probably a descendant of Esau who had risen to favor with the Roman government) and was very protective of his position. This sounded like a threat to him.

Satanic opposition to Christ has been apparent from the time of the curse and Herod is another example of those who waited to stop the ascension of our King. Such stand in fierce opposition to the sovereignty of Christ and the reign of righteousness. These forces are no less active today. We know of the killing of the children by Herod – the world stops at nothing to oppose Christ our Lord.

These men were led by the star to the place they sought and there they accomplished their mission: *And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11).*

When the season is over, and all the trappings are put away for another year, all will soon be forgotten by the masses. But those beholding the majesty of our King will still be falling down to worship Him as did these men so long ago. "Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices..." and declare with them "Glory to God in the Highest!" As we approach the Word of God, as we fellowship one with another, may our hearts be joined to the thought, "We are come to worship Him." *bhs*

THIS SAME JESUS WHO IS GENTLE, MEEK AND MILD, WILL "STRIKE DOWN THE NATIONS, AND HE WILL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON. HE WILL TREAD THE WINEPRESS OF THE FURY OF THE WRATH OF GOD THE ALMIGHTY." (REV. 19:15) – From Monergism

THE KING IS BORN

The King is born, and now he must be acknowledged. At the same moment he will be assailed. His birth was in the days of another king, of Edomite stock, who had usurped the throne of David. The world's kingdom is opposed to that of our Lord: where Jesus is born there is sure to be a Herod in power. It is a marvelous thing that Magi from afar should know that a great king was born, and should come from so great a distance to do him homage; for the world's wise men are not often found bowing at the feet of Jesus. When wise men seek our King they are wise indeed. These were devout men, to whom the stars spoke of God. An unusual luminary was understood by them to indicate the birth of the Coming Man for whom many in all lands were looking. Stars might guide us if we were willing to be led. Lord Jesus, make everything speak to me concerning thee, and may I be truly led till I find thee! The wise men were not content with having "seen his star", they must see himself; and, seeing, they must adore. These were not in doubt as to his Godhead: they said, "We are come to worship him." Lord, I pray thee, make all the wise men to worship thee! – C. H. Spurgeon, *Commentary on Matthew*.

From Alistair Begg – *Pray Big*

We need to learn to pray, "Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. I want to see you, and all I have in you." Knowing God by seeing God. This is what we most need. One of the major weaknesses of evangelicalism today is a failure at this very level. Wherever I preach, I often find people saying afterwards, "But you haven't told me what to do. Can you give me something practical? Something that I can do that will help me?" Part of the answer lies in this prayer of Paul's. Nowhere in any of Paul's letters will you find a six-step guide to satisfaction, or the four keys to anxiety-free living, or eight practical ways to make the most of your money. No—Paul wants for you what you most need. What you really need, he says, is a spirit of wisdom and revelation, that leads to a greater, deeper knowledge of him. You need to know God.

From Elisabeth Elliot – *Suffering is Never for Nothing*

At the beginning of this chapter, I referenced that I was going to tell you three things relevant to gratitude in the midst of suffering, and I don't think I've specified what that third thing is, but I've already said it. The first thing was that gratitude and acceptance distinguish the Christian. The second was that gratitude honors God. And the third principle relevant to gratitude in the face of suffering comes from the second half of the same verse I referenced earlier, Psalm 50, verse 23. "He who brings thanksgiving as his sacrifice honors me; to him who orders his way aright I will show the salvation of God!" (rsv). It prepares the way. It is in these very situations which are so painful—having what you don't want, wanting with all your heart something that you don't have—that thanksgiving can prepare the way for God to show us His Salvation.

Let all men therefore prize a little with the fear of the Lord (gifts indeed are desirable), but yet great grace and small gifts are better than great gifts and no grace. It doth not say the Lord gives gifts and glory, but the Lord gives grace and glory; and blessed is such an one, to whom the Lord gives grace, true grace; for that is a certain forerunner of glory. – John Bunyan