

WD January 1, 2023

“He Knows What He’s Doing”

A long time ago in a land called Michigan the Woods family built a house. It was on a wooded lot full of big trees. Many of these trees needed to be cleared for the house. The excavating crew went to work. One of the crew, the son of the owner, was clearing the lot with an excavator. At one point he reached out with the arm of that machine and began to pull back on a tree. As I remember my dad telling me about it, this “professional” on this machine seemed to be clueless to the fact that if he succeeded the tree would fall on his cab and probably kill him. Seeing this, dad quickly waved the operator off from pulling the tree and encouraged a different method that didn’t involved pulling the tree down on himself. It was enough to make one wonder, “Does he know what he is doing?”

When it comes to anything it’s always better when it’s done by someone that knows what they are doing. One wouldn’t want their mechanic to connect their washer fluid line to the brakes—every time you press the brakes the windshield wipers spray and every time the wipers are turned on to spray the brakes slow the car down. One wouldn’t want one’s doctor to work on the lungs when the heart is what needs attention. We wouldn’t want an investment advisor to invest our retirement in K-mart or Sears in an Amazon kind of world. I think we can agree that having one that knows what one is doing is the key to getting most things right.

The one most important place to get it right is the Salvation of the world. I think the visit of the Wisemen is one of those places that illustrates how much the Lord knows what He is doing. In Matt 2:1-12 we hear some amazing things. Vs 1-2 tell us, “After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” First, the Wisemen were from the East, maybe Persia, or Babylon. These are likely men who spend a lot of time watching the sky. Stars had great meaning back then. They follow a star to Bethlehem. This star was a possible alignment of planets such as Jupiter and Mars. God who is Creator of all things could have moved the planets as easily as He calmed the winds and waves on the Sea of Galilee. They exist to praise Him. This alignment was enough to catch the attention of these wisemen who believed that this alignment indicated a King born in Judea, whom *should* be “worshiped.” They did not worship every king by the way. They certainly didn’t worship Herod. With this newborn king they planned on worshipping as unique among all kings. They understood something was galactically different about Jesus that makes Him a king of kings worthy of planets announcing His birth. The shepherds may have been the first to witness about Jesus. These wisemen seem to be the first Gentiles to worship the Lord.

Another clue that the Lord has things well in hand is in the gifts that the Wisemen brought. Matt 2:11; “On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” First, two quick notes. By the time the Magi arrive Mary and Joseph were living in a house. Secondly, the child is a *paidion* by this point—a toddler. Jesus may already be a year old. At any rate consider the gifts. These are not random gifts. Each carries meaning.

Gold is the treasure of a king. A great emphasis on Jesus as King and heaven as His kingdom runs throughout Matthew’s Gospel. But let us also remember that the Ark of the Covenant, constructed of Acacia wood as covered in Gold. The top, or Kapporeth, was made of pure Gold (Exodus 25:10-21). Two golden cherubim were on this cover and between these cherubim was the presence of God Himself. Gold is for kings. But here it also connects to God being present with His people as He once was in the Tabernacle.

Frankincense is the second gift and is as significant as the gold. It is made of a clear resin usually used as a perfume and healing. It's true significance is that it was used in the presence of the Lord at the Tabernacle and Temple (Exodus 30:34). It was most likely what Zechariah was bringing into the Temple when the angel appeared to Him in Luke 1:10. Frankincense is also a symbol of prayer (Psalm 141:2) as its smoke rises which is why Zechariah's prayer is also noted. It is significant in that it signals Jesus Himself as High Priest (Hebrews 7:25). As High Priest Jesus would offer Himself also as the Lamb. Frankincense ultimately points to cross with Jesus as sacrifice for the sins of the people.

Finally, we turn to Myrrh. Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh while on the cross but Jesus refused it (Mark 15:23). The big picture of Myrrh is that of a burial spice. Where frankincense is a spice of intercession Myrrh is directly connected to Jesus' death. John 19:39-40 tell us, "³⁹ He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. ⁴⁰ Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs."

So, we have a star. We have wisemen following the star. We have gold for a king. Frankincense for intercession and myrrh for a burial. Interesting, considering Isaiah 60:6, "And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord." Of course, the timing couldn't have been better for their arrival. These would be helpful gifts to support Mary and Joseph on their journey to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath. So many details. So many clues that the Lord knows what He is doing especially in terms of our salvation.

As we start 2024 one may wonder if God knows what He is doing. Well, that depends on what we are looking at. Contractors. Doctors. Wars. Elections. Abuse of Government authority. Migrants and more migrants. Economic woes. Or... Jesus—The Creator who aligns stars to announce Himself. One who draws to Himself Wisemen who bring specific gifts that witness to Jesus' true purpose. Great timing for Mary and Joseph and Jesus to tour Egypt. Herods who become irrelevant in the presence of Jesus. Jesus' death on a cross and a resurrection. It certainly appears to me that Jesus knows what He is doing as much in 2024 as He did 2000 years ago and from the beginning. Like the old saying goes, "The truly wise still follow Jesus." That's good advice for another new year.

Pastor Matt Woods
John 3:30