



Springcreek  
CHURCH

2660 Belt Line Road  
Garland, TX 75044  
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www.springcreekchurch.org

## THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas Message 2017  
Pastor Keith Stewart  
December 23-24, 2017

"The way we think someone sees us is not necessarily how they see us. That becomes manifest in the gifts that they give us sometimes. That can be a bit of a surprise..." – Dr. Karen Pine

"Gifts are one of the ways in which the pictures others have of us are transmitted. Of course, the gift doesn't just reveal the image the giver has of you; it exposes the character and the thinking of the giver as well." - Barry Schwartz, *The Social Psychology of Gifts*

"I think people need to regard gift giving as a communication. The ideal gift communicates appropriate and desired messages about both the giver and the receiver." - Dawn Bryan

### 1. THE PLAYERS AND TENSION IN THE STORY

#### □ The Magi

How did they know the star (whatever it was) meant anything at all?

...and in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. — Daniel 1:20

...the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. — Daniel 2:48



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## ❑ Herod the Great

"You may be surprised to hear this, but believe it or not, if you are ever asked which is the one figure from the ancient world on whom we have more primary evidence from original sources than anyone else in the world, the answer is not Jesus or Saint Paul or Caesar Augustus or Julius Caesar—none of those. Alexander the Great? No, no. It is Herod the Great, believe it or not. Why? Because Josephus gives us two whole book scrolls on the life of Herod the Great. And that is more primary material than anyone else."  
- Paul Maier, Historian

"It is better to be Herod's pig than son." – Caesar Augustus

Josephus, a Jewish historian of that period, called Herod "...a murderous old man."

## 2. THE SAGA AS IT UNFOLDS

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 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." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. Matthew 2:3

The word "disturbed" means to "shake violently."

When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. Matthew 2:4-6



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He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." Matthew 2.8

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house... Matthew 2.9-11

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. Matthew 2.11

### 3. THE GIFTS AND THEIR MESSAGE

#### Gold for His Majesty

"Seneca, the Roman philosopher, tells us that in Parthia it was the custom that no one could ever approach the king without a gift. And gold, the king of metals, is the fit gift for a king of men." - William Barclay, The Gospel of Matthew

#### Frankincense for the High Priest

#### Myrrh for One Who Is to Die

Myrrh was about 5 times more valuable than gold, weight for weight.

"According to the Greek writer, Herodotus, the Egyptians used myrrh in preparation of human mummies, a practice that pre-dated Jesus' birth by thousands of years." - Clint Pumphrey, "What Are Frankincense and Myrrh?"