



## Missing Christmas

December 11, 2011

The visit of the wise men (or Magi) is an exotic part of the story of the birth of Jesus, with foreign travel, expensive gifts, political intrigue, and danger. But the Magi and King Herod reacted in very different ways towards God. Let's look at their responses and learn from them. As you start this study, ask God "What do you want me to see this Christmas? I am seeking you."

### Where Am I Today?

- 1) Have you ever been so busy during the Christmas season that you felt as though you missed the whole thing? When else in your life have you come to that realization?
- 2) Can you say that you are an honest seeker? Are you currently pursuing Christmas by pursuing Jesus? If not, what *are* you pursuing?

### Into the Bible

- 3) When the Magi crossed paths with Herod, both parties ended up fulfilling Old Testament prophecy without meaning to. **Read** Matthew 2:1-12 to see how God, in His sovereign power, lined up events to fulfill His plan. What does this show about God's ability to use anything and everyone to accomplish what He wants to accomplish?



- 4) There were very different responses to the Good News of Jesus. Most of us have these same reactions (all of them!) at different times in our lives. Briefly note the attitudes of the people in the passages below, and what motivated their response. Then underline the passage that represents who you choose to be like this Christmas.
- a. Matthew 2:2
  - b. Matthew 2:3, 7 & 16
  - c. Luke 2:25-38
  - d. Matthew 9:1-8

#### **How Does This Apply?**

- 5) King Herod was full of pride, busy building an empire, self-absorbed, and totally missing God's appearance. What are the specific "Herod" areas of your life, where you need to make adjustments so you don't "miss Christmas"?
- 6) Imagine how you could look more like the Magi: Are you ready to put Jesus on your Christmas list, and ask Him what He wants from you for Christmas? **Make a list** of specific things Jesus asks of all believers, and any personal request He's asking of you. (Hint: Mark 12:28-31 might be of help.)



- 7) For self-examination: Do I have any attitudes that keep me from relentlessly pursuing God? What are the attitudes and responses I typically exhibit? (For example: "Pride leads me to resist" or "I'm afraid, so I don't follow.") What "next step" is God requiring of you so that you can overcome that obstacle to full obedience?

### **Digging Deeper: Going Further on Your Own**

- 8) The Magi were most likely Zoroastrian priests. Zoroastrianism is an ancient monotheistic religion from Persia that's almost extinct now. Over time, Magi started studying texts from other religions, plus astrology, and anything else they thought would point them to God. They were like ancient pluralists, with coexist bumper stickers on their camels. While they would have probably read the Old Testament (which is why they were familiar with Messianic prophecies), it's unlikely that they considered it to be any more important than other religious texts. However, God still used their bumpy method and faulty theology to bring them to Jesus. What does this show about God's character and His sovereignty? How can this encourage you to pray for friends who seem to be looking for God in all the wrong places?