

“The Magi Celebrating the Birth”

◆ Matthew 2:1-12

Around the time of Jesus' birth, wise men from the East (Persia) came to Jerusalem. Their country was a developed country where astronomy and various civilizations flourished. Though they were Gentiles, upon hearing of the birth of the “King of the Jews,” they desired to offer their blessings. Meanwhile, Herod the king of Judea, known for his jealousy, felt great unease. He feared his throne would be usurped. He therefore questioned the chief priests and scribes of Judea and heard that the Messiah was to be born in the small town called Bethlehem. Thus, Herod instructed the wise men from the East to find the place where Jesus was born and report back to him once they had confirmed it. He intended to kill the infant who would become his rival.

Guided by the star, the wise men found the newborn Jesus. They fell down before the infant, rejoiced, and worshiped him. Though they were pagans, they knew of the Messiah's coming foretold in the Old Testament. They presented precious gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold was for the young parents' financial support; frankincense's sweet scent was to deodorize the stables' odors; myrrh

was for treating illnesses, which is common for infants. The scholars returned to their own country without meeting King Herod again.

The foreign scholars traveled a great distance to find the newborn Jesus to joyfully celebrate. They testified that Jesus' salvation was not confined to the Jews alone. The love of the Creator of heaven and earth is for the salvation of all peoples. The arrival of the Messiah born in the small town of Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus, the God of peace, is an encouragement to the peoples of the world. Those who prioritized self-interest, represented by Herod, rejected Jesus. The foreign scholars bowed down and celebrated Jesus' birth.