

King At His Birth
Matthew 2:1-12

THE RESPONSE OF FEAR

[The magi said], “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Matthew 2:2-3

Herod is not dead; Herod lives on, in us...The exaggerated ambitions, pretensions, greed for position, grudge against God, guile and finally human cruelty and insensitivity, which are all the fruit of our war with God—all these still live in us and must be contended with until the last judgment.

-Dale Frederick Bruner

I speak from experience, being strongly subject to this fear myself: I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that. My guess is that this cosmic authority problem is not a rare condition...

-Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word*

You ain't got the right to tell me
When and where to go, no right to tell me
Acting like you own me lately
Yeah, baby you don't know a thing about me
You don't know a thing about me

-Kelly Clarkson, "Mr. Know It All"

THE RESPONSE OF FAITH

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

Matthew 2:1-2

“Those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons make known what shall come upon you— Behold, they are likely stubble; the fire consumes them.”

-Isaiah 47:13-14

“He who learns from a magus is worthy of death.”

-Babylonian Talmud, *bShab.*, 75a.

Just like God lowers himself to meet us in the incarnation of Jesus, so God also continually lowers himself to meet us where we are at.

And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Matthew 2:11

Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in *wisdom*. And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. Every one of them brought his present, articles of silver and *gold*, garments, *myrrh*, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.

-1 Kings 10:23-25

When people are drawn to, find, and worship God's Christ, they also find themselves wanting to bring him their finest resources. Christmas gift-giving has its origin here. The first gift-giver is God. Now the first human gift-givers are Magi. Regenerate humanity's first response to Christ is giving itself to his honor and service. The question of life's meaning begins to be answered: it is to devote one's gifts to God's King.

-Dale Frederick Bruner

THE MOTIVATION OF FAITH

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us).

-Matthew 1:23

Before we ever give our worship to God, God always first freely gives himself to us.

This was the crowning point of [the magi's] faith. — They saw no miracles to convince them. They heard no teaching to persuade them... They saw nothing but a new-born infant, helpless and weak, and needing a mother's care like any one of ourselves. And yet when they saw that infant... 'they fell down and worshiped him.'

-J.C. Ryle