

Christmas (or Christmas Eve) – The Christ Candle

As you light the first candle explain, "The first candle we light is The Prophet's Candle and it reminds us that the coming of Jesus was foretold hundreds of years before His birth."

As you light the second candle explain, "The second candle we light is The Bethlehem Candle and it reminds us that Jesus was born in a humble fashion as a servant."

As you light the third candle explain, "The third candle we light is The Shepherds' Candle and it reminds us that the birth of Jesus was first announced to the humble shepherds."

As you light the fourth candle explain, "The fourth candle we light is The Angels' Candle and it reminds us that the birth of Jesus was good news of great joy for all people."

As you light The Christ Candle explain, "We light The Christ Candle as we celebrate the joy of Christ's birth and are reminded to celebrate him as our greatest gift."

Consider: There is only one response to such a great gift as Jesus and it is worship. If we were to receive nothing else today we would still have a great treasure to celebrate, and celebrate is exactly what our hearts should do when we remember the birth of Jesus. The story of the wise men that came after Jesus was born reminds us of what happens in the heart of someone who realizes who Jesus is, they rejoice and generously give their lives to worship him.

Read the Bible: *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." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:*

"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship

him." After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 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. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. (Matthew 2:1-12 ESV)

Remember: In the passage that we just read we find two very different responses to the birth of Jesus that may help us to reflect on our own preparation to celebrate today. The first response is that of the wise men, who travel with gifts to celebrate the birth of the Savior. They welcome the coming of Christ with joy and worship. The second is that of King Herod. To Herod, this small baby appears as a threat to his own power and desires. Rather than recognize the significance of the moment, he plotted how he could protect his own crumbling kingdom in the face of the birth of the King of the universe. To realize how futile it is to respond like Herod, we only have to stop and think that today we are not celebrating Herod's holiday, but Christmas.

Pray: Give us hearts like the wise men to worship the Lord Jesus today. Help us to rejoice exceedingly with great joy at the very thought of him. As we share our gifts with one another help us to remember his great gift to us.