INTRODUCTION: (read Text: 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 and of incense and of myrrh.)

–[house not a stable; the Bible shows it took about two years from Christ’s birth till the Magi came] However long it took, the gifts of the Magi (title) were Christ’s 1st birthday presents. During our busy holiday activities, these gifts remind us of Whose birthday we’re celebrating at Christmas.

–Everything in Scripture is for our instruction. So, why are the Magi mentioned? What is being taught through them? The answers to these two questions may help us with a more personal question: HOM.idea.

I. Who were the Magi?

A. Were they wise men or kings? [Tertullian (225 AD) called them kings.]
   1. The OT spoke of kings– Ps 72:10-11, ..kings of Tarshish and of distant shores will bring tribute to him; the kings of Sheba and Seba will present him gifts. All kings will bow down to him, and all nations will serve him.
   2. Because of the 3 gifts, a “3 Wise Men” legend started sometime before 600 AD, [naming the wise men Melchior, Balthasar and Gaspar].

B. Literally, these were Magi (a term of ancient and obscure origin)
   1. Its general definition [HolmanBD]: “Eastern wise men, priests, and astrologers expert in interpreting dreams and other ‘magic arts.’”
   2. There were 3 possible backgrounds for these Magi: that of...
      a. Medes: a sacred tribe of priestly wise men who gave counsel to Persian kings through the use of sorcery and astrology.
      b. or Magicians: a name given to those practicing magic (like Simon Magus and Elymas the Sorcerer in the Book of Acts).
      c. or Magians: Persian priests who, like the Jews, had only one God and no idol-worship. (These Magi anticipated a Messiah, probably because of the prophecies of Daniel, who had been (Dan 5:11) “chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners”).

TRANS: Knowing very little about Jesus, these Magi “bowed down and worshiped him,” bringing Him gifts. But they set a pattern of what to bring to the newborn King by first bringing themselves. So...
II. Who do these Magi represent?
A. They represent God's will for the world's wise men. His will is*
1. for philosophers [lovers of wisdom] to submit to true Wisdom—1Cor 1:30. “Christ Jesus...has become for us wisdom from God.”
2. *for scientists [students of natural law] to kneel to the Law-Giver (acknowledging the God of Science, the Creator of natural law)
3. for religious leaders [seekers of God] to worship the God Who became Man. (Occultists & New-Agers often extol ancient religions, but their man-centered beliefs don’t match the God-centered faith of the Magi.) [from The Three Visions of Balthasar: We vowed to leave our magic arts/ And serve this King the Star announced,/ To bow to Him with humble hearts./ And you who hear my mystic song,/ If you are wise, as I am gray,/ Will also seek to find that King./ And worship Him, and wait His day.]

B. The Magi also represent us, the followers of Christ:
1. They were kings and priests; and so are we—Rev 5:9b-10 (NKJV), For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.
2. They came to Christ; and so have we (v.2:11a):
   a. coming to the house—Why do we come to the house of God? What do we hope to find here? We seek to be in God’s presence!  
   b. they bowed down—A big obstacle in coming to God is often pride of knowledge, which keeps our finite minds from bowing down to the revealed will of the Infinite Mind [Hippolytus: “We must not act in accordance with our own mind or our own will... We must look at things rather as God has chosen to make them known through Scripture.”]
   c. they...worshiped him—The heart of the matter is a “heart” matter: Each person must decide Who or what they’ll worship. (We and the Magi chose to adore Jesus Christ, “the newborn King.”)

TRANS: We’ve examined who the Magi were and who they represent. But, “Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts...”

III. What were their gifts?—they...presented him with gifts...*
A. of gold [It was a Persian custom to approach kings with a gift, and the only fit gift was gold, king of metals]—Their gold symbolized their surrender to this newborn King’s authority [A defeated officer who knew of Admiral Nelson’s fame for courtesy, extended him his hand, but was told, “Your sword first, and then your hand.”] (If we would surrender fully to Christ the newborn King, we must lay down our swords at His feet!)

B. *of incense (frankincense) [a priestly perfume burned in censers at worship]—a fit gift for Jesus, born to be a Priest [Lat., pontifex, bridge-builder]
1. It stood for the need of a Mediator between sinners and God.
2. As a priesthood of believers, we must take up censers, burning with the perfume of grace and attracting others to Christ!
C. *of myrrh [a spice used for embalming]—a fit gift for One who was to die—John19:39 says that Nicodemus brought myrrh to use in wrapping Christ’s body. [The word “myrrh” is used only twice in the NT, like parenthesis marks wrapped around Christ’s birth and His death.]
1. Jesus was born to be the sacrificed Lamb of God. (Myrrh cast the shadow of the Cross on the manger cradle of the newborn King.)
2. Myrrh represented dying to self—John15:13 “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” (Jesus calls us by His Cross to follow Him by taking up our own crosses.)

CONCLUSION:
–What can we bring for the birth of the King, the Mediator between God and man, the Savior of the world? The Magi opened their treasures and presented gifts to Him. Let’s open the treasure store of our own hearts:–Let’s give Him our swords, surrendering our allegiance to His reign alone, no longer fighting against His will with our own defiant will.  
–Let’s open our hands, taking up priestly censers burning with the sweet-smelling aroma of grace, as we seek to bring others to Christ.  
–Let’s yield our hearts for His self-denying love to be lived out in us. –closing: Christina Rossetti’s Christmas poem, In the Bleak Midwinter

In the bleak midwinter, / Frosty wind
made moan, / Earth stood hard as iron, / Water like a stone; / Snow had fallen, snow on snow, / Snow on snow, / In the bleak midwinter, / Long ago.

Angels and archangels / May have gathered there, / Cherubim and
seraphim / Thronged the air; / But his mother only, In her maiden bliss, / Worshipped the beloved / With a kiss.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him, / Nor earth sustain; / Heaven and earth shall flee away, / When he comes to reign; / In the bleak midwinter / A stable sufficed / The Lord God almighty, / Jesus Christ.

What can I give him, / Poor as I am? / If I were a shepherd, / I would bring a lamb; / If I were a wise man, I would do my part; / Yet what can I give him— / Give my heart.