

INNOCENCE OF LOVE

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Lesson: Matthew 2:1-11

Let me ask you a question. If you could have any present you would like, any present at all, what would it be? Each one of us probably has a different answer. It would take a long time for each person to say what he or she would like most of all, and they would all be very different. But why does each person want that special present? Because that present we think will make us happy. All of us want to be happy, and that's why we *each* are thinking about some other present. But happiness is what we're all looking for, and is it wrong to want to be happy, especially at Christmas-time? Certainly not. The Lord loves us, and wants more than anything else for us to be happy. That's why He created us. That's why He came on earth—to bring back true happiness. He tells us in His Word that we can be truly happy only when we receive His love; When we read His Word and learn about Him, and think about Him—how He came into the world; The beautiful story of Christmastime. When we think about Him, then we can love Him. And when we try to love *Him*, His love flows into our hearts and fills our hearts so that they run over with love, and then we think about other people. We want to make them happy. And there's no happiness at all without the Lord's love.

This brings us to the most important reason for the Lord's Coming—to bring love to mankind once again, so that they feel it and use it to make each other happy. And in this way they prepare for heaven.

You know that when men and women and little children first lived on this earth, back in the days of the Most Ancient Church, they loved each other. There was no evil or selfishness. They were happy. Their minds were open to the Lord's love. But they became selfish. They turned away from the Lord, and turned His love into hatred and into unhappiness. All of those things soon were centered and made up hell. And so the Lord wanted to come down and take away that unhappiness, to bring His love once again to everyone in a way that they would receive it. That is why He was born. He is love itself. He came down in the most lovable form that we can think of, which is a tiny baby. There's nothing so easily loved as a little baby, and the innocence surrounding that little baby. And so the Lord wanted to be loved, and He came as an infant, born in Bethlehem of Judea. He was born in Bethlehem because Bethlehem means 'His Word.' That is where the Lord is to be found. And the shepherds came immediately, because the shepherds represent those tender feelings in our heart from the angels that make us want to love the Lord.

The wisemen came with their gifts, following a star, because they represent the

other way that we prepare for the Lord's love—by following His truth like a bright star. And even though we come into contact with evil, as the wisemen did in Jerusalem where Herod was, if we follow the Lord's Word like a bright star, we will be protected, and will learn about the Lord and will be led to where He is. Then what can we do? We can love Him above all else— that's the gift of gold. We can love each other—and that's the gift of frankincense. We can love to obey His Word in everything we do and say—and that's the myrrh. That's how happiness comes. The Lord wants us to be happy. That's why He came. And we can only be happy when we receive His love, and when that love is present in the gifts that we give and the gifts that we receive, and in everything we do for each other.