

PLEASANT RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH

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State Road, N.C. 28676

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Born to Die: The Light of the Word amid the shadow of the cross

All parents have dreams that their children will grow up to be someone great, that they would live their lives in a meaningful and satisfying way. No parent wants to think about the death of their child. And children don't usually grow up anticipating their own death. But from the beginning of Jesus' life, death loomed large, marking His purpose for coming into this world. When Jesus was dedicated in the temple, the elder Simeon predicted the grief Mary would one day experience seeing her Son die: "And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart" (Luke 2:35, GNT).

Later, when the magi visited the child Jesus, they brought gifts suitable for a king but with an odd twist—"gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11). These were expensive items but also emblematic of the role Jesus would play during His life. Gold and incense were typically associated with royalty and regarded as gifts befitting a king (Isaiah 60:6), but a gift of myrrh may have caused a few brows to furrow. It may have seemed out of place, even offensive to give to a child. Yet it revealed that the purpose of this child was to die.

Myrrh is an aromatic, reddish resin that comes from a low-growing, thorny tree of the genus *Commiphora*, native to the Arabian Peninsula. And the use of myrrh goes back thousands of years. It was used as a beauty treatment, a perfume, and even an anti-septic and analgesic. Most significant, it was used as an embalming fluid. The Greek writer Herodotus even tells us that Egyptians used myrrh in the preparation of human mummies. So, if myrrh is for dead bodies, then why give it to a baby?

Here's what's interesting: The same substance that was presented to Jesus after His birth was also used for Him at His death. When Jesus' body was removed from the cross and prepared for burial, we're told that "Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds" (John 19:39). This compound was to be used to mitigate the stench of the body as it decayed in the tomb.

Did you know that ancient rabbis also associated myrrh with sacrificial death, especially with Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac on Mount Moriah? The Hebrew word for myrrh is *mor*, and that's the root word of the place where Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac—on Mount Moriah, or the "mountain of myrrh." So, to an ancient Hebrew rabbi, myrrh immediately connected with death, and especially the idea of a father sacrificing his son!

Here's what's incredible: Centuries later, the ridge of Mount Moriah was the very place Jesus Christ would be sacrificed by His Father for the sins of the world. This gift of myrrh to the child Jesus was prophetic of His very death. It's important, too, that you know that myrrh gave off its finest scent only when it was crushed. Does that ring a bell? "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities ... and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5, NIV).

Yet it must have been a surreal moment when the magi presented the myrrh to Mary and Joseph. They may have thought, *Hmm, embalming fluid. Interesting! Well, thanks all the same.* But this is what the angel hinted at when he told Joseph, "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). And how would He save people from their sins? By dying on the cross. Salvation would come only through His death. As Augustine, who was from the region, would later remark, "Gold, as paid to a mighty King; frankincense, as offered to God; myrrh, as to one who is to die for the sins of all."

We all know the Christmas story. But do you know the rest of the story? Jesus was the only person ever born with the distinct purpose of dying! The purpose of the crib was the cross. And unless you see the shadow of the cross falling on the crib, you won't see the crib clearly at all.

Jesus dying on the cross was not God's "Plan B." It was always meant to happen. God planned it that way from the beginning. Revelation 13:8 calls Jesus "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The gift of myrrh was one of the first hints of this in Jesus' life, this Child who was born to die.

That's quite a thing to suggest: "Your child is here to die." Just as any parent thinks about and even plans their child's life, and not their death, we must ask: What kind of a father would give his son to be killed? Only a Father who loves you enough to redeem you the only way possible—through His Son's atoning death.

But the magi didn't come all that distance to just drop off a few gifts; they came to adore Him. They "fell down and worshiped Him" (Matthew 2:11). These were important, dignified men, ancient kingmakers with political clout—yet they bowed in front of a small child. Why? Because they knew their place. You don't brag about your crayon sketches when you're standing next to Picasso; you don't claim equality with Einstein just because you can write "H₂O." And you may be a kingmaker, but when you're standing in front of the King of kings, you bow down.

Some Bible commentators refer to the magi's worship as their fourth gift. It's something you and I can give Jesus this Christmas, too—a fitting gift for the Savior, who was born to die. ©2021 Skip Heitzig

Skip Heitzig is founder and senior pastor of Calvary of Albuquerque, a Calvary Chapel Fellowship in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

GOD'S BLESSINGS DEC. 5, 2021

BUDGET NEEDS:	\$7,157.70
BUDGET RECEIPT:	\$10,564.02
CEMETERY FUND	\$100.00
LOTTIE MOON	\$100.00
WORSHIP ATTENDANCE:	172

GOD'S BLESSINGS DEC. 12 2021

BUDGET NEEDS:	\$7,157.70
BUDGET RECEIPT:	\$5,565.00
CEMETERY FUND	\$50.00
LOTTIE MOON	\$2,160.00
WORSHIP ATTENDANCE:	180



LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS

\$2,585.00 GOAL \$7000

Tri-C for December: Jello, Pudding Donations: 34 Pounds

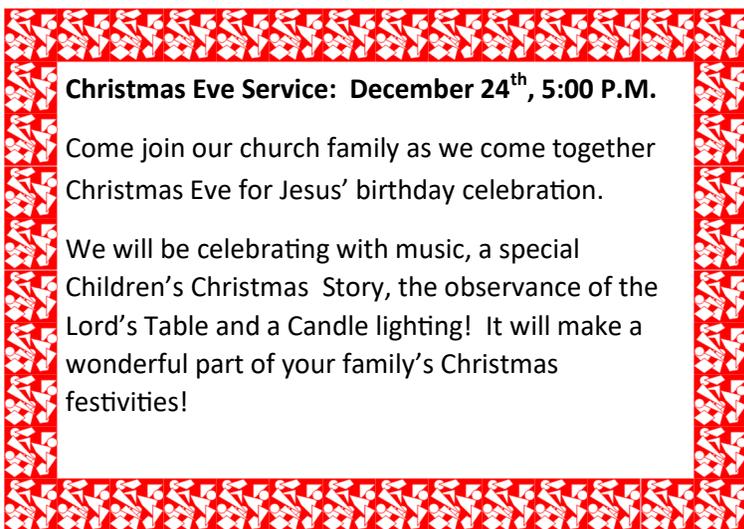
Ark Meal for Dec. 21: Anita Darnell

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering: The month of December. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® is an annual offering collected by Southern Baptists to support international missions. The offering was officially named in 1918 by Woman's Missionary Union in honor of the missionary to China who urged churches to start it and give sacrificially.

Christmas Caroling: PRBC will have Christmas caroling this Wednesday night, Dec. 15 at 6:00pm with a hot dog dinner following. Please see Melinda for more info.

Christmas Office Hours: the office will be closed Thur. 12/23 reopening Monday 12/27.

Senior Saints: Jan. 7th. Hayride to Hollywood, an Elvis Birthday Celebration! SOLD OUT.



Christmas Eve Service: December 24th, 5:00 P.M.

Come join our church family as we come together Christmas Eve for Jesus' birthday celebration.

We will be celebrating with music, a special Children's Christmas Story, the observance of the Lord's Table and a Candle lighting! It will make a wonderful part of your family's Christmas festivities!

Just a note of Thanks!

Cindy and I would love to express to you our appreciation for your welcoming spirit and kindnesses that have been shown to us in just the first few days of being at PRBC! You have greeted us as family and gifted us with a generous outflowing of goodies and gift cards that have made our settling in so much easier. We are looking forward to getting to know you and ask that you are tolerant as we try to remember names. The Lord has brought us together as we find our place of service in this local body of Christ. To His Glory!

John and Cindy Newton

Service Times

Sunday

- 10:00 am - Children's Sunday School
- 10:00 am - Adult Sunday School
- 11:00 am - Worship Service

Wednesday

- 7:00 pm - Children Night Class
- 7:00 pm - Adult Bible Study
- 7:00 pm - Youth Bible Study

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WIFI: PLEASANT RIDGE, PASSWORD: PLEASANTRIDGE

WIFI IN NURSERY AREA: PRBC, PASSWORD: PLEASANTBAPTIST

For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given:
and the government shall
be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor,
THE MIGHTY GOD,
The everlasting Father,
THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

Isaiah 9:6

