



Some reflections inspired by online copyrighted commentaries and homilies

**January 3, 2021**

**Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord**

## **Three Wise Men, We Want to Know**

The Bible story of the Three Wise Men, from the gospel of Matthew, is also known as the biblical Magi or the Three Kings. This Bible story regards a group of scholarly foreigners who traveled to visit Jesus after his birth, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, during the time of King Herod, Wise Men from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.' When King Herod learned this he was troubled, and all of Jerusalem with him. He called together all the leading clerics and scholars of the law, he questioned them where the Christ was to be born. 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they answered, 'for this is what the prophet has written: "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'" Then Herod summoned the Wise Men secretly and found out from them the precise time the star had emerged. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'

As directed by King Herod, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the East went before them until it stopped over the area where the child laid. Upon arriving at the house, they observed the child with his mother Mary, and they kneeled down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh. They were then miraculously warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, as he planned to kill Jesus in preserving his authority, and returned to their home by an alternative route.

### **Names & Characteristics of the Three Wise Men**

Accounts have been told about the Three Wise Men and they have been given names. This is how they are often portrayed:

- **Gaspar** (or Caspar), who wears a green cloak and a gold crown with green jewels on it. He is the King of Sheba. Gaspar represents the Frankincense brought to Jesus.
- **Melchior**, who has long white hair and a white beard and wears a gold cloak. He is the King of Arabia. Melchior represents the Gold brought to Jesus.
- **Balthazar**, who has a black beard and wears a purple cloak. He is the King of Tarse and Egypt. Balthazar represents the gift of Myrrh that was brought to Jesus.

### **Meaning of the Gifts for Jesus**

When the Wise Men discovered Jesus and Mary, they would have been residing in a modest house in Bethlehem, because by this time Jesus would have been aged between one and two. Their gifts seem somewhat unusual to give to a baby, however, Christians consider that they had the following purposes and meaning:

- **Gold:** is affiliated with Kings and Christians believe that Jesus is the King of Kings.
- **Frankincense:** is occasionally utilized in worship in Churches and represented that people would worship and praise Jesus.
- **Myrrh:** is a fragrance that is embedded on dead bodies to make them smell pleasant and represented that Jesus would endure persecution resulting in his death.

*Taken from: Bible Study Tools*