

Wise Men Come to Worship

Key Verse: *“When they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”*
—Matthew 2:11

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 2:1-11

THE ACCOUNT OF OUR

lesson begins, “In the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.” When Herod heard this, “he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.” (Matt. 2:1-3) This reaction perhaps was because Herod felt his own rule was now threatened. Likewise, others in Jerusalem who may have had some advantages because of his rulership were fearful of losing these special privileges.

Herod “gathered all the chief priests and scribes” of the Jews and demanded to know where Christ should be born. Knowing the prophecies concerning Messiah, they answered, “Bethlehem.” Herod told the wise men, “Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.” (vss. 4-8) This was a deception by Herod.

If he knew where the King of the Jews was, he could then have him killed, thus protecting his rulership.

After the wise men departed from Herod, “the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.” (vss. 9,10) Our Key Verse states that when they came into the house, the wise men saw the young child with Mary his mother. They bowed down and worshipped him and then presented him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Joseph and Mary were perhaps surprised by the precious gifts received from these strangers. In God’s providence, however, their costly value was probably used to meet expenses during their flight to Egypt, which would soon follow.

Each of the gifts given by the wise men seems to have had a symbolic meaning. Gold, a relatively rare metal and considered precious throughout history, was a fitting gift for a king. Frankincense produces a pleasant odor when burned and was used extensively in the Tabernacle. It was one of the ingredients in the holy incense and was also placed on top of the shewbread in the Holy. (Exod. 30:34-38; Lev. 24:5-7) The gift of frankincense perhaps pointed forward to Jesus’ priestly service.

Myrrh was one of the ingredients in the holy anointing oil of the Tabernacle. (Exod. 30:23-25) A bitter herb, it may have symbolized in advance how during Jesus’ earthly ministry he would be “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” (Isa. 53:3). Myrrh was also applied to Jesus’ body after his death.—John 19:39,40

After the wise men presented their gifts, having been “warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.” (Matt. 2:12) Let us be as the wise men, presenting daily our treasure to the Heavenly Father—all that we have and are, which is our “reasonable service.”—Rom. 12:1