



# Anglican Orthodox Church



## WISE MEN WHO BECAME WISER

Matthew 2

- 1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
- 2 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.

Having lived in the hauntingly beautiful high desert of Persia (modern Iran) as a young man, I was overcome with awe at the beauty and pristine clarity of the night sky. Every star was a point of crystal-bright light on a purple canopy.

Persia was also a land of beautiful gardens of flowers and fruit orchards. The distance snow-capped Alborz mountains stood solemn watch over this ancient land of the Magi. Esfahan, the central city in which I lived, was home to the original Magi of Persia. It is the place of origin of the Zoroastrian religion. The Magi were the priests of this religion. Cyrus the Great, who was buried nearby in Pasargadae, was heavily influenced by Ahuramazda, the presumed god of Zoroaster.

The Wise Men were men of influence and means in Persia. They sought Truth and were not satisfied with the shadows offered by a false religion. They searched the ancient writings and prophecies of the Hebrews and discovered many wonderful Truths. Among the Truths that the Magi learned was the prophecy of a coming Messiah. A Star was to herald His birth.

They searched the clear night skies of Persia for the sign of His coming. When men search diligently for Truth, they shall always be rewarded, and so were these Wise Men of ancient Persia. They saw the Star and knew its meaning! Men of today need discernment in knowing God's Will.

They followed the Star across the harsh deserts of Arabia and drew nigh to the Holy Land. For some reason, they decided to go directly to Jerusalem and the palace of Herod to find this promised King of Israel. The Star had not led them to Jerusalem, but they reasoned that surely the coming King would be born in the splendor of a King's Palace. In this they were mistaken - just as you and I will be deceived if we take our vision from off the sure Word of God.

The Promised Child was not to be found in Jerusalem. Herod diligently inquired of the place and time of His birth so that he (Herod) might go and worship Him also. Herod lied! Herod had only one plan in mind..and that was to murder the Holy Child. The seat of worldly power is never the place to find Christ!

The Wise Men departed out from the presence of Herod, His Palace, and Jerusalem. When they had cleared the man-made lights of the city, once again the God-made Light appeared to them and they followed it faithfully to Bethlehem. The Beautiful Star stopped and stood over the place of Jesus' Nativity. The Wise Men rejoiced as all wise people do at the discovery of Christ.

They entered into the humble abode. When we find Christ, we enter into His Divine Presence. And they worshipped Him. These men of means worshipped a little Child! They worshipped Him - not for WHAT He was, but WHO He was.

In the traditions of the East, it is customary for conquered peoples to pay tribute in the form of gifts to a conquering King. These men were no exception. They presented the Christ Child with three varieties of gifts - Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh.

These very gifts were prophetic of who this Child was.

Gold is a gift signifying Royalty. Christ was born King of Kings. He spiritually and, soon, physically, takes the place of the failed Kings of the earth.

Frankincense is a gift signifying Divinity. The burning of the incense in the Temple represented the presence of the Holy Spirit and the ascension to Heaven of the Prayers of the People. Christ is not only King, He is our Divine Sovereign. He rules, not only in our outward manner of living, but in our inward being and thinking. He is worthy of Worship!

The third gift, Myrrh, was an expensive substance used in anointing a body in Death. Christ was the sacrificial Lamb of God whose coming was foreordained from before the foundations of the world (1 Peter 1:19-20). He was a King who would die for the great benefit of His subjects!

The Wise Men were wise to search the Heavens for the prophetic sign. They were wise to follow the Star to the place where Jesus lay. They were wise to recognize Who He was. They were wise to offer their gifts, not only material but also of time and effort. They were wise to disregard the words of King Herod and follow the sign of God. They returned to Persia more than wise - they returned as changed men, having met Christ face to face!

Let us each be thankful this Christmas and Epiphany that we have been privileged to see His Star - the Bright and Morning Star! Let us rejoice that God has deigned to include us as Wise Men and Women in His Kingdom.

Wise Men still follow the Star! Amen.

Have a blessed Christmas, beginning today and extended all the way through the gates of Eternity!

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