



**N**OW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men<sup>1</sup> (Greek μάγοι, mágoi) from the east to Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.<sup>4</sup> And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.<sup>5</sup> And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,<sup>6</sup> And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.<sup>7</sup> Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.<sup>8</sup> And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, 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.<sup>9</sup> When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.<sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.<sup>11</sup> And 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,

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<sup>1</sup> The country of origin and names of the Three Wise Men (three based on the number of gifts brought) is lost in antiquity; however, we do have clues upon which to base a fanciful account that coincides in many particulars with the biblical account. It is more of a fictionalized account I am writing that seems sensical to true possibilities. Hope you enjoy it. Please do not scold me for not using more biblical evidence upon which to base the story since such evidence it does not exist – remember, I told you it is fiction! I will use the names of popular lore since the real names are unknown

and frankincense, and myrrh.<sup>12</sup> And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. (Matthew 2:1-12)

## A Tale of the Magi

Two thousand years ago in the land of Persia existed a religious sect called the Zoroastrians. This religious sect had been founded by the Persian, Zartusht (Zoroaster in English) sometime before the advent of the great Mede and Persian kings such as Cyrus the Great, Darius, and Xerxes. In fact, Cyrus the Great was Zoroastrian. The priests of this religious order were highly educated and refined in the arts of science, mathematics, and many other disciplines. These priests were called Magi (Greek for Wise Men - μάγοι, *mágoi*). They shared the responsibility to keep the eternal flame of Ahuramazda (the God of Righteousness) burning without cessation. They were scholars who also took a great interest in primitive writings and such studies as the movement of heavenly bodies. The subject of this story is of three such men famously referred to as Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. These three were wealthy and wise in their understand and perceptions.

Being particularly studious in the ancient Hebrew Scriptures, one of these three Magi hit upon the prophecies of a coming King of Kings who would be the Son of the Living God. Discovering what he believed to be some connection between the Hebrew writings, and the prophecies observed in the movement of stars, he believed that more than superstition could be made of astrology – that God actually used the heavenly bodies to convey great mysteries to His creatures.

Astrologers in Korea from an observatory called Chomsongdae (near Pusan) had sighted an unusually brilliant heavenly body moving east to west as recorded in the wood plate annals at Haein-sa Temple (near Taegu, Korea). This record dates to 4 B.C. Chomsongdae and the historic city of Isfahan (a Zoroastrian center) are on approximately the same global parallel of 33 degrees. So it is possible that the Korean observers were first to see the Star of Bethlehem as it moved on its westward course. God moved in the minds of these three scholars to discover the course and meaning of this Star.

Caspar, the eldest of the three, had made the ancient Hebrew scripture the center of his studies over the prolonged years of his life. He was a lover of knowledge, and there was something of great meaning and mystery which he sought from these ancient writings. Early in his studies, he was fascinated in the mysterious reference to a Star which would herald a major historic event: *“And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.”* (Numbers 24:15-17) Caspar at once began to associate his studies of those ancient manuscripts to the movement of Heavenly bodies; but his intent was upon discovery of the one Heavenly Body to which Balaam referred. He needed to combine his studies in Hebrew history with those of a friend more learned in the movement and projected course of heavenly bodies. That friend was Melchior.

Caspar and Melchior joined their minds, and hearts, together to see how the movement of such heavenly bodies might be related to those ancient utterances found in the Hebrew texts. Being quartered on the Holy Mountain of the Eternal Flame overlooking the city of Isfahan to the south, these two had a perfect vantage point from which to refine their observations. Not long after combining their studies they were

joined by a young apprentice priest named Balthazar. Unlike Caspar and Melchior, Balthazar was not so much interested in Hebrew scriptures and astrology as the other two. His interest centered on how one could use the stars, especially the North Star, as a navigation aid. Young and eager, God has chosen this last Magi as one to complete the complement of visitors to the Holy Land and Bethlehem.

Balthazar was eager to put some of his theories of navigation to the test but was persuaded to be patient by the other two scholars. In the meantime, the Star sighted by the Korean observers was slowly making its way toward the Persian city of Isfahan.

As the three men served in their orders to attend the Eternal Flame on the mount, they constantly speculated on the mysteries of the heavenly bodies, how their courses were always constant and unchanging, and of how they always seem to come in continuous order from the same easterly direction. Caspar remarked that the earth might be a globe since this was insinuated in the Hebrew writings: *"It is he that sitteth upon the circle (circuit or compass) of the earth,"* (Isaiah 40:22a) These heavenly lights must have some deeper meaning than man can conceive. Melchior commented that if such could sing, as Caspar intimated, perhaps they were great angels. *"When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"* Job 38:7 (KJV) But Caspar promptly corrected him – "when the Hebrews refer to the stars as singing, they are using the stars as personifications of angels – not actual angels," he said. So went their daily discourse.

One particularly quiet evening, as the salamander was feeding the Eternal Flame with fuel, Caspar's dimming eyes caught sight of a brilliant star just breaking over the distant horizon due east. It was unlike any other star his old eyes had ever witnessed. "Melchior! Come quickly! Look at that! Have you ever seen such a star before?" Melchior, acclimating his eyes from the flame to the dark sky suddenly burst out in emotion, "Caspar, this star is different from all others we have ever observed. Its course is not recorded in any of our charts! Perhaps this is the Star for which you have been searching. Young Balthazar was awakened from his sound sleep and told of the observance. He, being very familiar with the recorded courses of the stars, found this particular star to be profoundly different from all others he had ever seen. It seemed to be alive with intense brilliance and warmth.

It was decided that the star would be observed for three consecutive nights and, if its course and character proved to be something other than a super nova, these three men would follow that Star to learn its destination and meaning. Thus was the Star faithful on its continuous course. There was something uncanny about its influence on these three Magi. On the fourth day, the three Magi had prepared for a journey of indefinite duration. Camels were loaded with provision, and servants were contracted to accompany the three on an uncertain journey of hundreds of miles.

As they were completing their plans, suddenly Caspar burst out, "Wait! If this is the Star heralding the coming of the Great King, we cannot visit Him empty-handed. What gifts would suit such a great King? Melchior offered, "If He is a king, gold is always representative of a king's wealth. I shall take GOLD!" "Yes, you are right, Melchior, said Caspar; but He is also a Divine Son of the Great God – I will take Frankincense which is used by the Hebrews to signify worship. This King is due worship." "Then what gift can I bear this Divine King," asked Balthazar. Caspar slowly scratched his grey old head and searched his memory banks of the Hebrew texts.

Suddenly, the cobwebs of his mind were cleared away and a certain passage of the old texts appeared in Caspar's fading memory: *"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace*

*was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:4-9)*

“This King is unlike any other: Yes, He is a great King, but He is also God in the flesh, and He will die for the sins of His people. A gift must be taken to represent that sacrificial death, but what?” said Caspar.

“Well,” spoke Melchior, tentatively, “I have read of the custom of the people of that land in anointing the dead bodies of their people with Myrrh . . . .” “That is it, Balthazar! Melchior is correct. You shall take Myrrh as a gift to signify His sacrificial death for His people. It will be for His anointing.” And so it was.

That very evening, as the scroll of night filled the Persian sky with its purple canopy sprinkled with points of light, the Three Magi mounted their caravan of several camels and servants and began their long journey in following the Bright Star. Its movement was just as gradual as their ability to travel. Balthazar computed the course and direction over the Zagross mountains to the west, crossing the many rivers and deserts, and the wilderness regions of Arabia. It was a long and arduous journey lasting months. As this entourage finally crossed the Jordan Valley into Canaan, they were excited to realize that the Sea was not far ahead, and their journey must have its destination between their present point and that sea coast. As they entered the hill country surrounding the Hebrew capital of Jerusalem, they began to speculate on just where they might find the Babe.

“It is certain that such a One would not be born in one of these rough little villages,” said Balthazar. “He must, of course, be born at the royal palace in Jerusalem.” This made an abundance of human sense. In their excitement, the three were no longer attracted by the direction of the Star and proceeded directly to the artificial lights of Jerusalem with eager anticipation. Upon explaining the purpose of their journey, the three were admitted to the king’s court after a few moments of hurried inquiry. In earshot of Herod the King, they voiced their purpose in coming, “*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.*” Everyone should be profoundly delighted to hear of the birth of such a King, should they not? Herod overheard this inquiry and was particularly disturbed by two words, ‘King’ and ‘worship.’ He had some slight understanding of ancient prophecy, and he did not approve of God’s provisions, after all, he was King in these parts, and there was not room for another. “*When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled,*” – he certainly was, and not only the King, but all the religious leaders who desired no divine challenge to their neat little arrangements – “*and all Jerusalem with him.*” But Herod was a shrewd and evil fellow. He would investigate before enacting his plot: “*And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.*” These were some of the Hebrew writings that had enlightened Caspar, but no such enlightenment was felt by Herod. We might say he felt subdued rage.

“Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, 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.*" Due to their long journey, the child, Jesus, was at least several months old when the Magi appeared. This is why Herod, calculating the possible age of the Newborn King, would have every male child of Bethlehem, of two years age and below, ruthlessly murdered before the eyes of the wailing mothers.

*"When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was."* Remember how distracted the Magi were by the false lights of the city of Jerusalem and how they no longer followed the Star? (We all go astray when we stop following the Light of God and embark on our own poor vision.) Once free of the false lights of Jerusalem, the Star was again visible to them and led them directly to Christ.

Our Lord was born in a stable and cradled in a manger; however, these many months later, Mary, Joseph, and the child are quartered in a house: *"And 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."* You will recall that the poor shepherds were the first to receive the good tidings of the birth of our Lord, and now come the Magi – gentiles from the East. Jesus came to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile. It is for this reason that we normally associate the Wise Men with Epiphany Season. The gifts, as mentioned before, were prophetic – GOLD for His royalty, FRANKINCENSE for his Divinity, and MYRRH to signify His sacrificial death as our Saviour.

God knows the heart and mind of all people, and Herod is no exception: *"And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."* God made provision to protect Baby Jesus who, as Joseph would be warned in a dream, was taken into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. Where did the means to make such a trip come from? Perhaps the gift of Gold Caspar was so inspired to bring.

The studies of the Three Magi did not happen in a vacuum. The motives and desires of these Three were inspired of God to further His plan of redemption in a prophetic and beautiful manner. These Three followed the brightest Star in the Heavens to Christ. Can we do less seeing He Himself is our Bright and Morning Star?