

Sermon- Epiphany

WE THREE KINGS VS 1

We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain
Following yonder star

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy Perfect Light

MESSAGE—HONOUR THE KING

The words of the well-known song “We Three Kings” are not necessarily accurate in every way. The wise men were most likely not kings, but scholars who studied the stars and sought wisdom in ancient writings. There may have been three wise men who searched for the Christ Child, but perhaps there were only two, or maybe far more than three. Very likely they did not come from the Orient, or Asia, but from a region of the middle east known as Persia or Chaldea. The song, however, accurately describes the three gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. We do not know why the wise men chose these three gifts, but they were searching for a newborn king, and these were rich gifts for a king, for our Lord and theirs, Jesus the King. The three gifts serve to remind us of just who Jesus is and why he was born among us.

WE THREE KINGS VS 2

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain
Gold I bring to crown Him again
King forever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to Thy perfect light

1 Kings 10:14-15, 21 Solomon's Gold

Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold, besides that which came from the explorers and from the business of the merchants, and from all the kings of the west and from the governors of the land ...

All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver; silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon.

MESSAGE—GOLD FOR A KING

Solomon, the son of King David, was Israel's wisest and wealthiest king. What do you choose as a gift for the king who has everything? Apparently, you give him gold, more than 40,000 pounds of gold. That's how much gold came to Solomon each year. There was so much gold in Jerusalem that silver was considered nearly worthless. In fact, Scripture comments that Solomon "made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone" (1 Kings 10:27).

Generations after Solomon, the wise men followed a star, searching for a new king in Israel. After a wrong turn through Jerusalem, they followed the star to Bethlehem and found and worshiped the holy Child Jesus. The wise men offered him a gift that would have pleased Je-sus' ancestor Solomon—a gift of gold. It was a fitting gift for King, a gift for the newborn Son of David. Yet this King would not wear an earthly crown of gold or sit on a golden throne. Jesus would be crowned with thorns and lifted up, not on a throne, but on a cross. Jesus our King offered up his life for us, taking onto himself the penalty of death that we deserved for our sins. We have been redeemed, "not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Amen.

WE THREE KINGS VS 3

Frankincense to offer have I
Incense owns a Deity nigh
Prayer and praising, all men raising
Worship Him, God most high

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to Thy perfect light

Exodus 30:1, 7-8 Incense from Aaron

You shall make an altar on which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood ... And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offer-ing before the Lord throughout your generations.

MESSAGE—INCENSE FOR GOD

God instructed the Israelites to build an altar for the tabernacle, or tent of meeting. This altar was to be made of wood overlaid with gold. Every morning and evening the high priest was to burn incense on the altar as an offering to God.

The wise men brought a gift of incense, a hardened tree resin called frankincense, to the new-born King in Bethlehem. With this gift, were the wise men acknowledging the divinity of the holy Child? Did they know that the newborn King was God in human flesh? We don't know if the wise men worshiped the Child Jesus as God, but we know and we worship Jesus as God and Lord. Jesus is true God and true man in one Person. He is the son born of a virgin, as the prophet Isaiah foretold, the Child who would be called Emmanuel, "God with us." We may not burn incense as an offering, but we offer up to our God and Savior our worship and our prayers. In the vision given to the apostle John, the throne of God is surrounded by "golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Revelation 5:8). Each day we can pray with the psalmist, "Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!" (Psalm 141:2). Amen.

WE THREE KINGS VS 4

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume
Breathes of life of gathering gloom
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to Thy perfect light

John 19:38-42 Myrrh for burial

After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

MESSAGE—MYRRH FOR CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

Myrrh may have been one of the most unusual of the wise men's gifts, at least as a gift for a baby, but it was a useful gift. Made from tree resin, myrrh could be used in perfume or in making incense. It was known to have healing and pain-killing properties and could be used as a medicine and mixed with wine. This unusual gift is mentioned two more times in the life of Jesus. More than thirty years after Jesus' birth, at a place called Golgotha, Roman soldiers offered wine mixed with myrrh to the condemned victims that were to be crucified. The myrrh may have drugged the victims, making the soldiers' task of crucifying them a little

easier. Jesus refused to drink the drugged wine. This was the purpose for which he had been born, and he willingly laid down his life for us. Finally, at the end of that dark day, the day we call Good Friday, Jesus was taken down from the cross. Once wrapped in swaddling cloths, the body of the Lord was now wrapped in a linen shroud, together with myrrh and other spices. But at dawn on the third day, those spice-stained linen cloths would be cast aside and left behind in an empty tomb. Myrrh, an unusual gift for a child, was just the right gift for a Sacrifice, Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord. Gold, frankincense and myrrh—rich gifts for a Child, and in this case, perfect gifts. Gold for the King, frankincense offered to God and myrrh to anoint the Sacrifice who laid down his life for us and rose up from death to give us eternal life. “Glorious now behold him arise, King and God and Sacrifice.” Amen.

WE THREE KINGS VS 5

Glorious now behold Him arise
King and God and Sacrifice
Alleluia, Alleluia
Earth to heav’n replies

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to Thy perfect light