

Bible Story

Matthew 2:1-12

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, look, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who is born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and have come to worship him."

And when King Herod heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he asked them where the Messiah would be born. And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written through the prophet, 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are in no way least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people, Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called the wise men, and learned from them exactly what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, "Go and search diligently for the young child, and when you have found him, bring me word, so that I also may come and worship him."

And they, having heard the king, went their way; and look, the star which they saw in the east went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered gifts to him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Being warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they went back to their own country another way.

The History behind the Three Kings/Wise Men/Magi in the Christmas Story

After Jesus was born, Wise Men came to look for Him, probably from an area which is now in either Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia the Yemen, or an area in what's now southern Turkey, northern Syria. Although they are often called the 'Three Kings', the Bible does not say how many there were, or that they were kings. One theory is that they might have been Kings of the Yemen, as during this time the Kings of Yemen were Jews. Three is only a guess because they brought with them three gifts: but however many there were of them, they probably would have had many more servants with them.

They were certainly men of great learning. The word Magi comes from the greek word 'magos' (where the english word 'magic' comes from). Magos itself comes from the old persian word 'Magupati'. This was the title given to priests in a sect of the ancient Persian religions such as Zoroastrianism. Today we'd called them astrologers. Back then astronomy and astrology were part of the same overall studies (and 'science') and

went hand in hand with each other. The magi would have followed the patterns of the stars religiously. They would have also probably been very rich and held high esteem in their own society and by people who weren't from their country or religion.

They had seen an unusual new star in the sky, and knew that it told of the birth of a special king in Israel. No one really knows what the new star in the sky was, and there are many theories including comets, supernovas, a conjunctions of planets or something supernatural! The Magi would have known about the prophecies of a special Jewish Savior (also known as the Messiah) from when the Jews had been held captive in ancient Babylon several hundred years before.

Herod asked the Wise Men to find Jesus and tell him where he was, not so he could go and worship him as he said, but so he could kill him! He thought that Jesus sounded like a new King that could come and take his power away.

When the Wise Men found Jesus and Mary, they would have been living in a normal house, probably in Bethlehem or Jerusalem, because by this time Jesus would have been aged between one and two. Then they gave their gifts to him. The gifts seem quite strange to give to a baby, but Christians believe that they had the following meanings: Gold: is associated with Kings and Christians believe that Jesus is the King of Kings. Frankincense: is sometimes used in worship in Churches and showed that people would worship Jesus.

Myrrh: is a perfume that is put on dead bodies to make them smell nice; Christians believe that it showed that Jesus would suffer and die.

The gifts are also all things that come from east of Israel in Arabia.

When the wise men were about to go to tell Herod where Jesus was, they were warned in a dream

not to, so Herod could not carry out his horrible plan.