

GIFTS OF GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH

Matthew 2:1-11

We know very little about the wise men. Millions of Christmas cards show three kings presenting gifts to a tiny child in a manger. Christians sing "We Three Kings of Orient Are." Such a lovely hymn, I must admit. But we do not know for certain that there were three wise men who brought the gifts.

All we know is that these Magi saw the supernatural star of the newborn king of Israel in the east and followed it west. When they are arrived in Jerusalem, that star appeared again to them and led them to the very house the Christ-child was in. Subsequently, they were warned in a dream to avoid king Herod and to take a different route back home.

The fact that so little information is given about the wise men clearly shows that Matthew's interest was not focused upon the wise men themselves. Rather, he was interested in the fact that Gentiles came to worship the Jewish Messiah, and in the gifts they bore. Let's us consider the gifts.

Gold- Royalty

It is easy to see why gold is an appropriate gift for Jesus Christ. Gold was the most precious metal of the day. And it symbolized royalty. When gold was presented to Jesus, it acknowledged his right to rule. The wise men knew Jesus was the King of Kings and they are paying homage to Him. They didn't cuddle or play games with the little baby. On bended knee, they worshipped the newborn king of Israel.

Frankincense -Deity

Incense was also a significant gift. It was an aromatic resin collected from the bark of trees of Arabia. It was used in the temple worship. It was mixed with the oil that was used to anoint the priests of Israel. It was part of the meal offerings that were offerings of thanksgiving and praise to God. In presenting this gift the wise men pointed to Christ as our great High Priest, the one whose perfect, sinless life was acceptable and a well pleasing fragrance to His Father. In essence they were acknowledging His deity.

Myrrh-Humanity

Myrrh was used for embalming the dead. It was resin (gum) extracted from small thorny trees of Arabia. It was also used as perfume and at times as a narcotic drug.

By any human measure it would be odd, if not offensive, to present to the infant Christ a spice used for embalming. But it was not offensive in this case, nor was it odd. It was a gift of faith and told of His humanity.

We do not know precisely what the wise men may have known or guessed about Christ's ministry, but we do know that the Old Testament again and again foretold his suffering.

On cross Jesus was offered wine mingled with myrrh as a narcotic, but He did not receive it. Rather than tasting myrrh to numb His pain, Jesus tasted the full pain of God's wrath in death as our substitute.

To prepare for the Lord's burial, John 19:38, tells us Nicodemus brought myrrh.

Isaiah 60:6, which describes a scene of the millennial reign rule of Christ, states that all those from Sheba (Africa) will come bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.

You will notice, myrrh is not mentioned with His second coming. Why is that? Simply because His suffering as the Son of God was a once-for-all, perfect atonement for the sins of the whole world.

- Gold – His Sovereign Dominion
- Frankincense – His Sinless Deity
- Myrrh -His Sacrificial Death

What Gifts Do We Offer?