

Christ's birth, the kings, and the gifts!

By Frank Borg

December 2010

During the month of December the World enters the so-called "Christmas season" - a season which is depicted as one of 'giving', 'joy' and 'love'. What must be understood is that, in reality, the Xmas season is an attempt to "whitewash" and misrepresent customs and observances of pagan gods! Xmas is shrouded in paganism – not only do we have proof that Christ's birth did not take place at this time of the year, but we also know that His birth certainly did not depict the celebration that we see today!

Let us make no mistake about it - the birth of Christ was definitely very significant – it was a momentous *political* event. It was a *historic* and significant *religious* event. The birth of Christ signified the beginning of the end of man's rule on this earth. Yet, humanity at large is oblivious to the true story that surrounds Christ's birth. Many are aware that Christ was not born on the 25th of December and that He was most probably born on or around the Feast of Trumpets, however, not many know too much about the specifics that surround Christ's birth.

The Bible gives us a few details about the birth of Christ. Notice what is stated in the gospel account of Matthew:

"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, 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. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 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. 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. 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. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 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**" (Matt. 2:1-11).

In the above scriptures we are told that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem. We are also told that an unknown number of wise men, or kings, came to visit Christ from the east, and brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Tradition states that these wise men where in fact three *gentile* kings that brought expensive gifts to Christ.

Not many understand the significance of the visit of these "wise men". For the remainder of this article, we will discuss that their visit played a huge part in God's plan to announce the birth of His Son!

Matthew 2:1 tells us that the "wise men" came from the east. The word 'east' is translated from the Greek word "anatole" (Strong's number 395) and means the 'rising of the sun' or could more literally mean: 'the distant east'. The question is, where is the 'distant east'? Who lived in the distant east? That would tell us who these wise men were!

Encyclopedias confirm that the great empire east of the Euphrates which is biblically known as 'the distant east' was the Parthian Empire. Parthia was the greatest *Israelite* empire. It was an *ancient superpower which was ancient Israel*. These 'wise men' who came from the distant east actually came from the land east of the Euphrates, a land that was ruled by the Parthian Empire, which included the exiled lost tribes of Israel, many of whom remained in the land of their captivity until about AD226.

Historical evidence points to the fact that these wise men were Israelites and not gentiles. The land east of the Euphrates is where these 'wise men' came from, and this was the land where the Assyrians exiled the Israelites. Scripture confirms this. Matthew 2:2 states that these 'wise men' came to worship Christ. That word 'worship' in verse 2 is 4352 in the Greek and means "to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand, to crouch to, to prostrate oneself in homage, to reverence, adore and worship". Would gentile magicians do this? Would gentile kings do this? Would gentile 'wise men' want to come and kiss Christ and pay homage and reverence and worship him if they hated and rejected the Israelites and their God? Logic tells us that gentile men would want to do the exact opposite yet scripture tells us that they came to worship Christ! These were people who knew about the prophecies of the coming Messiah and *believed* in them!

To support the point that these wise men were in fact Israelites and not gentiles, Strong's and McClintock Cyclopedia (under the heading 'Magi') states "that certain of the ancient wise men could claim Abraham as their father!"

The reason why these wise men came to visit Christ becomes more obvious. The implication would be that once the wise men saw Christ the distant nation of Israel would have had a witness of His birth! These wise men were used by God to announce the birth of His Son to the tribes of Israel! With this light shed on the identity of these kings, it is evident that there was **great significance** in their visit. God was playing something out – these wise men would be used to announce the birth of Christ to the tribes of Israel.

Another interesting point is that most bible commentaries are in agreement that there were *more than* three kings. Lange's commentary indicates that there were 12 men! This is also stated in various encyclopedias where they substantiate the claim that **all Eastern writers** confirm there were 12 men that traveled to see Christ. *Not three!* Wouldn't these historical Eastern writers be ones who knew how many men visited to see Christ? After all these 'wise men' men did come from the east! The question is, who would these twelve men represent? Interestingly, Langes commentary suggests that these men *represented the twelve tribes of Israel*.

The Bible gives us further proof that these men where Israelite kings! Matthew 2:11 states that the kings came with *fine gifts* – gold, frankincense and myrrh. Let us here briefly discuss these three gifts:

1) Gold

Gold was the usual gift presented to kings by their subjects, or those wanting to pay respect. *It was a symbol of royalty* which meant that these wise men believed that Christ was a king. This is why gold was given to Christ as one of the gifts. When the wise men presented gold, they were honoring Christ with the very best that they possessed, and they were also recognizing that He was King. This is further evidence that the "wise men" were not gentiles. The gift of gold represented the fact that Christ was born royalty.

The gold represented Christ's birth!

2) Frankincense

Frankincense is an aromatic plant used to create incense. Through a number of scriptures in the New Testament, we know that incense is a symbol of prayer (Rev. 8:3-4). In Old Testament times, frankincense was poured on all offerings so that when it was 'made by fire', it would present a sweet smell. The Hebrew word in Strong's is number 3828 and indicates that this produced a white smoke ---- 'white' symbolizing purity. Not only did frankincense symbolize prayer, but in a deeper sense it symbolized Christ's life.

Lange's commentary states that "frankincense was given because these wise men believed that Christ was a High priest". Evidently, these men *knew* the prophecies of the Old Testament and believed them – clearly indicating that they were Israelite kings! Frankincense was a symbol of prayer and purity; a gift that symbolized Christ's life!

3) Myrrh

This is a very costly ointment. In biblical times this was used in the embalming or anointing of the dead, so this gift represented suffering and sorrow. The word 'myrrh' in Strong's is number 4666 and implies that it is an ointment used to strengthen the body. These wise men gave this gift because they *knew* that Christ was destined to suffer and die for mankind, which is further proof that they *knew* and believed the Old Testament prophecies of God sending a Savior. Interestingly, the Greek word for myrrh, is "smyrna" -- the same as the name of the congregation called "Smyrna" discussed in Revelation 2. Both the words 'myrrh' and 'smyrna' share the same Greek number of 4666. The Smyrna congregation was distinguished by being persecuted – so these wise men understood the difficulties and the persecution that Christ was going to face. Myrrh symbolized persecution and the horrible prophecies that Christ had to go through before His death! The gift of myrrh symbolized Christ death!

Even through the symbolism and significance of the three gifts given to Christ, we can conclude that these men *knew* the prophecies of the Old Testament! The twelve Israelite kings *knew* who Christ was, *believed* and had *faith* in the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ's birth, life and death! These three gifts symbolized the three phases of Christ's life!

Discussed in Matthew 2 is the wonderful way in which the House of Israel witnessed the birth of Christ their King! The twelve Israelite kings who visited Christ were able to return "to the east" and proclaim the birth of their Saviour!