

The Wise Men

Matthew 2:1-12



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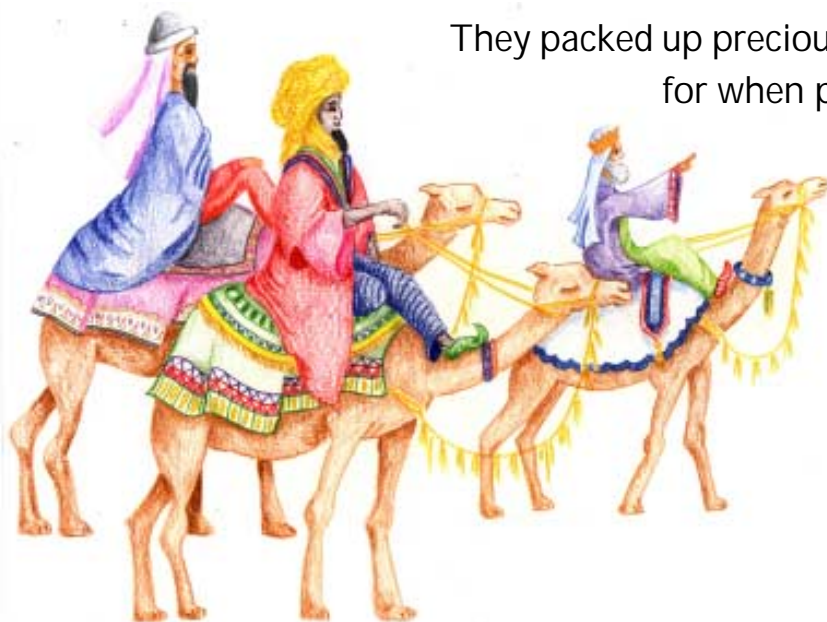
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Long, long ago, in ancient times, in the countries of the East where it hardly ever rains, certain men watched the skies every night. What were they watching for?

They were watching because they had learned from the Word that one night a new star would appear in the sky. This would be a sign to them that the God whom they loved and worshiped had been born on the earth. These men were called Wise Men because they knew about the Lord and studied the stars for this sign.

The Wise Men longed for the Lord to come because many sad and evil things had been happening in the world. They knew He would come to help them, to teach what was right and to help fight against what was evil and wrong. So they watched the stars, hoping for the promised new star to appear.

At long last, the new star appeared in the sky. They were happy and rejoiced when they saw it. It meant that the Lord had been born in the Land of Israel. Now the Wise Men would go to see Him. They lived far away from Israel in the lands of the East, but they quickly got ready to go on a journey to find the place on a journey to find the place where the Lord had been born.



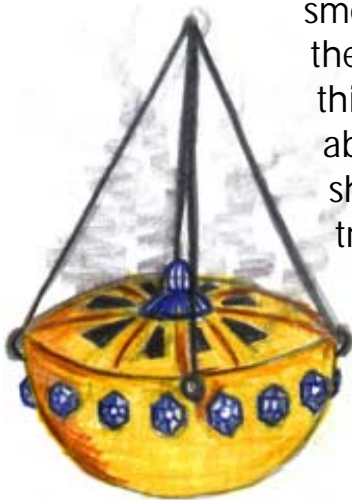
They packed up precious treasures to bring with them, for when people went to visit a king they always brought gifts. The treasures the Wise Men brought were a special sign of their love for the Lord. Do you remember what the gifts were?



If you said "gold," you are right. That was one of the gifts. Gold was very precious then, just as it is today. It was a sign of heartfelt love, a special kind of love you feel deep in your heart. Your mother and father may have given each other rings of gold at their wedding as a sign of their love for each other. The Wise Men brought gold to the Lord to show how much they loved Him. Gold also shows how much the Lord loves us.



And the second gift was "frankincense." Did you remember that? Frankincense was used in worship long ago. It was burned on the altar to make a smoke that would fill the temple with a pleasing smell. The people believed that this smoke would carry their good thoughts and prayers up to heaven. So this gift showed that the Wise Men loved to think about the Lord and His truth. Frankincense also shows that the Lord had come to earth to teach His truth to us.



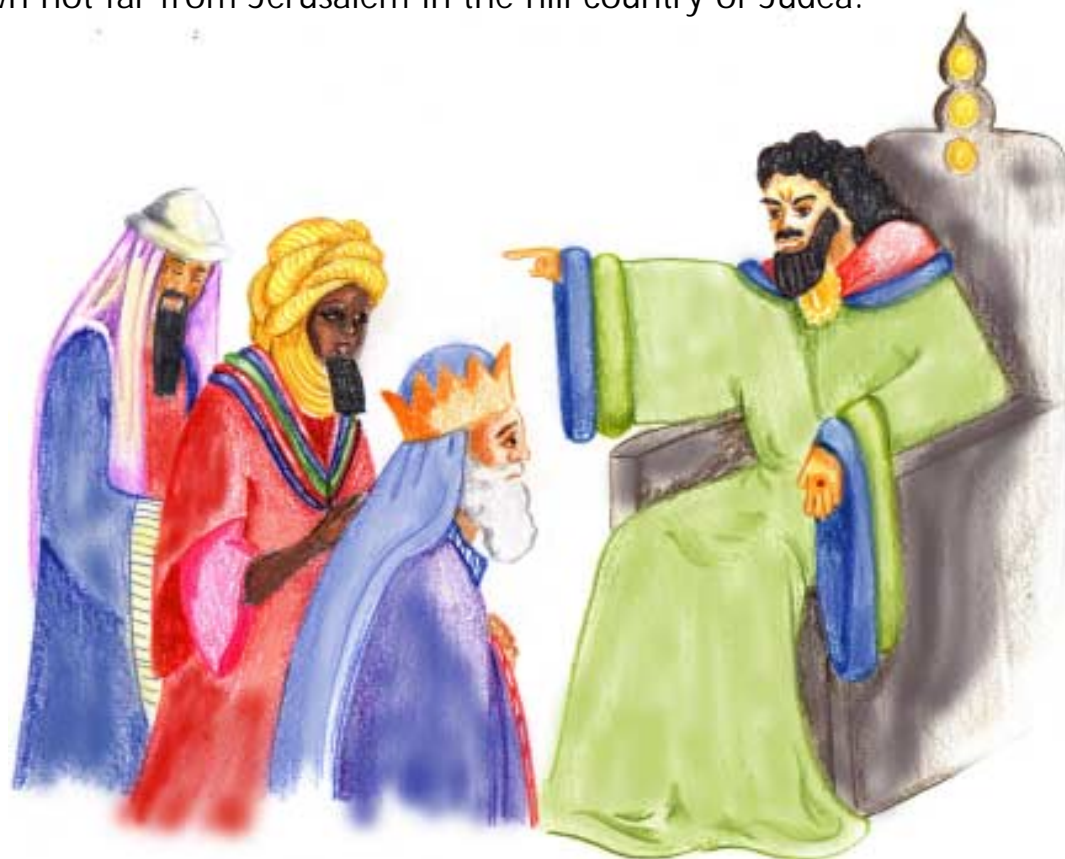
The third gift was "myrrh." This was a soothing ointment that could be rubbed gently on someone's wounds to heal them. (Remember how the Samaritan used ointment on the poor hurt man.) The Wise Men brought the gift of myrrh to the Lord because they knew He had come to heal our souls. This means that He came to teach us to love and help our family and friends and all people who love the Lord.

After a long journey, the Wise Men arrived at the great city of Jerusalem, in Israel. They expected to find the Lord here. They asked people in the city, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." No one knew what



they were talking about. They hadn't seen the star in Jerusalem. They weren't looking for it. And they already had a king. Do you remember his name? It was Herod.

People in Jerusalem told Herod about the Wise Men and the news about a newborn king. Herod was troubled and frightened when he heard this. He was afraid that a new king would take away his kingdom of Israel. Herod called the priests and learned men of Israel together to find out what they knew about this king. They knew from old stories called prophecies in the Word that He was to be born in Bethlehem, a little town not far from Jerusalem in the hill country of Judea.



Then Herod met secretly with the Wise Men to find out when they had first seen the star. He wanted to know as much as he could about this Child. When he had heard their answer, he sent the Wise Men out to search for the Lord in Bethlehem. He pretended he wanted to see the Lord and worship Him, too. "When you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also," he told them. Do you think Herod wanted to worship the Lord? What did he really want to do?

A wonderful thing happened as the Wise Men left the city of Jerusalem and began their journey to Bethlehem. The new star that they had seen in the East appeared to them again! It went before them, leading them straight to the house where the Lord was. We can imagine how happy they were to see the star again. The Word tells us that "they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy." They were close to the end of their journey now. Their hearts were filled with excitement, just as we become excited each year when we come closer to Christmas day and our own celebration of the Lord's birth.



Then the Wise Men entered the house. And they saw the young Child with Mary His mother. There He was, the Lord Himself! He was the promised Savior for whom they had waited and watched for so long. And all though the Lord was only an infant child, they fell down on their knees and faces to worship Him. These men, with all their wealth and wisdom, knelt before the Lord because they knew that He was greater and wiser than anyone on the earth. He had come to lead us to a life of heavenly happiness.

Then the Wise Men opened their treasures and gave their gifts to Him. You remember them now: Gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

It was time for the Wise Men to return to their homes. Herod had asked them to come back to Jerusalem to tell him where he could find the baby Lord. Did they go back? No. Herod did not love the Lord and only wanted to kill him. So, before the Wise Men started their journey back, they were warned in a dream from God that they should not return to Herod. When they awoke, they turned away from the road to Jerusalem and traveled home by other ways. So Herod never found the baby Lord.

Each year at Christmas we celebrate the Lord's birth, and, like the Wise Men who followed the star, we are happy and rejoice with great joy that the Lord has been born.

