

## "What does the Bible tell us about the Wise Men (or Magi)?"



*"In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking: "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people. He inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another path" (Matthew 2:1-12).*

We might assume that the men or kings were wise [Sacred Scripture does not say there were three] because of the gifts that were labored across the desert and later given to the Christ child: gold, incense, and myrrh. Post-biblical era writings and tradition, state that their names were: *Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar*. We know that the magi were from "the East," most likely Persia or modern-day Iran. This means the wise men traveled, guided by a star, some 800 to 900 miles to honor the Christ child. Most likely, the Magi knew of the writings of the Prophet Daniel, who in time past had been the chief of the court seers in Persia. Daniel 9:24-27 includes a prophecy, which gives a timeline for the birth of the Messiah.

The wise men were guided to look for the King of the Jews by a miraculous stellar event, the "*Star of Bethlehem*," which they called "*His star*". It has long been understood within Christianity that these men are believed to have come from the priestly caste of the Eastern occult religion, called Zoroastrianism. As part of their religious practices, these priests paid particular attention to the stars and gained a widespread reputation for astrology, which was at that time highly regarded as a highly skilled science, and their predictions of worldly events by an examination of the stars was long sought after. Many an Eastern king or leader (like King Herod) would regularly consult with these type of priests (or astrologers) as his advisors, before making any major decisions—such as engaging in battle with a neighboring adversary—to ensure that the stars were in proper alignment and rested favorably upon their planned activity(s).

Additionally, it is a common misconception that the wise men visited Jesus at the stable on the night of His birth. In fact, the wise men came days or perhaps weeks after the birth. That is why scripture says the wise men visited and worshiped Jesus in a house, not at the stable or a cave.

Indeed, the Magi were men who: (1) read and believed God's signs; (2) sought out after Jesus; (3) recognized the great worth of the Christ—the long-awaited Messiah; (4) humbled themselves to worship Jesus; and (5) obeyed God rather than man. They were truly Wise Men!