

Once the wise men tracked down Jesus, they gave him gifts of gold, incense and myrrh - a bit like jewellery, perfume, and aromatherapy oil.

Three Wise Men



Herod, the king, lived in the city of Jerusalem. He was not a kind king and most people were afraid of him. He wished to be the richest, the greatest, and the most important person in the world.

It made him angry for anybody else to be important. The idea that another might ever be king in his place was a horrible thought to him.

One day three men came riding into the city of Jerusalem. It was easy to see that they were rich men. They rode on large, handsome camels. The camels were decorated with bells of gold and silver.

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The three men wore rich clothing.

Their faces were noble and dignified. They looked like kings, and they also looked like very wise men or teachers.

These three rich travelers came to Herod's palace.

"Where is the new king?" they asked.

One added, "We hear that a baby has been born who is to be king of the world."



In many households, part of the fun of eating Christmas pudding is finding a trinket that predicts your fortune for the coming year. For instance, finding a coin means you will become wealthy. A ring means you will get married; while a button predicts bachelorhood.

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This was not good news to the proud king.

"What are your names and where do you come from?" he asked haughtily.

"I am Melchior," said one.

Another said, "I am Balthazar."

The third answered, "I am Caspar. We have journeyed here from the far east to see the new born king."

"We have come a very long way," said Melchior in his deep, slow voice.

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Balthazar added, "We were led by a great bright star which went ahead of us."

These words sounded strange to Herod.

They made him shiver. He called his court together.

"I suppose you have heard about this new king?" he said to his council. "Or rather, about this new baby?"

Herod's councilmen nodded their heads.

"In our book of ancient wisdom it says that some day a king will be born in Bethlehem," said the chief adviser. "The book says he will be called Jesus, or Christ."

"Does it say he will become a great king?" asked Herod in an angry tone. His councilmen looked nervous, but again they nodded their heads.

"That is what the book of wisdom said," said the keeper of the book. His voice shook, for he was frightened. He knew Herod would be angry.

King Herod was angry. He tossed his head. His long beard wagged fiercely.

"Send those men from the east in to me," he commanded.

When the visitors came before him, Herod made his voice very friendly.

"My council tells me that the new king will be born in Bethlehem. Please go to Bethlehem and look around for the king. When you find him, let me know so that I can send fine presents to him."

The Wise looking men nodded their heads. They got on their tall camels again. The golden and silver bells tinkled with a musical sound.

It was evening. Up in the sky a star became very large and very bright.

"Yonder star will guide us to the new king," said Balthazzar. "Let us follow it."

The star which they had seen before went ahead of the three men. It led them westward. On and on they followed. They went through fields and across rivers. They traveled in valleys and over hills.

At last the star seemed to stop. It was right over the stable behind an inn.

The three kingly travelers ordered their camels to kneel. They dismounted from the animals and went into the stable, carrying the gifts which they had brought.

In the stable sat Joseph and Mary. Near them, in a manger, was a very young baby wrapped in strips of white cloth.

The three richly dressed men went over and looked closely at the baby.

"I am an old man but I have never seen a child so beautiful," said Melchior.

He laid a bag of fine leather by the manger.

"I bring him a gift of gold, and I hope he may be king forever," said Melchior.

Then Caspar said, "This baby has a holy look about him. I bring sweet perfumes and incense. I hope he may be a great leader for the people."

Caspar placed his gift by the bag of gold.

Balthazzar knelt and laid a beautiful chest by the other gifts. It held sweet smelling ointments in silver bottles trimmed with jewels.

"I bring myrrh," he said. The myrrh had a very sweet perfume like spice, but it was very bitter. "This myrrh is both bitter and sweet as the child's life will be."

Mary and Joseph were silent, for they did not know how to answer these strange words.

Once more the grandly dressed men bowed low to the baby in the manger.

Then they left the stable.

"We have seen the young child and left our gifts," they said. "Now we will go back to our homes in the east."

"First, however, we should go back to Jerusalem and visit King Herod again," said one. "He will be waiting to hear about this child."

The three agreed to wait until morning and then go to Jerusalem with their news.

But when morning came they changed their minds. Each had had a very clear dream. It was the same dream for all three.

They dreamed that a messenger wearing a cloak made of flame came to them. The messenger spoke to them.

"Do not go back to King Herod," warned the messenger. "Herod is not friendly to this new baby. He wishes to find him and kill him. Go home by another road so you will not see Herod!"

"This is not an ordinary dream," the three men from the east decided. "This is a true warning and must be obeyed."

The three men from the east went home by another road. They did not return to Herod's palace.