

Dear friends,

The Christmas story is a series of events that are often compressed in time to all fit in the Nativity Set at the same time. Most Nativity Sets include the Wise Men with the shepherds in the stable with the baby Jesus lying in the manger. And of course, there are always three wise men! We have even elevated them to the status of royalty as we sing, *We Three Kings of Orient are*. Tradition has given them names of Melchior, Caspar and Balthasar. We focus on three people because three gifts are mentioned. The three gifts can each have a spiritual meaning. Gold is a symbol of kingship, frankincense a symbol of priesthood and myrrh a symbol of death. The gifts can also symbolize virtue, prayer and suffering.

Where was Jesus when the wise men found him? Matthew writes:

⁹ *After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.* ¹⁰ *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.* ¹¹ *On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.* ¹² *And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.* ¹

Jesus was in a house when they found him. Enough time had elapsed between the birth of Jesus and the arrival of the wise men that more suitable lodging had been found for the holy family. The wise men are certainly part of the Nativity story, just not on Christmas Eve with the shepherds.

The wise men bowed down and worshipped the baby Jesus. The word *worship* means to “bend the knee.” It is an act of physically making yourself lower than the other person you are with. Lowering yourself acknowledges that the other person is higher than you or more important or more worthy. Paul wrote,

⁹ *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.* ²

January 6th is Epiphany, which is the date celebrating the wise men finding the Christ child. Epiphany means a revealing of something. It is the *eureka* moment when the light bulb goes on and we say Aha! Epiphany is important because it symbolizes that Jesus, Emmanuel – God with us, is for everyone, Jew and Gentile, not just the Jews. Everyone is invited to meet God’s gift of Jesus and to bow before Him in worship and acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior. Take some time on January 6th to give thanks that Jesus is for you and that you have an opportunity to worship Him on a daily basis.

Love in Christ,
David

¹*The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1984 (Mt 2:9). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

²*The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1984 (Php 2:9). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.