

The Light of Wisdom

‘G. K. Chesterton (one of the brightest Catholic scholars and writers of the 20th century) and several other literary figures were asked one evening what book they would prefer to have with them if stranded on a desert isle. One writer said without hesitation: “The complete works of Shakespeare”. Another said, “I’d choose the Bible”. They turned to Chesterton. “How about you?” And Chesterton replied, “I would choose *Thomas’s Guide to Practical Shipbuilding*”.’ With that answer, one can tell why Chesterton rivals C. S. Lewis as one of the true genius thinkers of the last century. The timeless wisdom of both of these luminaries, stemming from their devout Christian faith and in-depth knowledge of the Bible, continues to teach us today. But, as great as these two men were, they would pale if compared to the three “kings” who visited the Baby Jesus 2,000 some years ago.

Pastor Rick Renner, overseer of the Good News Association of Churches, and founder of Renner Ministries, has brought together much new information about the details of the “three” wise men, that actually is not “new” at all, but ancient, which falls into the category of “forgotten” over the passing of millennia! So, here’s some more specifics of what really happened on Epiphany, the day we in the West have traditionally observed as the day the

“three” magi came to visit Baby Jesus, worshipping Him with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

As the famous traditional hymn goes, which the choir will sing in a few minutes, “We Three Kings of Orient Are”, countless nativity scenes and Christmas cards portray, even the slide I use for Christmas worship services, we picture three personages carrying three ornate boxes of gold, frankincense and myrrh. First of all, there may well have been more than just three, maybe as many as a dozen. And they weren’t kings. They were magi, or wise men. But wise at what? They were almost certainly descendants of the exalted class of “ivory tower” philosopher-scholar-clergy-financier powerbrokers who lived in Eastern societies for many centuries. Sometimes functioning as priests, they were a noble class of people who could sometimes govern as kings, but mostly were “above” such things, preferring to be king-makers, as they wielded so much wealth, prestige and respect, that should they express an opinion, their word by itself could bring down governments and crown new kings. There is no comparable class of people in our society today, though rolling technocrats, the uber rich, globalists and politicians of today together is the closest we might have. As the magi commanded more respect than even royalty, there are truly none like them today.

They were magi, wise men. We get our modern word “magician” from “magi” which indicates they were akin to wizards or sorcerers, but not of the evil kind. Rather, these particular magi

who came to worship King Jesus were the opposite of evil, as they were the first Gentile visitors and worshippers of the Christ Child. Since they were from eastern lands, they were almost certainly descendants of the great wise men of the Babylonian and later the Medo-Persian and Greek empires. We know from Daniel 2 that earlier, in the days when Jews were in exile, that Daniel became the chief of all the magi. His decades of leadership left a long-lasting legacy reflected in these magi who were not merely moguls and tycoons, but actual followers of God, who knew the Bible well enough to recognize the special star sign in the heavens that God gave them to announce Lord Jesus' birth.

So, assuming that God put up the star at the very instant of His Son's human birth, and the magi saw it immediately, then they, much like the shepherds abiding the fields, they determined they had to go and personally pay homage to, welcome, and worship the newly born King of the Jews, Who is also, King of the Universe. For if Christ was "merely" a newborn king of the vassal Jewish people, why would the wise men care? But if they knew from the Scriptures that this "King of the Jews" was far more than just another human king, then their decision to make the arduous journey makes sense. So they made their plans and embarked.

Being the exalted, uber rich men they were, they would have never traveled by themselves. Traveling long distances was dangerous, such that VIPs were always accompanied by numerous security and bodyguards. In the case of the exalted magi, their

status and enormous wealth would have both required and enabled them to have a small, well-armed army escort them. And this is to say nothing of their servants and staff. Modern day royalty often require two aircraft when flying—one for themselves and their staff and the other for their possessions. Magi journeying with such a large cohort with hundreds of attendants and hundreds of soldiers in caravan would not have allowed the fastest transit, but with their wealth and power, they still would have made good time, while lounging in their coaches carried by servants or mounted on the backs of camels, or possibly horses.

While Matthew 3 specifically mentioned three gifts, there undoubtedly would have been vastly more riches and treasures they brought to the Baby King Jesus. If they felt it was so important that they had to go and worship Him, their catalog of treasures would have been greater than for any earthly potentate! And those gifts and monies would later come in handy, as God pre-arranged it all, for the time when Joseph and Holy Family would have to flee to Egypt. With King Herod's spy network operating far beyond Judea's borders and into Egypt, we can be sure the Holy Family would have been fleeing from one safe spot to another, always just a few steps ahead of the assassins Herod dispatched when he discovered that his massacre of the baby boys in Bethlehem had failed to root out this latest threat to his throne.

Getting back to when the magi and their huge entourage of possibly over a thousand persons arrived in Jerusalem, one can

imagine the great excitement and stir this created. Awe-gripped crowds jostled to see the passing parade of ostentatious wealth and power striding into Jerusalem. Always-paranoid Herod's trepidation upon seeing them explains vividly his subsequent overreaction in ordering the killing of all the boy babies in Bethlehem, two-years old and younger. Why that age? Because it took that long for the wise men to acquire and prepare their gifts, arrange the transport for the long journey, secure the armed soldiers for protection, and then to actually make the trip, following the star God put in the heavens just for them.

So, if we assume that God put up the guiding star at the very moment of Lord Jesus' birth, then it would require at least about a year, perhaps longer for the magi to have arrived to worship Lord Jesus. This is why Matthew clearly states that they saw the "Child", not baby, in a "house", not a stable cave. Thus we know from these "passing" details that they did not arrive on the same night as He was born. The only way they could have arrived on the night of His birth, which they didn't, was as if God had put up the star ahead of time, allowing them the many months of lead time to make the trip. Thus, whether they actually visited the young Child, the Toddler, Christ Jesus in Bethlehem is itself questionable. For the time it took for the wise men to arrive, and the fact that Matthew reports that they saw Him and His mother in a house months later (Joseph is not mentioned so he must have been away at the time), they may not have even visited Him in

Bethlehem itself. Renner asserts that due to both Mary and Joseph's having lived in Nazareth, probably even being born in the area, they had probably already left Bethlehem and returned to Nazareth when the magi reached them. Thus the star would have led them up to Galilee to Nazareth. And the wise men would have returned to Persia, from there, and not via Jerusalem, and thereby not relaying to Herod, Christ Jesus' actual location.

As we close out this season's observance of the Christmas story, we see that it's far more "riddled" with miracles than we ever imagined. And the fact that these "wise" men felt so moved to make this grueling expedition, is evidence of just how "wise" they were. They knew the Holy Bible, the Old Testament was all it was in those days. They knew it so very well to know that God was sending His Son as a human baby. So well they could hear Holy Spirit's moving them to recognize a unique, miraculous star sent just for them. The light of the star led them to the brand new Light of the World, which would never ever after be extinguished. All this reveals just how great their wisdom was, which came from their study of God's written word. So the question is, how wise do you want to be? We never stop learning, unless we just don't want to learn any more. If we really want to be wise and grow wiser, as we're supposed to as we get older in life, then, does that not mean that we need to study our Bibles every day? The Light of the World is Christ Jesus, and we get to know Him better by studying what He wrote down for us to read. So keep at it!

