

Greater Than All Kings

Several years ago, ‘Pope Francis is finishing a papal trip to Los Angeles’. After his final appearance, ‘he is picked up by a limousine, and climbs into the backseat ready for the journey to the airport. While sitting in the back of the limo, he starts thinking this is a pretty beautiful car, and it’s been a long time since he has driven, so he’ lowers ‘the privacy screen, and says to the driver “It’s been a long time since I’ve driven a car. I was wondering if you could let me drive the rest of the way?” The driver’ think[s] it would be nice to ride in the back of the limo for once. What’s’ the harm in it? ... ‘So he pulls over, rushes around to let the Pope out and then climbs in the back thinking, so this is how the other half live. The Pope in the driver’s seat is cruising along the freeway, ...’ wondering ‘how fast it will go,’ so he ‘puts his foot down a little bit, ...’ exceeding ‘the speed limit. A cop on the side of the road sees the speeding limo, pulls up’ with ‘his lights on. Diligently the Pope pulls over ...,’ lowers ‘the window, and says, “Good afternoon, officer”. The cop is ... taken aback,’ recognizing ‘... the Pope driving ...’. He ‘responds, ... “Sorry, can you please wait ... for a moment?”’ He ‘hurries back to his car, and radios ...’ the captain: ““What do I do if I pull over someone famous?” ...’ The captain ... ‘replies, “Well how famous are we talking, movie star,

musician?” “No no, a bit more famous than that”. “So are we talking president famous?” “No, a bit more famous than that”. “So ... royalty of some kind?” “No sir, even more famous than that”. “Well, who the heck is it then?!” “Sir, I honestly couldn’t tell you who it is, but he has the ... Pope as his driver!””

Sorry if you’ve heard that one before, but it’s chock full of morals! For in a very real sense, that fictional chauffeur is, in many respects, more of a VIP than the pope. And this goes for each and every one of us. Not in that we are special, unique, or in any way important in and of ourselves, but because we belong to Christ Jesus. Since He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and we are His blood-bought siblings, we, too, are royal princes and princesses. If, we take our roles, our positions seriously. The problem with most who call themselves Christians, is that they not only don’t act like it, they don’t really know what they’re supposed to be, because they don’t really know Who He is, Who has purchased their God-given destinies on the Cross of Calvary.

We’re at the end of the Christmas season, celebrating Epiphany, the day commemorating the visit of the wise men. Generally speaking, babies are cute, and Baby Jesus was certainly as cute as normal babies are. Helpless. Dependent upon Mother Mary and Stepfather Joseph for everything. He hardly looked the part of the King of the Universe. From the world’s perspective, He was just the opposite. Born in a livestock cave, laid in a feeding trough, with straw as his mattress. But in our mind’s eye, even

that's become cutesy. So Lord Jesus was born and we're happy. But what real difference does it make for our everyday lives? After we exchange our presents, feast with family and friends, well, it's all over for another year. And we go about our lives just like always. Intellectually, we know it's not that simple. But practically, living is too busy to properly incorporate what He is into our daily routines. Or is it? Isn't it actually the case that our daily living is too stressed **not** to include Him in everything we do?

We read about the wise men in Matthew 2 again. How many times have we heard that story all our lives? How much time have we actually spent contemplating why it's in the Bible? What it all really means? Who were they, really? In the past, I've fleshed out a little of who and what these mysterious visitors who came to pay homage and worship Baby Jesus were. But let's review. First, there were far more than three of them. The Bible doesn't say how many came, nor how many gifts and kinds of gifts they brought, summarizing only the three most poignant and symbolically crucial gifts. So let's focus on the three specifically mentioned. Gold was the *de rigueur* gift for people in very high positions. For royalty, kings particularly, history records the prescribed amounts required to gain an audience with a king. First of all, it had to be the purest, highest quality of gold. And for a low level king, the minimum amount acceptable weighed in today's equivalent 110 kilos. That's 242 and ½ pounds! Which is 3,880 ounces. Which is at the close of trading last Friday went for

\$4,332.36 an ounce. Meaning that amount of gold bullion is worth over \$16.8 million. Similar was the value of the frankincense and myrrh. Follow the choir's offertory anthem later for the symbolism and practical use of those two particular gifts for later in the Lord's life, and His death. But no visit to a king would be limited to just three gifts. There would have been other valuables: exquisite spices, silks, carpets, vases, sculptures, jewels. Back in the ancient world, being a king really meant something. In today's world, under Christian-influenced democratization, the protocols and exalted status surrounding royalty is much diminished.

With all that in mind, consider what the wise men and their entourage presented to King Herod and his court for their visit requesting directions. They had to have given him something equivalent to what we've mentioned. No wonder kings were so wealthy back then. No wonder people did unconscionable things to get those thrones! Since ordinary people had nowhere near such wealth, common folk would never have an audience with a monarch. It was unthinkable. But these wise men were granted not one, but two audiences with Herod. Furthermore, with such valuables, just the weight of the gold itself, and for not just one king but the Baby King of the Universe, these men were hardly just three guys riding on camels over a thousand miles to worship Baby Jesus. They'd be a magnet, sending up flares, broadcasting, "Gold and valuables here. Come, pillage and rob us!" Absolutely not!! They would have required their own "secret service".

They would have had at least a few hundred crack military soldiers protecting them, as they ventured across multiple international boundaries.

Speaking of border crossings, ordinary people couldn't just hop in their cars and drive from one empire to the next. It's not like the open border madness which the evil globalists have been pushing on us for the last several decades. Ordinary people could not travel from one empire, from one nation, to another without special papers. And ordinary people would never get such papers nor have the business to travel anywhere outside of their nations. Remember all the missionary travels the Apostle Paul took. He never left the Roman Empire. But for these wise men to travel from probably Persia, Central Asia, into the Roman Empire, they had to have been very, very important people indeed. They, in a sense of importance, were similar to the globe trotting elites of today, but with even more clout. For these wise men were a recognized class of dignitaries who wielded the authority to actually depose rulers if they thought necessary. They were famous throughout the ancient world, which is why they are given no additional description in Matthew, because in those days, everybody knew what they represented. Thousands of years later, now, we have to do research to find out what they were. When they showed up, no one stood in their way. When they showed up in a distant land, some one was likely going to be crowned a monarch, or dethroned! These wise men were wise

and in a real sense, kingmakers.

If they came all this way, having been guided by Holy Spirit through the visible sign of a miraculous star, to worship and crown the Baby Jesus king, as no ordinary king, but king of all the universe, well, imagine what they brought to give Him! In today's money, it totaled probably a billion dollars, or more! They knew Whom they were coming to. What they gave had to reflect the One receiving the gifts! Parenthetically, we might ask, what happened to all that wealth? It would have set up Lord Jesus' family in the lap of luxury for generations to come. But we know Lord Jesus "had nowhere to lay His head". We also know that some of it was used to finance the emergency escape to Egypt. But as the firstborn Son of Mary and Joseph, He had the authority to use the wealth in any way He wanted. He would have given it all away. There is some evidence that the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea, who took Jesus' body from the cross and placed it in his very own tomb, was an uncle of Mary's, and his wealth was part of what the Baby Jesus had received from the wise men.

The wise men knew what they were doing, Whom they were visiting, Whom they were declaring King of Kings. Their gifts were the best of the best, for here before them was the highest of all kings, the very God Almighty in human flesh. If He was worth such over the top devotion and gifts, what have we given Him? What can we give Him? Nothing less than our whole being!! If so, then must live like it!

