



December 13, 2009

The Gifts Of The Wise Men

Last week I wrote about the wise men from the East who visited Christ at a time when he may have been as old as two years of age. Traditionally the view has been that there were three wise men and this may be based on the gifts that they brought. There were three principal gifts noted by Matthew; gold, frankincense and myrrh. The significance of these gifts lies in the relationship that they have with the Old Testament and the appearance of the Messiah. There may have been 3 wise men, or, there could have been three hundred. The account does not tell us. Gold is a precious metal that has great value which does not have to be stated here for everyone to know. There are grades of gold based on purity and in the scriptures this is referred to as fine or pure gold. In Exodus chapter twenty-five, God details the construction of the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat, table of showbread and the lampstand. Each item is either made of pure gold or overlaid with gold. The tabernacle was the place where God would manifest his presence and commune with the people. Once a year the Lord would do so as the priest offered the blood of atonement in the most holy place for the sins of the people. The intersection of God and man, the point at which the Lord would take away sin and interact with his creation is exactly what Christ has done through his appearance in the world and the sacrifice that he made for all of us. The priceless nature of salvation far outweighs the value of gold but what better way to represent the richness of God toward us than with gold. Frankincense provides another connection with the Law of Moses and in particular with the physical elements that foreshadowed the coming of the Christ. Frankincense was used in the making of the holy anointing oil (**Ex 30.23-25**). This oil was used to anoint the priests and later kings to rule over God's people. Jesus was also known as the Christ, a title which means the anointed one. Christ was the anointed of God who would not only become the sacrifice upon which the new law is based, but would also be it's high priest. Frankincense was also used in certain sacrifices (**Lev 2.1-2, Lev 2.15-16, Lev 5.11, Lev 6.15**). Frankincense was also placed on the show-

bread, also known as the bread of the presence, each week (**Lev 24.7**). The bread represented the abiding presence of God with his people. Today the presence of Christ abides with us as we obey the Lord. The scriptures assures us of the care and watchful eye of God over those who serve him. Once more it is fitting and appropriate for a gift to be made that has significance in a spiritual sense. The final gift is that of Myrrh, an aromatic resin from a tree that was used in the formulation of the anointing oil. The oil was used to sanctify the objects in the tabernacle and to consecrate the priests (**Ex 30.23-30**). The gifts brought by the wise men show that they had a deeper understanding of the birth of Christ and offered such things as were embodied in the law which pointed to the coming of the Lord and the salvation that he offered. The diligence of the wise men is seen in that they had a depth of understanding of the scriptures and the gifts, while being of great value in a physical sense, were a statement of recognition, honor and praise. Christ was the culmination of all that God had planned in order to save mankind and the visit of the wise men speaks of great beauty and glory in the birth of the savior. Today we are called upon to offer a sacrifice of praise by coming to an understanding of God's will as revealed in the scripture. The power of the Gospel is that of salvation (**Rom 1.16**) to all that will believe and obey. Are we like the wise men in our search for truth? When we find the truth that has been recorded do we obey it? Do we honor God in our lives through adhering to the things that he has commanded? The birth of Christ was an event of great joy because it meant that salvation was at hand. The power and beauty of the Gospel is that of forgiveness, preservation and eternal salvation. True wisdom is in obedience and faithful service.

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