

How many wise men in a nativity set.

After Jesus was born, Wise Men came to look for Him, probably from an area which is now in either Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia or the Yemen.

Although they are often called the **'Three Kings'**, the Bible does not say how many there were, or that they were kings.

One theory is that they might have been **Kings of the Yemen**, as during this time the Kings of Yemen were Jews. Three is only a guess because they brought with them three gifts: but however many there were of them, they probably would have had many more servants with them.

They were definitely men of learning. They were certainly men of great learning.

The word Magi comes from the greek word 'magos' (where the english word 'magic' comes from). Magos itself comes from the old persian word 'Magupati'.

This was the title given to priests in a sect of the ancient persian religions such as Zoroastrianism. Today we'd called them astrologers. Back then astronomy and astrology were part of the same overall studies (and 'science') and went hand in hand with each other. The magi would have followed the patterns of the stars religiously. They would have also probably been very rich and held high esteem in their own society and by people who weren't from their country or religion.

They had seen an unusual new star in the sky, and knew that it told of the birth of a special king. No one really knows what the new star in the sky was, and there are many theories including comets, supernovas, a conjunctions of planets or something supernatural! Find out more about the star in [the Star of Bethlehem page in the Christmas Customs section](#).

Legends are told about them and they have been given names. This is how they are often described:

- **Gaspar** (or Caspar), who has brown hair and a brown beard and wears a green cloak and a gold crown with green jewels on it. He is the King of Sheba. Gaspar represents the Frankincense brought to Jesus.
- **Melchior**, who has long white hair and a white beard and wears a gold cloak. He is the King of Arabia. Melchior represents the Gold brought to Jesus.
- **Balthazar**, who has black skin and a black beard and wears a purple cloak. He is the King of Tarse and Egypt. Balthazar represents the gift of Myrrh that was brought to Jesus.

Herod asked the Wise Men to find Jesus and tell him where he was, not so he could go and worship him as he said, but so he could kill him! He thought that Jesus sounded like a new King that could come and take his power away.

Herod well He kind of represents the whole nation at that time. They misunderstood what Jesus was about. Interesting, they could look into their Old Testament and find out about the prophecies. Why didn't they already know if they were waiting for this Messiah person? You'd think that they would have that info on hand. But they didn't have google back then I suppose (forgive the sarcasm!!)

Notice God thwarts Herod's plans. The end of the passage says God communicates to them in a dream and says go another way.

Anyway back to the main story.

When the Wise Men found Jesus and Mary, they would have been living in a normal house in Bethlehem, because by this time Jesus would have been aged between one and two. Then they gave their gifts to him. The gifts seem quite strange to give to a baby, but hey it was a different world back then, I don't really know what kids got given as gifts but Gold frankincense and myrrh probably not common.

but Christians believe that they had the following meanings:

- Gold: is associated with Kings and Christians believe that Jesus is the King of Kings.
- Frankincense: is sometimes used in worship in Churches and showed that people would worship Jesus.
- Myrrh: is a perfume that is put on dead bodies to make them smell nice and showed that Jesus would suffer and die.

So what's in the story?

1. Wise guys but how many and how many travelled with them we don't know Important people in those days travelled with a bunch of people. Body guards, cooks, servants, etc. .

We don't know their names from the bible so we don't know for sure if they were Gasper, Melchior and Balthazar.

2. We do know they brought gifts.
BUT

.” Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh” There is a sense that these may only have been some of what was included. . To open their gifts has the sense of they opened up what they had to offer him. Maybe they gave more. It’s a bit like the wise men we see three gifts mentioned and assume three men, we see three gifts mentioned and assume ONLY three.

3. In some ways the gifts were expressions of what They came to do. Notice in verse 11

they bowed down and worshiped him.

They offered gifts as worship, they bowed down as worship, they came to worship Their whole purpose was to worship!!!