

The Wednesday Word, December 14, 2016: Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh - Deity, Devotion and Death

“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” Matthew 2:11

We may not know much about the Wise Men who journeyed to give gifts to Christ, but their generosity tells us much about the young child.

The first thing they gave was gold and gold speaks of Deity. We see this in the Old Testament where the boards of the Tabernacle were covered with this precious metal. The Ark of the Covenant was overlaid with gold. Also, when heathens made images of their gods they usually fashioned them out of gold. The essential symbol identifying a king was a golden crown on his head. Christ is the King of Kings (Revelation 17:14). Being the King of Kings, it means simply that Christ is God. He is King of all. Gold, therefore, was a fittingly appropriate gift.

Yes, indeed, gold spoke of majestic Deity. How telling that these Medes and Persians should bring gold to the Young Child. I think these sages knew the ancient prophecy which foretold that this baby should be offered the gold of Sheba. I suspect they comprehended that kings should bring the young Messiah the riches of the Gentiles (Psalm 72:15). How fitting that He who is God manifest in the flesh should be given gold.

The next precious thing they gave Him was Frankincense ... All through scripture, frankincense was used in worship, especially in the daily Temple worship. (Exodus 30:34, Leviticus 2:1-2, 14-16).

The Wise Men came to Jesus and worshiped. What an opportunity we have to worship our majestic priest upon His throne. May we learn to sing in our hearts, "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given and the government shall be upon His shoulder and His name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God the Everlasting Father."

The third gift they gave was Myrrh. Myrrh speaks of death. What a strange gift to give a child! Myrrh was a spice used in embalming. The Wise Men gave Him Myrrh because the young child came to die. Babies are usually born to live, but the Christ Child was born to die.

John Stott in his book, 'The Cross of Christ' reminds us that Holman Hunt has a famous picture of Jesus. It depicts Him at the door of the carpenter's shop in Nazareth. He has come to the door to stretch his limbs which no doubt had grown cramped over the bench. He stands there in the doorway with arms outstretched, and behind him, on the wall, the setting sun throws his shadow, and it is the shadow of a cross.

Holman Hunt was correct: Christ lived in the shadow of the cross. Here, at His birth, the Wise Men brought Him myrrh ... a picture of His suffering and death. There is much to learn from the gifts of these Magi. They gave Him gold... a sign of His Deity. May we never forget that the young child was God with us, Emmanuel! They gave Him Frankincense, a symbol of their devotion. And they gave him Myrrh...a prophetic picture of His Death.

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh...Deity, Devotion and Death

When we understand who it was that cameThe eternal God. And when we grasp that he came to redeem us with His precious blood, we are transformed into devoted worshipers. When our devotion dries up it is usually because we have forgotten Christ's Deity and His Death.

And that's the Gospel Truth!