

## **THE WISE MEN**

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*Lessons: Numbers 24:15-19, Matthew 2:1-5, Arcana Coelestia 9293:3*

Christmas is such a joyful time, with its lively parties and the presents we give and receive, but we must be careful not to forget why we celebrate this day. Christmas is the day the Lord was born on earth, and the happiest time should be when we think of His birth, and hear of the many wonderful things, which happened then. To enjoy our Christmas in the best possible way we should begin the day by reading about His great love for all of us.

Among those who worshiped the Lord at His birth were wise men from the east. They were wise because they knew that everything good and true comes from the Lord, and they loved Him and obeyed His Commandments. They knew that the Lord was born because they saw His Star in the east. This is a wonderful thing, that from seeing a star they should know that the Lord was born. But this was a remarkable star, different from all other stars, which appear on a clear night. It had been promised from old times that this Star would appear when the Lord was born. This Star really was an angelic society that appeared to the wise men. Swedenborg tells us that in the spiritual world he sometimes saw groups of angels appearing as stars on high. The best of the angels appeared as bright stars giving light to those below.

Not all people saw this Star. Herod did not see it. The wise men saw it because they knew that angelic societies sometimes appear as stars. They saw this Star in spiritual light, which is to see the truth, and to receive the Lord who was the true light.

The star led the wise men from a far country to the east to Jerusalem, and then to Bethlehem where they found the Lord. And where do you suppose they found Him? Was it in a fine palace, with the whole city rejoicing that the Lord had come to bless them? No! Hardly anyone was wise enough to know who the Lord was, and even if they had known Him, they were too busy enjoying themselves to pay any attention to Him. So the Lord was born in a stable and laid in a manger, because there was no room for Him in the inn. The people of the Church had no room for the Lord in the inn, because they had no place for Him in their hearts. Those who should have loved Him loved themselves so much that they could not love anyone else. Even when the Lord came down to earth to teach them the way to heaven, they shut Him out and would not receive Him into their inn.

But the wise men did not go to this inn, for the Star led them to the place where the Lord was, and “when they saw the young child with Mary His mother, they fell down and worshiped Him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh”. This was the end of the long and dangerous journey they had made in order to worship the Lord and present their gifts to Him.

They gave the best things they possibly could to the Lord, for the gold, frankincense and myrrh were precious things. We also should give our most precious things to the Lord in thankfulness because He has given us everything we have. By gold they showed that they had a pure love of Him and rejoiced in His goodness in coming to save people. By frankincense they showed that they thought about Him and tried to understand what He taught them. By myrrh they showed that they would cheerfully obey His commandments. Gold for love; frankincense for thought; and myrrh for obedience; these are the precious gifts we should give to the Lord. He wants our love, our thought, and our obedience, because He knows that these things will make us happy.

This is the story of the wise men of which we never grow tired. Every year we find it more delightful, and the better we understand it the more pleasure it gives us. Especially when we know that the Lord came to teach and bless people, not only of that distant time, but all of us at this day as well. We have many things to learn from this story. We cannot see the Lord born on this earth as the wise men did, but we can hear about His birth, and for that reason rejoice just as much as they did. And we have seen that when we love, think about, and obey the Lord we are offering Him those gifts, which are as pleasing to Him as the ones, which the wise men gave Him. We cannot see a special Star in the sky, but we can hear the same angels who appeared to the wise men as a Star.

We learn these stories first from our parents and teachers, but when we grow up we can see for ourselves the Divine light of the Word. We must obey its teachings that lead us where the Lord is to be found. He comes to us, even as He came to Bethlehem. When we forget about our own good times and fight against being selfish, we find a new and fuller delight in doing what the Lord has told us to do. This will bring us far more pleasure than anything else on earth possibly can.

We should remember some of these things about the Lord’s birth and begin our Christmas celebration by thinking and reading about them. Our first love is to the Lord, to think about Him and to thank Him for all the wonderful things He gives us, and then we show our thanks by gladly sharing what we have with others. We worship the Lord because He came on earth to teach all people and to show them the way to true happiness; and then we show our love and

affection for our friends. This is doing what the angels told the shepherds to do when they said:

Glory to God in the highest, and on  
Earth peace, good will toward men (Luke 2:14).