

Quotes from the Word: The Guiding Star

THE OLD TESTAMENT

I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel (Numbers 24:17).

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be ruler in Israel (Micah 5:2).

Arise, shine; for your light has come!
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you....
The Lord will be to you an everlasting light.
(Isaiah 60:1, 19)

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.”
(Isaiah 9:2)

And it will be said in that day: “Behold, this is our God;
We have waited for Him, and He will save us.
This is the Lord: we have for Him:
We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”
(Isaiah 25:9)

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah;
For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.’”

Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.”

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When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way (Matthew 2:1-12).

THE HEAVENLY DOCTRINE

The Lord Came into the World

The Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, came into the world to subdue the hells and to glorify His Human. Without this no mortal could have been saved, and those are saved who believe in Him (*True Christian Religion* 2).

Jehovah God came down into the world as Divine truth, in order that He might work redemption. And redemption consisted in subjugating the hells, restoring the heavens to order, and after this establishing a church. The Divine good is inadequate to bring this about. It can be done only by the Divine truth from the Divine good (*True Christian Religion* 86).

The Lord is light, that is, good itself and truth itself, and thus from Him stems all intelligence and wisdom, consequently all salvation (*Arcana Coelestia* 3195:4).

“I am the Root and Offspring of David, the bright and morning Star” means that it is the Lord Himself who was born in the world, and was then the Light, and who will come with new light, which will arise before His New Church, which is the holy Jerusalem.... He is called “the bright Star” from the light with which He came into the world (*Apocalypse Revealed* 954).

The Wise Men Follow the Star

The star which went before the wise men symbolized knowledge from heaven, inasmuch as stars in the Word symbolize concepts (*De Verbo* 7:5).

That wisdom flourished in Arabia, appears from the three wise men who came to the newborn Jesus, a star going before them (see *Coronis* 41:2).

A “star” symbolizes the knowledges of good and truth, and in the highest sense the knowledge respecting the Lord (*Apocalypse Explained* 422:20).

There remained something of the Ancient Church in Syria, which is why there were still knowledges of good and truth in that land. This can be seen from Balaam, who not only

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worshiped Jehovah, but also prophesied concerning the Lord, and called Him the “Star out of Jacob, and the Scepter out of Israel” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3249).

The star appeared to those from the east because the Lord is in the east; and because they had knowledge respecting the Lord’s coming. The star appeared and went before them, first to Jerusalem, which symbolized the church itself in respect to doctrine and in respect to the word, and from there to the place where the infant Lord lay (see *Apocalypse Explained* 422:20).

“The wise men from the east” also symbolized those who are in the knowledges of truth and good. The worship of such [people] from celestial good, spiritual good, and natural good is symbolized by “they offered gold, frankincense, and myrrh (*Apocalypse Explained* 324:10).

Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh

The wise men brought with them gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The gold symbolized celestial good, the frankincense spiritual good, and the myrrh natural good—the three kinds of good from which everything of worship originates (see *De Verbo* 7:5).

That they might testify their joy of heart, the wise men offered [the Lord] such things as symbolized every good from first to last (*Apocalypse Explained* 324:10).

“Gold, frankincense, and myrrh” means all forms of the good of love and faith offered to the Lord “gold” being forms of the good of love, “frankincense” forms of the good of faith, and “myrrh” forms of both in external things. The reason why “wise men from the east” offered them was that among some in the east there remained from ancient times the knowledge and wisdom of the people of old, which consisted in their understanding and seeing heavenly and Divine realities within things in the world and on earth. For it was well known to the ancients that all things had a correspondence...and therefore had a spiritual meaning.... This was how they knew that gold, frankincense, and myrrh meant the forms of good that should be offered to God (*Arcana Coelestia* 9293:3).

“Gold” in the Word symbolizes celestial good, which is inmost good [or the good of love and charity] (*Apocalypse Explained* 70; see also *Arcana Coelestia* 10177:3).

Frankincense means the truth of faith, and so when frankincense is mentioned in the Word oil, bread, or gold (which means the good of love) is linked with it (see *Arcana Coelestia* 10177:11).

That the inmost truth which is meant by “frankincense” is spiritual good, is because the good with those who are in the Lord's spiritual kingdom is nothing else than truth, which is called good when a person wills and does it from conscience and affection. In its essence spiritual good is truth (see *Arcana Coelestia* 10296).

Myrrh symbolizes the most external truth, which is truth on the level of the senses and perception of that truth (see *Arcana Coelestia* 10250:7).

The Gifts We Bring to the Lord

Gifts offered to the Lord serve to bear witness to things offered from the heart, which are those of faith and charity (*Arcana Coelestia* 9293).

Because gifts captivate the mind and consociate, it was a custom in ancient times to give gifts to the priest, prophet, prince and king when they were approached.... So too, "The wise men from the east brought gifts to the Lord..." (Matt. 2:11). This is because external gifts symbolized internal or spiritual gifts, such as go forth from the heart (see *Apocalypse Explained* 661:2).

Gifts and presents were said to be made to Jehovah, though Jehovah, that is, the Lord, is not the receiver of gifts or presents, but the giver of them, freely to everyone. Even so, His will is that they should come from a person as though they did so from that person himself, provided the person acknowledges that they do not actually come from him but from the Lord. For the Lord imparts a desire to do good because he loves it, and a desire to speak the truth because he believes it. The actual desire flows in from the Lord, yet appears to be inherent in the person and so to flow from the person. For whatever a person does out of love and desire for it, he does from his life, love being what composes anyone's life. From this it is evident that the things that are called gifts and presents made to the Lord by a person are essentially gifts and presents made to a person by the Lord, and that they are called gifts and presents on account of what they appear to be. All who are wise at heart recognize this appearance (*Apocalypse Explained* 9938).