

## Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

### Gifts Fit for a Baby

Scripture: Matthew 2

Code: BQ122612

**And having heard the king, they went their way; and lo, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him; and opening their treasures they presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their own country by another way. (Matthew 2:9–12)**

Right worship is always, and must be, the only basis for right giving and right learning and right service. Giving that is generous but done apart from a loving relationship with God is empty giving. Learning that is orthodox and biblical but is learned apart from knowing and depending on the Source of truth, is empty knowledge, like that of the chief priests and scribes. Service that is demanding and sacrificial but done in the power of the flesh or for the praise of men is empty service.

Throughout history **gold** has been considered the most precious of metals and the universal symbol of material value and wealth. It was used extensively in the construction of the Temple (see 1 Kings 6–7, 9; 2 Chron. 2–4). It was also a symbol of nobility and royalty (see Gen. 41:4; 1 Kings 10:1–13; etc.). Matthew continually presents Christ as the King, and here we see the King of the Jews, the King of kings, appropriately being presented with royal gifts of gold.

The Savior of the world is also the true King of the world, and He will not be Savior of those who will not accept Him as sovereign Lord. As wonderful as Jesus' saviorhood was to them, the early Christians' first known creed was "Jesus is Lord," acknowledging His rule.

**Frankincense** was a costly, beautiful-smelling incense that was used only for the most special of occasions. It was used in the grain offerings at the Tabernacle and Temple (Lev. 2:2, 15–16), in certain royal processions (Song of Sol. 3:6–7), and sometimes at weddings if it could be afforded.

Origen, the great church Father, suggested that frankincense was the incense of deity. In the Old Testament it was stored in a special chamber in front of the Temple and was sprinkled on certain offerings as a symbol of the people's desire to please the Lord.

**Myrrh** was also a perfume, not quite so expensive as frankincense but nevertheless valuable. Some interpreters suggest that myrrh represents the gift for a mortal, emphasizing Jesus' humanity. This perfume is mentioned often in Scripture, beginning in Genesis (37:25; 43:11). Mixed with wine it was also used as an anesthetic (Mark 15:23), and mixed with other spices it was used in preparation of bodies for burial, even Jesus' body (John 19:39).

Those were the magi's gifts to Jesus. **Gold** for His royalty, **frankincense** for His deity, and **myrrh** for His humanity.

We do not know what was done with the gifts, but it seems reasonable that they were used to finance the trip to Egypt and to help support the family while there (see Matt. 2:13–15).

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