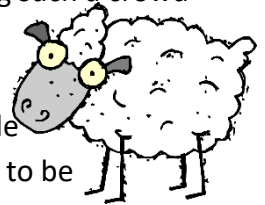




I love to see little children taking part in a nativity play at Christmas. Little girls who do not have a major roll are usually angels. Some of them look very angelic with their tinsel halos and angel wings. Others are more fidgety with their halos on one side and wings looking a bit bent and worse for wear.

Sometimes a lovely little angel dissolves into tears when facing such a crowd and has to be taken off stage. I feel really sorry for the Mum who has spent hours trying to make a decent pair of wings and trying to fix them in place. The boys end up as sheep. There is often a major problem for them because the designer has made the eye slots to fit an adult so the little lads push it to the top of their heads in order to be able to see what is going on!



Of course, no nativity play would be complete without the three kings, dressed in all their fine clothes, topped with extremely expensive jewelled crowns! In the Bible they are not referred to as 'kings' but as 'wise men' and may have been astronomers who were accustomed to studying the stars. In other writings they are referred to as 'Magi', which was a kind of Persian priest. Their journey from the East would have been a distance of at least 500 miles so would probably have taken them a few months. We casually just refer to them as part of the Christmas scene, but, have you ever sat and thought how amazing

it was for them to follow a star for that distance? Had God revealed to them the nature of the person whom they were going to visit? At least one of them must have had a 'whopping' revelation to be prepared to travel all that way, even though they had not been brought up in the Jewish tradition of expecting a Messiah.



What about the star? Even more amazing was how God guided them by a star. We say that God is capable of doing anything but when it comes to something like this it is beyond anything that we are able to grasp.

We are not told how many wise men made that journey. The general assumption is that there were three, because of the three gifts that are mentioned. Over 700 years previously Isaiah prophesied that men would come from the East and bring gifts of gold and frankincense. (Isaiah 60: 6)

The gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh that the wise men brought to Jesus shows that they were very wealthy. I suppose too that a person must have been pretty well-off in order to own a camel!



Gold



Frankincense



Myrrh

The gifts they brought had significant meanings. The men told King Herod that they had come to find the 'King of the Jews' and the gift of gold was something that was a fitting gift for royalty; for one who was the 'King of the Jews'. Frankincense was a type of incense and perfume and would often be used in worship. The wise men came not only to bring gifts to Jesus but also to worship Him. Myrrh was known to have been used for embalming, as well as being a painkiller – Foreshadowing the death of Jesus. It was used in oil for anointing kings so was certainly an appropriate gift for the 'King of the Jews' that they were expecting to see.



We do not know when the wise men arrived at their destination, certainly not when Jesus was first in the stable. After they had spoken to King Herod, he had the boys killed who were aged two years and under so it was likely to have been around two years after His birth when they visited Him as a toddler in a house.

It would seem that Mary and Joseph remained in Bethlehem for quite some time after the census had been taken since it was in Bethlehem that the wise men saw Jesus. How did they finance themselves? Had Joseph taken his tools with him with the intention of a long stay? Were they with other relatives? What did they do with the three gifts? It would have been quite difficult to exchange them because of their high value. All questions to which we do not have the answers given to us in the Bible.

I have been wondering what gift I would give to Jesus if I visited Him in the stable. I love doing counted cross stitch so I would embroider Him a picture with a lovely fancy border and the words 'Thank You Jesus'. He would then be able to keep that and know that I am very grateful for what He did for me. What gift would you give to Him?



You can read about the wise men in Matthew Chapter 2.

### *Thank You Jesus for :-*

- .....coming down from Heaven to earth.*
- .....dying on the cross for me.*
- .....making a way for me to be forgiven.*
- .....my salvation.*
- .....saving me from going to Hell.*
- .....reserving me a place in Heaven.*

**Thank You !**