

Tis The Season: Expectation of Light and Hope for the World

Read Time: 4 Minutes, 43 Seconds

The Light of the World has come! His coming is what we celebrate at Christmas. From the very start, His light drew people who hungered for truth from far and wide.

Consider the magi, or wisemen. They travelled for potentially up to 2 years following a light in the sky that led them to Jesus. And they brought gifts fit for a king.

Many of us know, or even have sung the song, “We Three Kings”. It may even be one of your favorite Christmas carols.

It was also known as “We Three Kings of Orient Are” or “The Quest of the Magi”. It was written by John Henry Hopkins Jr in 1857 for a Christmas pageant. It is said to be one of the first Christmas carol’s written in America that became widely popular.

Scripture does not specifically refer to kings but rather “magi” or “wise men,” and we are not given a headcount as to how many of them there actually were. Yet, we do know that they did bear gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

I like how the Nativity movie depicts the presentation of the gifts. The first magi presents his gift, announcing it as “gold, for the King of all Kings; The second presents the frankincense and says, “for the Priest of all Priests”; and after a moment of hesitation and stumbling, the third says, “and myrrh, for the Sacrifice of all Sacrifices”. Nestled in the middle of the Christmas story was the mystery of Jesus’ life; even though He was a king, He had been born to die.

"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."(Matthew 2:11)

In 2003, we saw the story of the crucifixion minister to thousands throughout the nation and around the world from a surprising source—Hollywood—with the release of Mel Gibson's production of *The Passion of the Christ*. With the movie's graphic depiction of what the suffering Jesus endured for the joy set before Him—our salvation—came a new realization for many of the reality of the crucifixion. For others, the movie generated questions. As the cover of one national magazine boldly inquired, "Did Jesus really have to die?"

Even with the controversy surrounding the graphic violence involved in the scourging and death of Christ, an R rating would not be sufficient to accurately portray the extent of His suffering, from the physical pain of the beatings to the emotional pain and loneliness of betrayal. Crucifixion was a form of capital punishment and considered the most humiliating and torment-full way to die. Even the word "excruciating" did not exist until a word was needed to describe the pain of death by crucifixion.

I remember reading a medical description of what Jesus most likely went through from a medical perspective, by the late Dr. C. Truman Davis. Each time I read it, I still get deeply gripped of heart and moved to tears with the revelation of Christ's love and sacrifice for us.

It is impossible to have a strong foundation as a Christian unless we have a revelation of the passion of Christ, the work of The Cross, and the power of the how it can transform our lives today. Without that understanding, we will be apathetic believers at best. But that revelation changes everything!

In some circles and especially in our western culture, we may

have heard about the Cross so often that the thought of our sins that put Him there does not still break our hearts, igniting a burning passion of gratitude and service within us. We sometimes take for granted the high cost of love that was displayed upon the Cross for us. I wonder if it's because we have so many distractions and substitutes that put more focus on self rather than fixing our eyes on the Author and Finisher of our faith?

A.W. Tozer said it well, "Self is the opaque veil that hides the Face of God from us. It can be removed only in spiritual experience, never by mere self under the guise of promoting Christ is currently so common as to excite little notice."

I like the question the late Leonard Ravenhill used to put on all of his notes and cards: "Are the things you're living for worth Christ dying for?" This is still a watershed issue that should challenge our values today.

The timeliness of the message of the Cross cannot be overstated. We need the message more than ever. We need to be rekindled in heart with a renewed revelation of the work of the Cross, and the Holy Spirit revelation and power available to each of us. From Genesis to Revelation, the beginning and the closing of scripture, we read of the Tree of fullness of life through Christ, revealed in full display on the Cross, that we may have life and life more abundantly.

From the Manger to the Cross, we have the scarlet thread of God's love and redemption revealed. The Hope and Light of the World Himself dwells among us.

It is important, during this holiday and Christmas season, and throughout the year, to reflect the Light of the World, who became man over 2000 years ago. He is the Word who dwells among us. We have a joy and a strength beyond human comprehension. We have peace that surpasses all understanding. May we as the Church let our light shine in such a way that it

draws others close to the Lord, like the star over Bethlehem drew to Magi. May we be an example to those around us so they too can find their faith, hope, peace, and joy in the midst of their difficulties.

Jesus is the Word who dwells among us, and He is the Light of the World. Oh, how we need a whole lot of light in the darkness!

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