

**The Gift of Myrrh –
Matthew 2:11**

What We Know About the Wise Men

There weren't three wise men; there was probably a large entourage of magi with a small army

The magi weren't kings; they were kingmakers

A hereditary priesthood tribe

In charge of acknowledging and advising kings

What We Know About the Wise Men

The gifts were emblematic of the roles Jesus would perform

Gold: He was the King (see Matthew 2:2)

Frankincense: used by the priesthood

Myrrh

Yet it's the most inspiring, and it shows us the depths of God's love

Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11

Its Significance in Ancient History

Goes back to the second or even sixth millennium BC

An aromatic resin from a reddish gum from a low-growing thorny tree

The word *myrrh* appears seventeen times in the Bible

Its Significance in Ancient History

Fourteen in the Old Testament

Three in the Old Testament

Hebrew *mor*; Greek *smurna*

Used as a beauty treatment; Esther 2:12

Its Significance in Ancient History

Used as a perfume

Psalm 45:8

Proverbs 7:17

Song of Solomon 3:6

Used as an analgesic, a painkiller

Used in modern times as an antiseptic

Used as an embalming fluid

Its Significance in Ancient History

Ancient rabbis associated myrrh with sacrificial
death

Especially Abraham giving his son Isaac on
Mount Moriah; Genesis 22:1-14

Hebrew for *myrrh* is *mor*, the root word of
Mount Moriah

Its Significance in Ancient History

Myrrh is connected with death, especially the sacrifice by a father of his son

In the same area as Mount Moriah was the place Jesus would be sacrificed by His Father for the sins of the world

Ancient Christian scholars regarded this gift of myrrh as prophetic of His death

Its Symbolism of Jesus' Ministry

We look over the manger while we overlook the
cross

Unless you see the shadow of the cross falling
on the crib, you don't see the crib clearly at all

God planned it that way from the beginning

William Holman Hunt's painting *The Shadow of Death*

The cross cast a long shadow throughout history

We see the shadow with this third gift

How much did Mary know about the fate of her
child?

The announcement of the angel

Jesus' dedication at the temple; Luke 2:22-35

The gift of myrrh

Max Lucado, "Mary's Prayer"

"Rest well, tiny hands. For though you belong to a king, you will touch no satin, own no gold. You will grasp no pen, guide no brush. No, your tiny hands are reserved for works more precious: to touch a leper's open wound, to wipe a widow's weary tear, to claw the ground of Gethsemane.

Max Lucado, "Mary's Prayer"

Your hands, so tiny, so white—clutched tonight in an infant's fist. They aren't destined to hold a scepter nor wave from a palace balcony. They are reserved instead for a Roman spike that will staple them to a Roman cross"

Its Signal to Us Personally

The wise men saw two things that caused them
to do two things

They saw the star and rejoiced

They saw the child and worshipped

Rejoiced

They found what they were looking for

The Wise Men Worshiped

Greek *proskuneó*, a very strong word almost always reserved for worshiping God

What should my response to Christmas be?

Rejoicing

Make the decision that rejoicing will be part of
your emotional palette

What gift should I give, if any, to Him?

Worship, the fourth gift of the magi

They worshiped and gave gifts; these go hand in
hand

Giving is part of worshiping

Points to Ponder

"There are three conversions that are necessary in a person's life: the conversion of the heart, the conversion of the mind, and the conversion of the wallet; the third is usually the most difficult for most people" —attributed to Martin Luther