

# Shadows In the Bible

## Wise men

This is a good one. It's not just that we have all seen the three wise men at a nativity scene with the baby Jesus. There are songs, movies, and church plays about these three men. Who are they? These guys don't say a word. They are just shadow figures in the Bible that show up and disappear. Yet, much has been written about them.

This is a topic that needs to be treated lightly. Tradition has made them different than these wise men were intended. First of all, it's most likely there were more than three. Tradition has given the number three to the number of gifts. Usually these men traveled in a caravan of 12 or so. The word Magi could mean wise men, Kings, or astrologers. Some have interpreted them as Kings because of Psalm 72:11. Again, tradition uses out of context verses and assumptions to make the Magi something they were probably not.

The place they came from is a mystery. Tradition has placed them in the east. So, scholars say they were most likely Persian. Zoroaster, a Persian spiritual leader had prophesy that a leader would come. He made this claim in and around 1200 B.C. The Bible account says they came from the east. People like to put two and two together. The star is another matter. Was it a

real star? Sometimes in Biblical terms a star is a leader or great man. The Zoroaster leans that way. Most likely the Wise men were astrologers. A star in the sky makes sense. There is no wording that states it was a heavenly star or that it was in the east. The wise men came from the east. The star rising is either a king rising or maybe a star rising in the west. Who really knows?

Then we have the time issue of when Jesus was born. Herod eventually wanted to kill this prophesy child. He tried to kill all male Jewish children 2 years old and under. Sometime after Jesus birth (up to two years) the wise men came. Clearly, the whole area was aware that the Persian and biblical prophesies were in play. Most likely the Shepard's, barn and manger were a nativity scene that did not include the Magi.

One last observation. These men brought Frankincense, Gold, and Mirth. These three things depict the King, Priest, and resurrection. These men saved Jesus by leaving without telling Herod what they found. I like to think God did a few things in this event. One is that he anointed Jesus King through these men. Two is that God provided for these two poor parents. Three is that he protected Jesus through the wise men. Although the tradition is off the mark. It is a great story of shadowy men of the Bible.