

THE TWELVE VOICES OF



CHRISTMAS

— WOODROW KROLL —

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WISE MEN

VOICES OF ADORATION

MATTHEW 2:1-12

The Wise Men traveled hundreds of miles and diligently searched for the child-king. And when they found Him, they offered their gifts and adoration. They recognized that He was not only the Jewish Messiah, the anointed One of Israel, but also the Savior of the world. Through the ages, their story and example have challenged millions to adore Him as Christ the Lord.

I still remember seeing the dirt floor of that primitive house. Early in my academic training, I never would have guessed that I'd be in such a situation. My friends and I had traveled hundreds of miles - not to see a potentate or an intellectual, but a baby! And at the end of our journey, my face was almost on the ground. I saw nothing but dirt.

Who were we? Some people called us wise men. Actually, we were Babylonians, part of a case of men who were appointed to the court in Babylon. As the most learned men of our country, we had dedicated our lives to the study of the sciences, especially astronomy. Our knowledge was kind of an alchemy of science and superstition. Some called us astrologers because we studied the constellations and their effects on society. Some also had dabbled a bit in the black arts - divination, magic, sorcery, that sort of thing.

But we were not unique in the history of Israel. Jewish people had encountered our kind before. Joseph met wise men in Egypt, as did the great leader Moses. One of the great heroines, Esther, had contact with them in the Persian Empire. Even the great Jewish prophets, like Jeremiah

and Ezekiel, spoke of wise men. But we were different from all of those other wise men. We were searching for the Jewish Messiah.

The story of how we got to that house in Bethlehem and on our faces before the young child was filled with adventure, danger and intrigue. We were not kings, as some may have thought; we came to Judea in search of a King. We had come for one reason, and on reason only - to worship Him and to raise our voices in adoration.

How did we learn about Him? We knew that the Jewish nation expected a Messiah, who would bring peace and freedom, joy and comfort, and salvation to all mankind. Perhaps our people learned this from Jewish wise men, such as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, when they were in captivity in our nation. This information had been passed down from one generation of wise men to another.

Though we were of Babylonian blood, we were eager to meet someone like that promised Messiah. And we fell on our faces before Him when we saw Him. In the presence of such deity and glory, any

intelligent person would do the same.

How did we know that we should search for Him? As we were watching the heavens, we saw a special star rising in the east. It had to be an indication for the God of heaven that He was about to fulfill His promise. So we set out on our journey westward. The star did not go with us, nor did it lead us. In fact, it disappeared, and we didn't see it again until later, when we left Jerusalem.

Once in Jerusalem, we began to inquire where the One who was born King of the Jews might be. We were surprised when on one seemed to know. We had come hundreds of miles to see the child-king, but they didn't even know there was a child-king. Perhaps we had come for no reason at all.

Our first big break came when the ruler, a man named Herod, called us to his palace. We thought it strange that he summoned us at night. It appeared that he didn't want anyone to know we were even there. Herod seemed very interested in this child. He told us to look in Bethlehem and commanded us to go there, find the child and return to him so that he, too, could worship Him.

While Herod appeared very sincere in his desire to worship the anointed One, we found out later that he was a deceiver. He wanted to kill the child.

Unaware of Herod's intent, we set out from Jerusalem to go to Bethlehem. It was only when we saw the star again that we knew for sure we had a reliable guide to the King.

The star hung low in the heavens, and it led us right to the Bethlehem house where Mary, Joseph and the young boy were living. We knocked at the door, and Mary answered. Again we posed the question we had asked so frequently in Jerusalem, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" The stunned look on Mary's face clearly told us she was uneasy about our being there. Likely she had assumed that the excitement about her baby's birth had now waned and she and her family could expect to live normal lives. But there we were, strangers from the East dressed in elegant Babylonian gowns.

Then her husband appeared at the door. He quizzed us about who we were and what our intentions were. Satisfied with our answers, the couple graciously invited us into their cramped quarters - probably part of a relative's house, because Mary and Joseph told us they were not permanent residents of Bethlehem.

When we saw the child, we fell to the floor on our faces. The star had led us to the house, but more importantly, to the One whom we would later understand was not just the Jewish Messiah, but the incarnate God, the Savior of the world.

Then we lifted our heads and raised our voices in adoration to the King. We also presented our treasure chests of gifts to Him.

I brought gold because it was the most precious commodity in our world. It represented royalty and should be associated with kings, queens and princes. I presented gold to the child, as my King.

My friend presented frankincense. It

was grown in southern Arabia and East Africa, and it was precious to everyone. To us it represented service to Jehovah and was given as an act of worship and adoration to this child by servants of Jehovah.

Another friend brought myrrh, sometimes used as an anointing oil. To us it spoke of the pleasant perfumes with which bodies were embalmed. Although we did not know everything about the child-king at the time, we learned the rest of the story in eternity. What a fitting gift! For while this child had just begun His life, a sacrificial death was to be His destiny.

We presented ourselves in adoration to Jesus as we gave these gifts. We understood Him to be much more than a baby born in humble circumstances in Bethlehem. We learned that He was God in the flesh - God with us.