

## **The Blessing of a House**

### **Matthew Chapter 2:1-12**

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'" Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

### **The Background**

We read in scripture that following the birth of Jesus Magi came from the East to see the Messiah who had been born. We know very little about them, the Greek historian Herodotus (500 BC) says that the Magi were a caste of priests from Persia who could interpret dreams – and interestingly there are five dreams in Matthew's birth narrative, with four of them warning of the murderous intentions of King Herod and his son Archelaus who succeeded him.

The Feast of the Epiphany, on the 6 January, remembers and celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the Magi from the East. The story of these 'Magi' is shrouded in much legend and the description used in the Authorised King James does not help us, as the words 'wise men' are without justification. Since there were three gifts we have often thought that there were three Magi. Gold for the great King, incense for the true God, and myrrh in symbol of His burial. Often we think of them as three wise men, surely their actions do show them to be wise, but there is nothing to suggest that there were only three or that they were only men. We might just as easily assume that since they brought rich gifts, they were also kings and have them wearing crowns, and we could also imagine that they travelled by ship, (I saw three ships.!) Western tradition has named them Melchior, Caspar and Balthasar, these names were first used by Origen (d. 254) and became popular from the 6th Century.

What we do know is that pagan astrologers existed whose divinatory skills were widely respected in the Graeco-Roman world. Astrology had become popular as the 'science' of the East, and everybody agreed that the best astrologers lived in the East.

Guided by the star they travelled, however long it took, it must have been quite a surprise when they found the Messiah in surroundings that they would not normally associate with a Messiah King. In the story of the kings and in their response to the infant Jesus we begin to see the changes that were occurring on earth through God's cosmic intervention.

**The chalking of the doors of a home** encourages Christians to dedicate their life at home to God and to others. Seeing the symbols over our doors can help to remind us, while passing in and out on our daily routines, that our homes and all those who dwell there belong to Christ. It also serves as a reminder of welcoming the Magi gave to Jesus. The three letters M C & B stand for the Magi (Casper, Melchior and Balthazar) The three letters also stand for the Latin phrase "Christ bless this house" – Christus mansion benedicat.

We should strive to be as welcoming to all who come to our homes to visit us!

## **The chalking ceremony**

The family gathers to ask God's blessing on their home and on those who live in or visit the home.

It is an invitation for Jesus to be a daily guest in our home, our comings and goings, our conversations, our work and play, our joys and sorrows.

Write on a wall above, near or on the ground 20 + C + M + B + 17.

### **The letters C, M, B have two meanings.**

They are the initials of the traditional names of the three magi: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar.

They also abbreviate the Latin words *Christus mansionem benedicat*, "May Christ bless the house." The "+" signs represent the cross and 2017 is the year.

## **Blessing the Chalk at Church**

V. Our help is the name of the Lord:

R. The maker of heaven and earth.

V. The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in:

R. From this time forth for evermore.

Let us pray.

Loving God, bless this chalk which you have created, that it may be helpful to your people; and grant that through the invocation of your most Holy Name that we who use it in faith to write the blessing upon the door of their home may receive health of body and protection of soul for all who dwell in or visit our home; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Blessing the Home**

Using the blessed chalk mark near your front door on a wall, the lintel or porch step as follows:

20 + C + M + B + 17 while saying:

The Magi who we remember as Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar followed the star of God's Son who became human two thousand and seventeen years ago. May Christ bless our home and remain with us throughout the new year. *Christus mansionem benedicat*, "May Christ bless the house."

Then offer the following prayer:

Visit this place O Lord we pray and drive from it the snares of the enemy. May your holy angels dwell with us and guard us in peace and may your blessing be always upon us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord **Thanks be to God**

"Chalking the door" is a way to celebrate and literally mark the occasion of the Epiphany and God's blessing of our lives and home. With time the chalk will fade. As it does we let the meaning of the symbols written sink into the depths of our heart and be manifest in our words and actions.

*Christus mansionem benedicat*, "May Christ bless the house."