

Magi Gifts of Gold, Frankincense & Myrrh

Christmas Gifts (2022)





Christmas Event (Luke 2)

- It came to pass that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed
- Joseph went up from Galilee unto the city of David called Bethlehem & with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child
- Mary brought forth “her firstborn son,” and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger
- In the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
- The angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.
- The angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
- And this *shall* be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.



Christmas Event (Matt. 2)

- Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
- Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him & demanded of his peeps where Christ was born.
- And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet.
- Herod called the wise men & sent them to Bethlehem to search for the young child
- And when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.
- They departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.
- And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: **and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.**
- And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.



WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE

We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.

O star of wonder, star of light,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never,
over us all to reign.

Frankincense to offer have I;
incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising, voices raising,
worshiping God on high.

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in the stone-cold tomb.



‘We Three Kings’ (or ‘We Three Kings of Orient Are’) written by American clergyman dating from 1857.

Wise Men | Magi

What We Know About the Magi

- Traditionally, they are known as the “wise men.”
- The Bible does not say there were three men, only that there were three gifts
- They are not called kings anywhere in the Scriptures
- Typically considered to be astrologers
- They probably did not visit Jesus at His infancy, but rather a couple of years later

There is a lot left up for discussion in the story of the three wise men but we’re going to focus on the gifts given to Jesus by the Magi.

Armenian tradition identifies the magi by name and identified their lands of origin: Melchior hailed from Persia, Gaspar (also called "Caspar" or "Jaspar") from India, and Balthazar from Arabia.





GOLD

The gifts may have been practical, but they also had spiritual significance. The Magi were communicating about who they believed Jesus to be by giving these specific gifts.

- How much gold did the Magi give?
- Regardless of how much gold it was, why would this be considered a valuable gift?
- Were Joseph and Mary rich?
- What would a gift like gold mean to the young couple?
- What are some possible reasons for the gift of gold to this poor young couple?
- Who would normally receive such a valuable gift?
- What does this say about how the Magi considered Jesus?

The words “gold” and “king” appear in the Bible together over 60 times. It was something that royalty collected. The average person did not have access to gold. Elsewhere in the Gospels, when money is mentioned, silver is usually the most valuable thing mentioned.

Frankincense & Myrrh

People have produced frankincense and myrrh for some 5,000 years. For much of this time, these aromatic resins were the region's most important commodity, with a trade network that reached across Africa, Asia and Europe.

Frankincense and myrrh were desired for personal, religious and medicinal use. In a time before daily bathing, people would use the smoke from the resins to make themselves smell better (perfume). Egyptian women utilized the ash of burned frankincense resin for personal use as well, mixing it into their eye shadow.

These resins were widely available when the three wise men visited the baby Jesus and would have been considered practical gifts with many uses. The expensive resins were symbolic as well. Frankincense, which was often burned, symbolized prayer rising to the heavens like smoke, while myrrh, which was often used in embalming, symbolized death.



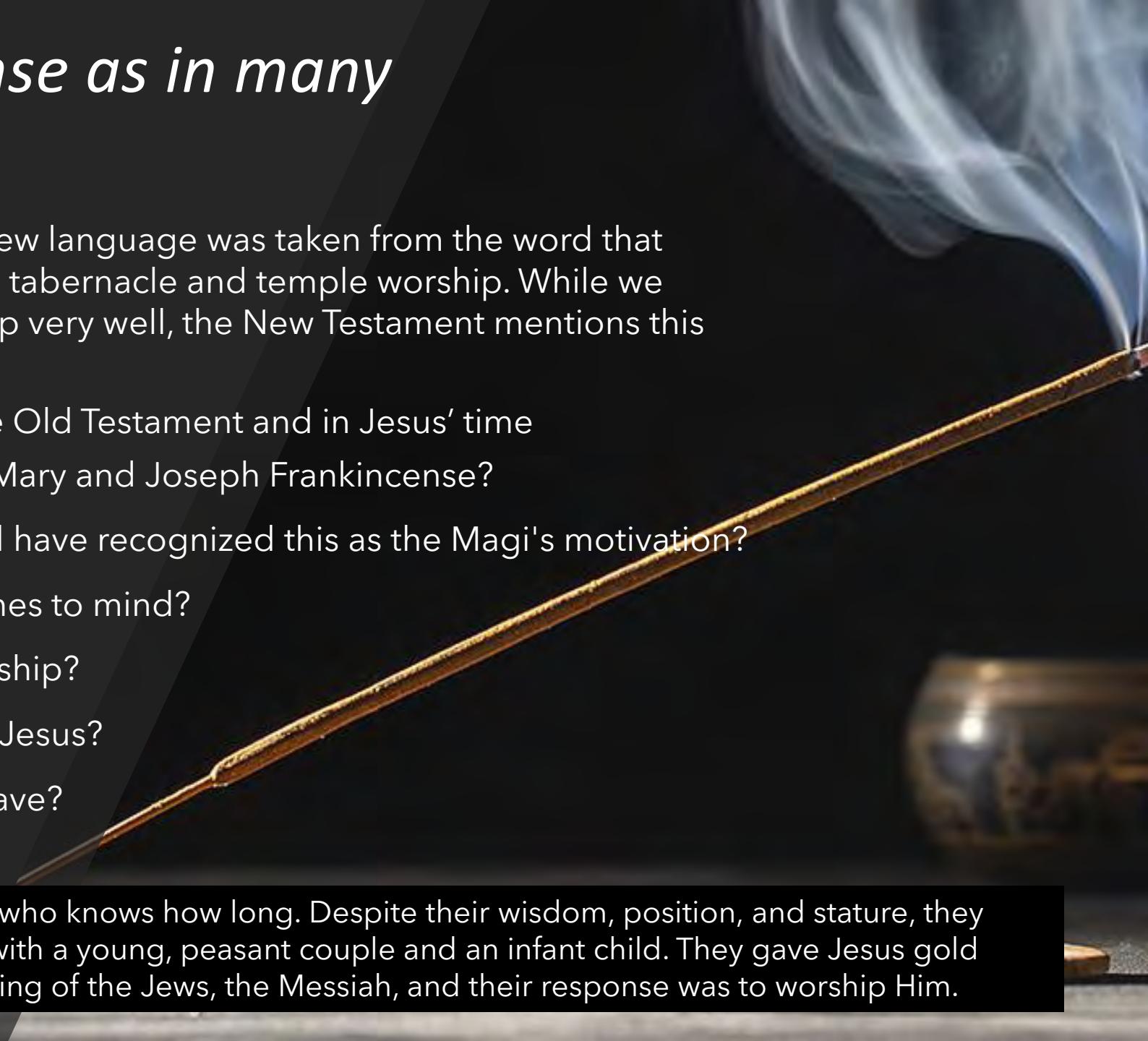
Frankincense, or incense as in many translations

The word for “frankincense” in the Hebrew language was taken from the word that means “white.” It was commonly used in tabernacle and temple worship. While we don’t understand Old Testament worship very well, the New Testament mentions this same worship style as well.

Frankincense was used in worship in the Old Testament and in Jesus’ time

- Why would the Magi/wise men give Mary and Joseph Frankincense?
- Do you think Mary and Joseph would have recognized this as the Magi's motivation?
- When you think of worship, what comes to mind?
- Do you think that is all there is to worship?
- What are other ways we can worship Jesus?
- What is the attitude that we should have?

Let’s look at the Magi. These men travelled who knows how long. Despite their wisdom, position, and stature, they stand in a modest home, in a distant land, with a young, peasant couple and an infant child. They gave Jesus gold because they recognized that He was the King of the Jews, the Messiah, and their response was to worship Him.



Myrrh



Myrrh (fragrant oil or perfume) is mentioned or referenced 25 times in the KJV; both in the Old and New Testament.

Exodus 30:23 - anointing oil used in temple worship

Esther 2: 21 - purification of Queen Esther

Solomon referenced ~ 8 times

Matt. 2:11 - birth of Jesus (Magi gifts)

Matt. 26: 7 - anointing by Bethany (poured on his head)

Luke 7: 37, 28, 46 - washing of Jesus feet

Mark 15:23 - crucifixion (they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it.)

John 19:38 - the burial of Jesus (they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it.)



WHAT'S YOUR TAKEAWAY ABOUT MYRRH?



What can we conclude about what myrrh is?

What was its main use?

What do you sense about its value?

Myrrh had several uses. Before embalming was common, bodies would be wrapped in cloth and spices. Myrrh was likely one of those. On one occasion, a woman who anticipated His death anointed Jesus with a similar mixture.

Matthew 26:10-13

What does the woman do with the perfume?

Why would the woman use the perfume in this way?

This is not the only time Jesus is offered myrrh. This woman anoints Jesus with this mixture, anticipating His death. Later, while hanging on the cross, Jesus is offered myrrh mixed with wine as a drink. Both times, this myrrh concoction is mentioned in the narrative about Jesus' death.

Mark 15:22-24

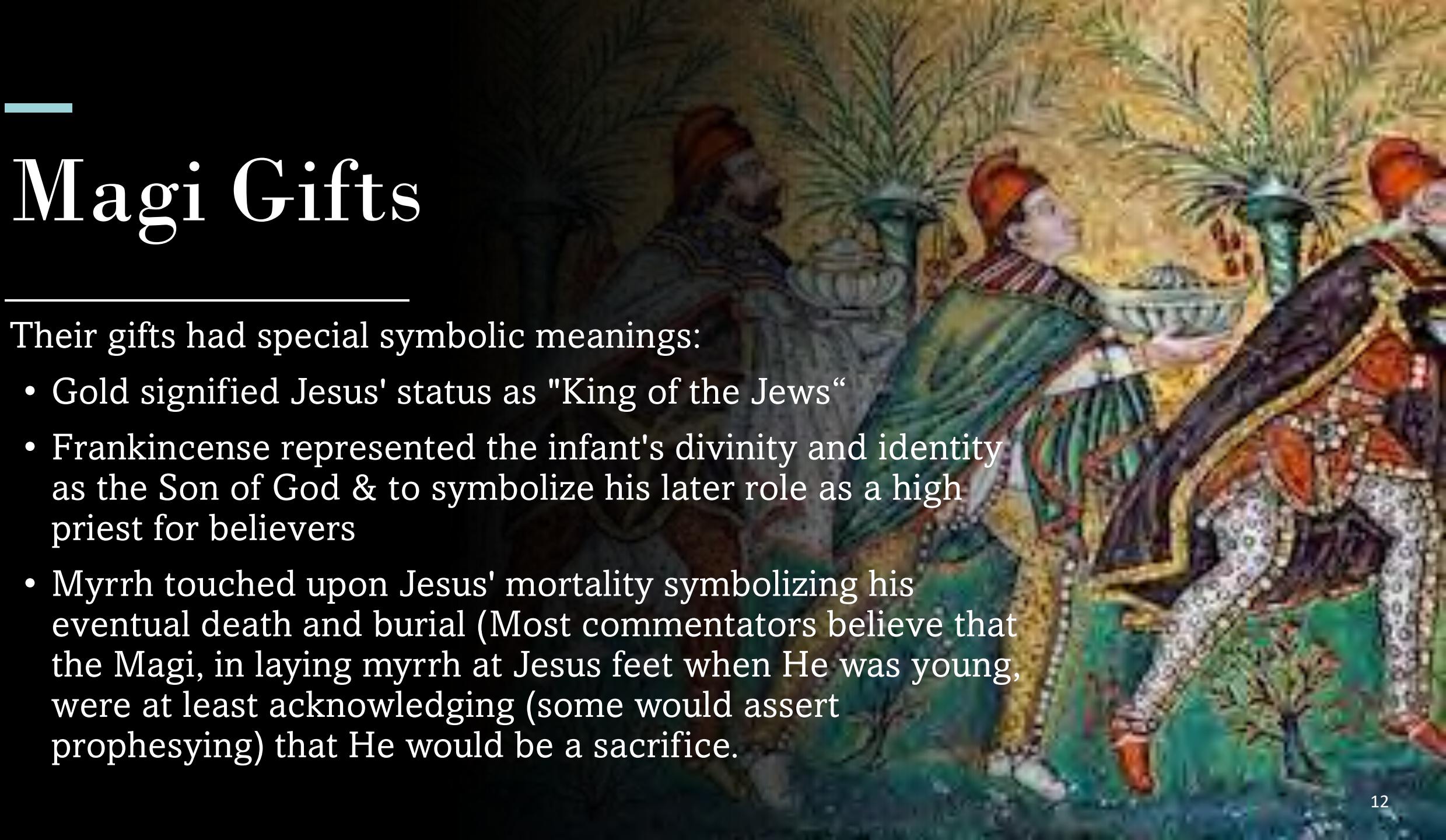
What is happening to Jesus in these moments?

Why would they offer Him perfume to drink?

Magi Gifts

Their gifts had special symbolic meanings:

- Gold signified Jesus' status as "King of the Jews"
- Frankincense represented the infant's divinity and identity as the Son of God & to symbolize his later role as a high priest for believers
- Myrrh touched upon Jesus' mortality symbolizing his eventual death and burial (Most commentators believe that the Magi, in laying myrrh at Jesus feet when He was young, were at least acknowledging (some would assert prophesying) that He would be a sacrifice.





Merry Christmas