



Christ and the Persian Magi

This is paraphrased from Marco Polo's version of this story. You may have heard it before but it is worth repeating.

The three magi, having followed the star and bearing their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, came to the place where Jesus was born. The youngest went in first to see the child and found him to be like himself in age and appearance. He came out full of wonder.

The second magi, who was of middle age, did likewise and again found the child to be of the same age and appearance as himself. The third magi, who was much older, found a similar situation. They all emerged from the stable very thoughtful, full of wonder and utterly amazed. They decided to all go in together as they did not believe what they had seen. They saw the child in his real likeness and age, for he was about 13 days old. They worshipped him and gave him their gifts. In return the child gave them a closed casket.

The three magi then set off back home.

After they had ridden for a few days their curiosity became so great that they decided to see what was in the casket. All they found was a stone which the child had intended to signify that they remain firm in their faith. The magi, not realising this, threw the stone into a well. Immediately a huge fire descended from heaven into the well. When they saw this they repented of their act and each took some of the fire and carried it back to their own countries and put it in their respective churches. They keep it perpetually burning and worship it as a god. If ever it goes out it is replenished from the other fires from the same source.

This may be the origin of the peace flame that many churches bring to their church at Christmas. This is brought from the Holy Land and is kept burning throughout the entire season of Christmas.

(Source - 'The Travels; the description of the world' by Marco Polo, written in 1298).