

VOICES FROM HEAVEN AND HELL

by

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CHAPTER THREE

"I Beheld His Star"

by **Balthasar**

"Light came to me through a beautiful star. Darkness was my lot. It was the darkness of ignorance and the darkness of superstition. But a marvellous light shattered that darkness. A star of hope brought me to Him who is the Light of the world. Wonderful is the mercy of the GOD of the world who manifested that light to those who were dwelling in darkness.

"I belonged to the priestly caste of the Magi. My name is Balthasar. In the darkness of ignorance I was a follower of Zoroaster. I kept the sacred fires and made sacrifices to Ahura Mazda whom we worshipped as the god of creation. We also worshipped the elements: fire, air, earth, and water. We felt that there was a struggle between the universal spirit of good and the universal spirit of evil. We took a part in that struggle by killing with our own hands the animals which were of the bad creation: such as, snakes, harmful insects, and birds of prey. Our special worship was that of fire. No doubt, this was due to our groping after light. Also we were students of the stars which we felt had an influence on the lives of men. As Magi we interpreted dreams and had the gift of prophecy. But in spite of our worship of light we were in terrible darkness.

"During my career as a priest I became very dissatisfied. It seemed as though we were waging a losing battle. I could kill the wicked creatures of the evil creation but I could not kill the evil of my own heart and that of my fellowmen. We lived not only in the darkness of ignorance and the darkness of superstition but in the darkness of misery. Poverty, strife, and wickedness surrounded us. It seemed that the evil spirit was in complete control.

"There came upon me an intense longing for a deliverer and for a golden age of happiness and peace. I felt that the religion of Zoroaster would not bring this to pass. It was then that I came in contact with a descendant of the Jews who had long ago been taken captive by Sargon the great King. Not all the Jews had returned to their country. This man was one of the descendants who remained in our land. I told him my troubles and longings. He told me of a great prophet of their nation by the name of Isaiah. This Isaiah prophesied of a golden age of righteousness and peace. This golden age was to be established by one who would be King of kings. The Jew quoted one

of the prophecies of this prophet. It was this: **'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.'** These words thrilled me. It was such a Being who would rid the world of evil and establish peace.

"I began to pray for the fulfillment of this prophecy. It was while I was praying that the angel of the living GOD came to me in a vision. He told me that soon the Prince of Peace would be born in the nation of the Jews and that the sign of His birth would be a glorious star. When the star appeared I determined to travel to the country of the Jews so that I might worship Him. To my joy I met two others of the Magi who also had received a revelation and had seen His star. They traveled with me. Their names were Caspar and Melchior.

"You will be interested in knowing how Caspar and Melchior received their revelation concerning Him who was born King of the Jews. Caspar told us that his knowledge came through one who lived in ancient times and was numbered among the Magi. His name was Balaam. He lived long ago in Pethor on the banks of the river Euphrates. He was a diviner of great fame among the Magi. It seems that the Jews were at one time held captive by the pharaohs of Egypt. The Lord GOD of the Jews, delivered them from the land of Egypt. On their way to the land of Canaan they came to the land of Moab. There they had to cross over the Jordan river into Canaan. Fearful of what the Hebrews might do Balak, the king of the Moabites, beseeched Balaam to curse them. But the Lord prevented Balaam from cursing the Hebrews and caused him to bless them.

"Caspar told us that in the midst of his blessing the Hebrews Balaam made a prophecy which had been preserved among the writings of the Hebrews and which came to him. The prophecy is this: **'I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession. Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city:'**

"We asked Caspar to tell us who the Jacob was of this prophecy and who were the Israelites. He told us that Jacob was one of the great forefathers of the Jews. His name was changed to Israel. His descendants, whom we know as Jews, are also called Israelites. That is why Balaam prophesied that there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel. Caspar told us that it was while he was meditating on this prophecy that the angel of GOD revealed that the star announcing the birth of this Ruler would soon appear. Upon seeing the star he, too, decided to travel to the land of the Jews in order to worship this King.

"Melchior learned of the coming King through the teachings of Belteshazzar whose words had been handed down for several hundred years. This Belteshazzar also was a Jew. His Jewish name was Daniel. He was one who had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. Because of his wondrous wisdom the King made him chief among the Magi of his day. One of his prophecies had been handed down in the family of Melchior. He quoted it to us. It was this: **'I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given**

him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.'

"It was the thought of this King who would rule over all people, nations, and languages which caught the imagination of Melchior. According to Belteshazzar this kingdom would never be destroyed. It was to be an everlasting kingdom. Melchior felt that this would benefit all the earth and he longed for the fulfillment of the prophecy of Belteshazzar. GOD revealed to him, also, that a star would signalize the birth of this King. So happy was he when he beheld it that he determined to travel to the country of the Jews.

"The wonderful providence of GOD led our paths to cross and we determined to travel together. It was indeed thrilling when we beheld the walls of Jerusalem the chief city of the Jews. It was beautiful for situation. No doubt the citizens of Jerusalem would still be celebrating the birth of the promised King. When we entered in by the gates we asked: **'Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the East, and are come to worship Him.'**

"We were dumbfounded by the reception our question received. The first group we asked refused to answer and seemed troubled. They repeated the question to others. As a result a great crowd of people gathered about us. They were quite excited as they talked among themselves. Although we asked several no one would answer our question. We were puzzled. Then an officer of King Herod approached and asked us to follow him to Herod. To our amazement Herod frowned and seemed displeased when we asked him where the newborn King was so that we could worship Him. He asked us to wait so that he could consult the chief priests and scribes who were the Jewish Magi.

"After consulting them, King Herod called us privately. He said that according to one of the prophets of the Jews the King was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea. He quoted the prophecy as it had been given to him: **'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.'** You would almost think that Herod was reading his death sentence so black was his countenance. But we were mistaken for he said: **'Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.'** This delighted us and we went our way.

"All this had taken so much time that it was dark when we started. To our joy the star, which we beheld in the East, appeared again. It guided us and stood over the place where the young child was. We were invited into the house and saw the young child with Mary His mother. At last we were able to worship Him whom Isaiah declared was the Prince of Peace; whom Balaam had declared would be a Star out of Jacob; and whom Belteshazzar had declared would be Ruler over all people, nations, and languages.

"We had not come empty-handed. We desired to present gifts worthy of such a King. Anything less than gold would be unworthy to present to Him who would rule the world. We also had precious ointments, frankincense and myrrh. These precious ointments were given by many only to gods. But surely this child is the Son of GOD. With our gifts we acknowledged Him to be our Ruler and GOD.

"Joseph and Mary told us of the events which had occurred previous to our visit. They told us of the messages which they had received from the angel of GOD. They told us about the shepherds and the carol the angels sang to them. They told us more about the Messiah who was prophesied in the writings of the prophets. We became all the more convinced that the Child was indeed the King of kings and the Ruler over the nations.

"It was late when we retired to the Inn. Our hearts were filled with joy and praise. During the night the Lord revealed to us in a dream that we should not return to Herod. This showed that we were not mistaken about Herod. He was displeased with the news of the birth of this Child. But we were overjoyed. We returned to our land with the news of the birth of Him who would conquer evil and establish righteousness.

"With the revelation of the star the darkness of ignorance and the darkness of superstition were vanquished. The star led us to Him who is the Light of the world. As the Light of the King vanquished the darkness in our souls so may He vanquish the darkness among all people of the world."

~ end of chapter 3 ~
