

The Bible clearly states that the visit of the Magi to Jesus was not on the night of his birth, unlike the shepherds' visit to the manger, but occurred later when Jesus was staying in a house in Bethlehem.



Then came Father Christmas

The most famous gift giver is **Father Christmas** (Santa Claus or Sinterklaas), based on the character of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children. But because the celebration of Christmas was not always appreciated, and because the origin of Christmas festivities are found in pagan festivals, there are many other gift givers. In communist Russia, where Christianity was outlawed, St. Nicholas became Grandfather Frost, dressed in blue instead of the traditional Christmas red. In early Europe, where old pagan traditions survived before they gradually took on the Christian meaning, festivities were held to ward off evil spirits. The Yule Buck, for instance, did not give presents but demanded them.

Italy had a female Santa, called La Befana. In parts of Russia, gifts were distributed by Babouschka, a grandmotherly figure. In Germany, the Christkind, an angelic messenger from Jesus, a beautiful fair haired girl with a shining crown of candles, delivered the gifts.

In some countries, the baby Jesus delivers the gifts, in others, the three wise men. But in most countries, the jolly round Father Christmas (Santa Claus) does the honors.

Matthew 2: 1-2: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi came from the east 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."

The three gifts of the Magi had a prophetic meaning: gold, the gift for a king; incense, the gift for a priest; and myrrh, a burial ointment as a gift for one who would die.



The custom of the Magi following the star is still celebrated:

In Bavaria and Austria, beginning with New Years and through January 6,