

and the people answered, "You ask in vain;
We know of no king but Herod the Great!"
They thought the Wise Men were men insane,
as they spurred their horses across the plain,
like riders in haste, and who cannot wait.

and when they came to Jerusalem,
Herod the Great, who had heard this thing,
sent for the Wise Men and questioned them;
and said, "Go down unto Bethlehem,
and bring me tidings of this new king."

so they rode away; and the star stood still,
the only one in the gray of morn
ings, it stopped, it stood still of its own free will,
right over Bethlehem on the hill,
the city of David where Christ was born.

and the Three Kings rode through the gate and
the guard,
through the silent street, till their horses turned
and neighed as they entered the great inn-yard;
but the windows were closed, and the doors
were barred,
and only a light in the stable burned.

and cradled there in the scented hay,
and the air made sweet by the breath of kine,
the little child in the manger lay,
the child, that would be king one day
of a kingdom not human but divine.

His mother Mary of Nazareth
sat watching beside his place of rest,
Watching the even flow of his breath,

For the joy of life and the terror of death
Were mingled together in her breast.

They laid their offerings at his feet:
The gold was their tribute to a King,
The frankincense, with its odor sweet,
Was for the Priest, the Paraclete,
The myrrh for the body's burying.

And the mother wondered and bowed her head,
And sat as still as a statue of stone;
Her heart was troubled yet comforted,
Remembering what the Angel had said
Of an endless reign and of David's throne.

Then the Kings rode out of the city gate,
With a clatter of hoofs in proud array;
But they went not back to Herod the Great,

'or they knew his malice and feared his hate,
and returned to their homes by another way.

Christmas Bells

(Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)

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heard the bells on Christmas Day
their old familiar carols play,
and wild and sweet
the words repeat
of peace on earth, good-will to men!

and thought how, as the day had come,
the belfries of all Christendom
had rolled along
the unbroken song
of peace on earth, good-will to men!