

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

January 6 2019 / D.M. Kerns

Isaiah 60:1-6
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

Standing...

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus is King of the Jews—the Son of David,
but the Wise Men—they are Gentiles.

From them we learn...

Jesus has not just come to save only the children of David,
but earn salvation for all,
ruling over one great kingdom,
one holy Christian church.

Let us pray. These are Your words Holy Father. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Sitting...

During Advent our message was: "Behold, your King comes to you!"

On Christmas Eve, our message was: "Christ is born in the City of David."

On Christmas Day we sang the prophecy: "And the government shall be upon His shoulders..."

And now we come to Epiphany—which arrives as a miraculous point of light,
a "star," that leads those strange characters called the Magi—pagans really,
closer to Jesus.

Epiphany is the season of light, but it's also Christmas for the Gentiles.

Because at Christmas Jewish shepherds came to worship the little baby Jesus,
followed by old Simeon and Anna in the Temple.

But today, we have Magi coming all the way from the East—
some 700 miles. You can't get any more uncircumcised,

more non-Israelite, complete Gentile goyim who show up asking,
 "Where is He who is born King of the Jews?"

The Magi were the first Gentile worshippers of the Messiah,
 leading us to recall with joy that this Infant King—is for all, yea...even us.

The Jews had every reason to anticipate His coming.
 They were given the name Immanuel (God with us),
 They were told He would be virgin born—
 They were told He would come from the clan of Judah—
 the line of Jesse, in the town of Bethlehem Ephrathah.
 It's what they were told...it's what they believed.

But, the Gentiles—they didn't have intel like this.
 They simply sat in darkness, where,
 "It was always winter and never Christmas" (C.S. Lewis).
 The Gentiles had no reason to hope things would ever change.
 So how did the Magi come to know?

Well, most likely it was due to the Babylonian captivity,
 when a Hebrew by the name of Daniel won the favor of King Nebuchadnezzar,
 whom he put in charge over the court of the Magi.

The Wise Men learned from Daniel the promise of the coming Messiah—that a seed
 would come forth from a woman—what? A seed? Yeah—to crush the serpent's head.
 They also learn the prophecy from the book of Numbers that this Messiah's star, "shall
 come forth from Jacob."

And so, these Magi—these Wise Men—our ancient kinsmen—
 kept these prophecies in mind for generations.
 Even after Babylon was defeated by the Persians,
 the Persians by the Greeks,
 and the Greeks by the Romans.
 Through it all, they learned not to trust in earthly kings and empires,
 for they come and go...
 but rather trust in the promise of the God of Israel.

So, after hundreds of years—Behold—in the darkness of the night sky, a light shines,
 just as we heard from Isaiah—***The glory of the Lord is risen upon you...The Gentiles
 shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.***

St. Matthew records that our ancestors followed the star twice. The first time was when it rose initially. The Magi knew enough that it was over the land of Jacob, and how to get there, but to be sure, the “star” disappears, as they make their way to Jerusalem.

Going to Jerusalem makes sense—because it’s the place of kings.

This is where the King of Kings must be born!

And so, the Wise Men ask around town.

However, the inhabitants of Jerusalem don’t know what to tell them.

They stopped reading their Bible a long time ago.

Which, is not unlike what we have today...

where children don’t come to S.S. to hear and learn the stories,
and adults—they don’t even come to church.

No one reads their Bible.

So, all the folks in Jerusalem can do, is tell the Magi,
“Go to Herod.”

Now to Herod, news of a new King—that’s not good.

The question, “Where is He who is born King of the Jews?”—that’s a threat.

Because Herod’s title was, King of the Jews.

Herod is troubled by what he sees and hears.

Yet, he gets what he wants, namely a promise from the Magi for them to return and tell him where the Child is, so he could have the Child killed (see Rev. 12:1-6). And the Magi learn from the teachers of the Torah—who after rummaging around in their scroll closet—find the scroll of Micah which tells them the exact spot of where they were to go. Bethlehem!

Bethlehem?! That’s the last place anyone would dare look, but setting aside their fallen human reason, the Magi follow the words of the prophet Micah.

Note that: the “star” does not guide the Magi straight to Jesus. It brings them to where they hear the Word. For you see, there’s another light shining in the darkness and it’s not in the sky. As the Psalmist says, ***Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*** So, by means of the Scripture, the Magi learn the Savior is just some 15 miles outside of Jerusalem, in Bethlehem.

As they go—the “star” reappears,

pointing them to the house where God in the flesh could be found.

Our text reads: "When they saw the star"—this is the second time, after visiting with Herod—and, "they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." Why? For, this is God's way of telling our Gentile ancestors, "He is for you too. Come and worship Him!"

Our text continues, "And when they went into the house they saw the child..." So, the Magi arrive after who knows how long at this small humble house Joseph has acquired. It's not a mansion. It's not a palace.

And look, this wasn't just the 3 Magi on camels—there the attendants, servants, the guys carrying the tents, the cooks, and most likely a military entourage with them. This was a massive display coming to these humble conditions to find the God of the universe.

Their eyes must have told them that this cannot be the place,
this must not be the One.

But Scripture told them otherwise,
and they believed the Scriptures over their own eyes.

Then the Magi get on their hands and knees,
and bow their faces to the ground.

No one else is doing this.

Not Herod.

None of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Not even the teachers of the Torah who pulled the Micah scroll off the shelf and read it to the Magi.

Yet the Magi do.

For in this Boy, they have come free of their idols,
and like Simeon said when He held Jesus sometime back,

"He's the Light to Lighten the Gentiles."

They are filled with the joy of seeing something holy, healing, forgiving and saving, energizing and life-giving.

Before this moment, one could argue that the angels in the night sky, when they said, "To you is born" they were only referring to *Jewish* shepherds.

When they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to those with whom He is pleased." That again references *His* people, those in the line of Abraham!

But, here, the Scriptural testimony is undeniable. The Christ Child is for all people.

These Gentiles—these outsiders, these pagan astronomers,
they have no claim to the promises of God, nor do we.

For just like them,
we too are the drunks and occasional worshipers.
We're the ones who clear out our browser's history and
fold a \$5 bill in the offering plate to make it look like a \$50.

Gentiles are those who snap at their kids and day-dream of abandoning their vocations.
They're the addicts, with tainted pasts,
mad at God, doubtful He exists,
and enjoy coming up with new excuses to be disgusted with the Church.

Gentiles are sinners—vile ones at that,
yet today we learn that God has come for such Gentiles like us.

The Magi believed Jesus was born for them,
worshipping Him with great joy.
It's called adoration: a holy response to this wonderful, divine gift.
And of course, to further show their adoration, they offer their gifts.

Gold and frankincense and myrrh—gifts fit for a king.
These same gifts were given to King Solomon long ago,
the son of David who prefigured the Son of David, born of Mary.

Sure—the Magi were the first Gentiles to worship Jesus,
but they certainly weren't the last.
You Gentiles have seen His light too,
not with your eyes, but with your ears.
You have beheld His glory as the Holy Spirit has revealed this Christ as
your Savior, too, as your God and your King.

As a teenager I vividly remember a Christmas card sent to our family—you've probably seen it too. On the cover was a silhouette of the Magi, with the caption..."Wise Men still seek Him." I looked at that card and thought—that's so true. I want to be a wise man—I want to seek Jesus. And I did. I looked in ever place I thought He should be, but hardly did I look in the places where He actually promised to be.

Where has Jesus promised to be?

In the font.

At the pulpit.

On His altar.

And in His Word.

Wise Men don't have to seek Him—not any longer—for He wants to be found and He's told you exactly where to find Him. I trust you will.

In the Holy Name of Jesus.

Standing...

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.