

## Epiphany

### I. Introduction

#### A. History of Epiphany

1. The word comes from the Greek word for ‘manifestation, and means “to show” or “make known”. Celebrated 12 days after Christmas (Jan. 6th), it historically has been a day to celebrate different events in the life of Jesus that reveal his glory. These most often include The visit of the Magi, Jesus’ baptism (presence of the Trinitarian theophany of the Spirit dove and the Fathers voice), and Jesus’ first recorded miracle, the Wedding at Cana. Each of these events were manifestations that reveal the glory or divinity of Christ. Over time, specifically in the Western part of the Church—particular emphasis fell on the visiting of the Magi.
2. Epiphany celebrates the reality that Jesus Christ has been revealed or made known to be the divine Son of God and the Savior to the whole world.

### II. Epiphany

#### A. Universal Savior: The Magi's Presence

1. So far in the Advent story, we've seen revelations to familiar Jewish figures - Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and the priest Simeon - all integral to the story of Israel. However, the Magi, distinguished individuals from the East, bring a unique dimension to this narrative. The Magi, originating from Persia (modern-day Iran), were prominent figures in their country's religious court. The term "Magi" refers to magicians, and they were known for employing a blend of scientific, diplomatic, and religious practices, including astrology and magical incantations. Their journey wasn't an ordinary one; they came to worship the King of the Jews. The extensive Jewish communities in Babylon and Persia meant they were likely acquainted with prophecies about the Messiah. Their presence and purpose emphasize that Jesus isn't just the King of the Jews but holds significance for all nations.
  - a) Isaiah 60:1-6, “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. <sup>2</sup> For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory

will be seen upon you. <sup>3</sup> And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. <sup>4</sup> Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip. <sup>5</sup> Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. <sup>6</sup> A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the Lord.”

- (1) David Roark—It's not that there are individuals from every tribe, tongue and nation represented in eternity, but we see that God acknowledges and values the unique cultures and personalities of these individuals because His kingdom is one of color, marked by people who look differently, act differently and worship differently, where the greatest parts of every culture are to be experienced, valued and understood as instruments of worship to King Jesus.”<sup>1</sup>
2. Revelation 21:24-26, “By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup> and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.”
  3. The salvation Jesus brings is extended beyond cultural and geographical boundaries. Jesus didn't come solely to save those who are familiar or similar to us. The Magi's visit challenges our expectations, prompting us to recognize that Jesus is the King not only of our people but of all nations. In our journey of faith, let's embrace the universal nature of Christ's kingship, acknowledging that His salvation extends far beyond our immediate circles.
  4. Reflection Question:
    - a) How does the inclusion of the Magi, individuals from a distant land and different cultural background, challenge our perception of who Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thevillagechurch.net/resources/articles/the-magi-and-the-gift-of-diversity>

came to save, and how might this broaden our understanding of God's inclusive and universal salvation?

5. Call to Action:

- a) **Engage Beyond Familiar Circles:** Purposefully connect with individuals or groups outside your usual social circles. Explore the richness of diversity in your community and seek to understand the unique perspectives and experiences of those different from yourself.
- b) **Reach out to the Marginalized:** In your outreach and service efforts, intentionally reach out to those who may feel marginalized or forgotten. Reflect on the example of Jesus, who came not just for those like us, but for all nations, including the overlooked and downtrodden.
- c) **Prayer for Global Salvation:** Dedicate time in your prayers to intercede for the nations, acknowledging that the salvation Jesus brings is not confined by borders. Pray for a global awakening to the transformative power of God's love, and for the light of Christ to reach every corner of the earth.—Team in Cambodia this week.

6. May these actions be a tangible expression of our commitment to embracing the universal nature of Jesus' salvation and recognizing the infinite worth of every individual in God's diverse kingdom.

B. Grace in God's Call: The Magi's Revelation

1. The Magi's journey began with a celestial marvel—a star in the sky, possibly the convergence of two planets. While the exact details remain uncertain, what is clear is their belief in finding meaning in nature. This cultural perspective teaches us that God's communication is not bound by conventional means; He can speak to anyone, anywhere, anytime—without contradicting Scripture. While the celestial sign played a crucial role, it was only a part of the Magi's revelation. Importantly, their ultimate guidance came from the Scriptures. This harmonious blend of nature and Scripture underscores God's multi-faceted approach to revealing Himself. The Magi, cognizant of Balaam's prophecy from Numbers 24:17, recognized the significance of the star. This ancient prophecy about a star emerging from

- Jacob and a scepter rising from Israel fueled their journey, aligning the celestial event with divine revelation.
2. What do we know for sure? God wanted them there! God went to the trouble of arranging for a star in the heavens for the occasion—God’s calling is initiated by his grace.
    - a) 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, "For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."
    - b) Romans 5:10, "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."
  3. May our response to God's gracious revelations be marked by humility, gratitude, and a relentless pursuit of the One who, in His infinite grace, continually unveils Himself to His beloved creation.
- C. Infinite Worth Revealed: The Gifts of the Magi
1. The Magi call him King of the Jews
    - a) Matthew has already pointed out that Jesus was the Son of David (1:1); that he was born in the city of David (2:1). Jesus' kingship is therefore legitimate and genuine, as opposed to Herod's which is simply political.
  2. Their worship transcends mere homage, revealing a profound acknowledgment of Jesus as a divine King—the Son of God. Matthew 1:18-25 establishes Jesus' divinity, portraying Him as the Son of God, Immanuel. While the extent of the Magi's understanding remains debatable, literary cues suggest a recognition beyond a mere earthly king, aligning with the consistent portrayal of Jesus as God the Son throughout Matthew.
  3. The Magi give him gifts fit for the King of Kings

- a) The gifts presented by the Magi—gold, frankincense, and myrrh—reveal the immeasurable worth of Jesus. Each gift symbolizes a different aspect of His significance: gold representing His royal kingship, frankincense signifying His divine nature, and myrrh foreshadowing His sacrificial death. Together, these gifts underscore the infinite value of Jesus, emphasizing His multifaceted role in the salvation of humanity.

### III. Closing Thoughts

- A. The Magi's journey reveals that Jesus is the universal Savior, calling us not just to a specific group but to all nations. The Magi embarked on a pilgrimage that transcended borders, reminding us that the grace of Christ extends to every corner of the earth. The revelation to the Magi reveals to us that the calling of God is given as a gift of grace. These wise men, despite their distant origins and different religious background, were chosen vessels for an encounter with Jesus. This reminds us that God's call is not constrained by our expectations or qualifications; rather, it is a merciful gift freely given to those whom God chooses. Lastly, the gifts of the Magi—the precious gold, fragrant frankincense, and poignant myrrh—speak volumes about the infinite worth of Jesus. In these symbolic offerings, we witness the acknowledgment of His royal kingship, divine nature, and sacrificial mission. The Magi's worship reveals a deep understanding of the multifaceted role Jesus plays in our salvation, highlighting His unparalleled value.
- B. As we stand before this Epiphany revelation, may we be moved to respond with hearts filled with awe and gratitude. This Epiphany, may the light of Christ continue to guide us, not just through the joyous moments but also through the challenges and uncertainties. As we carry the essence of this revelation into our daily lives, may we become bearers of the light, proclaiming the good news that the Savior born in Bethlehem is the King for all nations, the grace-filled caller of hearts, and the incomprehensible treasure of our souls. Amen.

### Bibliography

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