

THE CHRIST CHILD IS THE LORD AND SAVIOR OF ALL THE WORLD**I. Revealed So by God****II. Worshipped As Such by the Magi**

Matthew 2:1-12

Revision of Epiphany, Jan 6, 2013

SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 2019 | EPIPHANY

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

YEAR C

<i>Old Testament</i>	Isaiah 60:1–6
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 72
<i>New Testament</i>	Ephesians 3:2–12
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 2:1–12

COMMUNION

MEDFORD

Psalm 72, p. 93

Opening Hymn - CW 92 Brightest and Best

Hymn of the Day – CW 83 As with Gladness Men of Old

Distribution Hymn - CW 141 At the Lamb's Hight Feast We Sing

Closing Hymn - CW 317 v. 1 O Lord, We Praise You

GRANTS PASS

The Entrance Hymn or Introit – ELH 169 Brightest and Best

Chief Hymn – ELH 168 As with Gladness Men of Old

Distribution Hymn – ELH 310 At the Lamb's Hight Feast We Sing

Closing Hymn – ELH 327 v. 1 O Lord, We Praise Thee

Matthew 2:1–12 (CSB)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, ²saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him.”

³When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Christ would be born.

⁵“In Bethlehem of Judea,” they told him, “because this is what was written by the prophet:

**⁶And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah:
Because out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”**

⁷Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him.”

⁹ After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was—the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

Dear fellow redeemed: You may very well have noticed that a text like today's is included for a particular reason that guides our approach. Today is the Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord, the feast commemorating the epiphany or manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. It is also called the "Christmas of the Gentiles" and in some parts of Christendom it is the pinnacle of the Christmas cycle.

The meaning of the text is one thing and its significance is another. The meaning is simple and straightforward. It is an account of Magi from the east, from Babylonia or Persia, seeing a star appear and concluding that it signified the birth of the great and long-awaited king of the Jews. They traveled to the Jewish capital, Jerusalem, to do honor to Him and were in turn directed by Scripture and by the star to the place where Jesus was.

Matthew also alludes to the historical situation: Herod the Great has brutally killed supposed rivals, including some from his own family. His attempt to destroy the Messiah as a possible rival will lead to the "slaughter of the innocents," the killing of all boys two years and younger in the vicinity of Bethlehem.

That's the simple meaning. That's what happened. We see what God did in bringing out this star, what believers like the Magi did, and what atrocities the unbelieving Herod committed.

But its significance goes beyond this and is revealed in Isaiah's prophecy, Isaiah 60:3 (ESV) **And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.** Jesus isn't just for the Jews, ...

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I. Revealed So by God

One of the ways that the old Liar separates people from the hope of the gospel is by casting religion as merely a cultural phenomenon. That's the unofficial religious position of our culture today. I violate that concept every time I greet you at the beginning of a sermon, "Dear fellow redeemed," because I am declaring that whoever you are in the world, whatever your language, race, color, or culture, Christ is your redeemer.

To say otherwise, to say that Christianity is just a cultural phenomenon, is to deny the universality of sin and the universality of our salvation. It reduces them from divine truth to personal opinion. The world (a Scriptural term meaning everything in the world opposed to Christ), the world wants to compartmentalize this universal truth. In Muslim and in communist countries you may believe such things, but not teach them or actually live according to them.

This is an agenda of "progressivism" in our country too, dividing "religious" from "secular." The social theory is that you get to exercise your religion only in church, but outside in other organizations you can be required to violate God's word and you have no choice. Ask Hobby Lobby's owners who are forced to pay for abortion drugs for their employees, even though they oppose it.

But if that is bad, then what's worse is the prohibition of the gospel. If God's law isn't universal, then the gospel isn't either. But He IS both Lord of all and Savior of ALL.

So you see the significance in the star that is seen by people elsewhere in the world than in Judea and Galilee. Think about that! You see the significance of the fact that the Magi saw the star

and believed the promise it represented. As God told Abraham, in his seed ALL the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Matthew gives us only the broad outlines necessary to grasp this. He doesn't tell us much about the wise men, the Magi (cf. "magician) other than that they were from the East. They were evidently among the great scholars and observers of Persia or Babylon. The prophet Daniel was probably one of them. We still have some incredibly accurate star maps from antiquity that shows how great their knowledge of the heavenly bodies really was. Recently scholars uncovered trig tables that were more accurate than ours. These were not superstitious tribesmen but great scholars.

Their celestial and mathematical knowledge was complemented by the knowledge gleaned from the Jews during their exile in Babylon. They must have been aware of prophecies like that from Numbers 24:17, **I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.** Evidently Daniel also was even able to ascertain when the Messiah was to appear, so that his colleagues anticipated it.

The bottom line is that God announced to the wider world the birth of His Son so that all of us might hear and know the truth of those words, **"God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself."** So God has clearly revealed His son as Savior and Lord of all.

II. Worshipped As Such by the Magi

And He was worshipped as Savior and Lord of all by the Magi. Their faith is shown above all in that they worshipped this little child without hesitation. They weren't put off by his poverty, by his social circumstances, or by his infancy.

Doesn't this teach us something today? How many people judge Christ according to His circumstances? He comes to us in His word and sacrament in places like this, in house churches in China, in ruins in Syria and Iraq. People reject him because there are no trappings of "success," because of the people He is found with, His pastors, and disciples, the music or worship that, while rich in His word and therefore in Him, isn't the "right style."

And then there are the "feelings" and the "experience," that isn't exciting, warm & fuzzy, or "inspirational." Jesus is your savior, whether you feel like it or not, and that's a good thing.

Whether or not He met some expectations or other, they worshipped Him.

That is an astounding fact to absorb. What would we have thought of them if they had just gone on their way without comment? "And they returned to the East with a few reflections upon the condition of the roads." "And they returned to the East in time for the annual games in the Babylon Hippodrome." "And they returned to the East wondering why they had made the trip." "And they returned to the East kinda disappointed and underwhelmed at the impression Jesus made on them."

That seems to be the way many observe Christmas. Consider that these wise men can travel for perhaps two-three months one way to worship the Christ child, and that some cannot travel 30 minutes to worship Him at least some time during the 12 day festival.

They worshipped Him. That is in itself an astounding fact. In the hierarchical society of the ancient world for someone of stature to humble himself before another was a huge thing. But they did this because they believed that He is indeed their Lord.

So He is also our Lord. He is the One who has the absolute right to command what we must do. Now who here likes being told what to do? "Lordship" is not a big part of American culture. Our experience with people who think we should do what they say because of who they are – some elite or other – is decidedly negative.

Many frankly feel the same about God. People resent Him. The challenge Him in his commands about our personal life: Whose body is it anyway? Marriage, family, virtues of chastity, humility, chivalry, respect, honesty, courage, faith and the like – are all so "old fashioned." But they are what our Lord asks of – ALL.

So again, they worshipped Him. That is an astounding fact. In the hierarchical society of the ancient world for someone of stature to humble himself before another was a huge thing. But they did

this because they believed that He is indeed their SAVIOR. There is no other reason to account for their devotion other than the fact that this same LORD whom mankind has offended is also the SAVIOR of mankind.

That means He is also your redeemer, whoever you are. He is the redeemer of everybody who lives in Medford or Grants Pass, or the Pacific Northwest, or on the North American Continent, or in the Amazon Basin, or on the tundra of Siberia, or the subcontinent of India.

THE CHRIST CHILD IS THE LORD AND SAVIOR OF ALL THE WORLD, and he is manifested as such here before the Magi and, through the Word of God, to the whole world.

AMEN.