

# *A Follow Up Bible Study*

*Building on the Messages of the Lessons from The Epiphany of Our Lord*

## **Warm Up**

Many think they know the story of the Visit of the Wise Men, but the story they know is built on pictures, Carols, and other sources that have added to the Biblical account. List commonly held *details* that are extra-Biblical.

### **1. Sermon for January 3, 2021**

**Text: Matthew 2:1-12**

**Theme: The Real Great Conjunction of the Epiphany**

**Share your** questions or comments regarding Sunday's sermon.

**Share your** questions or comments regarding Sunday's sermon **text**.

2. Which of the 4 Gospels included accounts of our Lord Jesus' Nativity?

3. Matthew's account of the birth (nativity) of Jesus Christ begins in Matthew 1:18.

*<sup>18</sup> This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother, Mary, was pledged in marriage to Joseph. Before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her. So he decided to divorce her privately. <sup>20</sup> But as he was considering these things, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

*<sup>22</sup> All this happened to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "Look, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son. And they will name him Immanuel," which means, "God with us."*

*<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up from his sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him. He took Mary home as his wife, <sup>25</sup> but he was not intimate with her until she gave birth to her firstborn son. And he named him Jesus.*

*<sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, when Herod was king, Wise Men from the east came to Jerusalem.*

Matthew recorded his Gospel history to demonstrate to the Jews that Jesus was indeed the long awaited Messiah. **Discuss** how his brief account of Jesus' Nativity matches that goal.

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4. When presenting an account as history the author confirms its reliability by including *who*, *when*, and *where* (i.e. names, time markers, location, and other historic details) to demonstrate it is an accurate account of what happened. Details that people of that time period would recognize as right and real. (If wrong, they would expose the author as misinformed, a fraud.)

List the historic details Matthew provides.

5. Who are the Wise Men and where did they come from?

The description Matthew uses would have been clear to those reading it in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. They are not as clear to us. **Why is that not important?**

*Magi* is a transliteration of the Greek word used referring to a scholastic role - holding and passing down knowledge and wisdom. They are from *the rising*, the term for the East, where the sun rises. What they say reveals their knowledge and expertise.

*“Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”*

What do their words tell us about the Wise Men?

What in this account, besides their words, reveals these men were our brothers in the faith?

6. Matthew includes a detail that needed no explanation to those living in the shadow of the reign of Herod the Great.

*<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was alarmed, and all Jerusalem with him.*

Share what you know about Herod the Great, why he reacted this way, and why Jerusalem was alarmed - disturbed, shaking in their boots?

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7. Explain the prophecy the Bible experts cited (v. 6) as revealing the location of the birth of the *King of the Jews, the Messiah*. How did they know this was about the Messiah? (Hint: The prophecy is from Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, 250-300 years after King David.)

What impact should this witness from the Jewish Bible Scholars have had on Matthew's Jewish audience.

8. Verses 7-8 reveal Herod's character and his mode of operation. He was sneaky. But his inquiry and orders in v. 16 provide clues to when the Wise Men saw the star, thus when Jesus was born, and when the Wise Men visited Jerusalem.

*<sup>16</sup> When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Wise Men, he was furious. He issued orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding countryside, from two years old and under. This was in keeping with the exact time he had learned from the Wise Men.*

What do these words reveal?

Herod the Great died in the Spring of 4 BC. We do not know how soon this was after the Wise Men visited. In view of this historic detail, offer the range of years for Jesus' birth.

9. The Epiphany of Our Lord has been called *the Christmas of the Gentiles*.

How does the Visit of the Wise Men demonstrate that Jesus is the divine Son of God?

How does this account reveal that God sent Jesus to be the Savior of Gentiles as well as Jews?

10. How does this account inform our worship of Jesus? Note both law and gospel messages.

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## **First Lesson: Isaiah 60:1-6**

“Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

<sup>2</sup>See, darkness covers the earth  
and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
but the LORD rises upon you  
and his glory appears over you.

<sup>3</sup>Nations will come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

<sup>4</sup>“Lift up your eyes and look about you:  
All assemble and come to you;  
your sons come from afar,  
and your daughters are carried on the hip.

<sup>5</sup> Then you will look and be radiant,  
your heart will throb and swell with joy;  
the wealth on the seas will be brought to  
you,  
to you the riches of the nations will come.

<sup>6</sup>Herds of camels will cover your land,  
young camels of Midian and Ephah.  
And all from Sheba will come,  
bearing gold and incense  
and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.

11. *The glory of the LORD* was the name for his glowing manifestation of his presence - the pillar of cloud & fire or the cloud that descended on Mt. Sinai. It also speaks about the One God delights in, his pride and joy, his promised Savior.

Here Isaiah reveals that this Light - the Glory of the LORD - is God's perfect antidote to *thick darkness* that is over the peoples. The term *people* is used in the Old Testament for God's people. But *peoples* (plural) is a synonym for all people - the nations.

This text doesn't reveal the nature and source of this darkness addressed with his Light. Based on your knowledge of Scripture, what is the *darkness that covers the earth*?

How does this light, the glory of the LORD, overcome the darkness? (Hint: 3 Offices of the Christ)

10. What is the main message of this reading? Explain why it fits The Epiphany of Our Lord.

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## **Second Lesson: Ephesians 3:2-12**

*<sup>2</sup> Surely you have heard of the administration of God's grace given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation (as I have already written briefly). <sup>4</sup> When you read this, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ. <sup>5</sup> This mystery was not made known to people in past generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets. <sup>6</sup> This mystery is that in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and people who also share in the promise through the gospel.*

*<sup>7</sup> I became a servant of this gospel, in keeping with the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> To me — even though I am the very least of all the saints — was given this grace: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ <sup>9</sup> and to enlighten everyone about the administration of this mystery. In past ages this mystery remained hidden in God, who created all things. <sup>10</sup> He did this so that, through the church, the multifaceted wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup> This was done according to the eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>12</sup> In him we can freely approach God with confidence through faith in him.*

13. There's an Epiphany message in these facts: the author and the audience (recipients)

How is that an Epiphany message?

14. Every time I read these words I anticipate that Paul's reference to *the mystery of Christ* is the God-man nature of Christ, even though I know what Paul is going to say. Do any of you ever have that same inclination?

What is *the mystery of Christ* that Paul is called to administer and reveal per vs. 5-6?

Paul frequently uses the word *mystery*. Be clear! It is **not** a secret to be kept only for insiders. It is something that was not known and could not be known unless God reveals it. God has revealed it at the right time and wants it shared.

Note through whom the Spirit reveals it? v. 5

While God had revealed this mystery by the prophets, what changed with the arrival of Jesus?

15. Share what words or thought wow you in verses 7-12.

Where does Paul speak about you and your role in vs. 7-12? Explain what that means.