

Matt 2:1-12
"Epiphany"
"The Magi"

What is Epiphany? Well, let's start with its meaning. The word means manifestation. Epiphany is the Christian Holiday commemorating the first manifestation of Jesus Christ to Gentiles, as represented by the Magi. It is one of the three primary and oldest observances of the Christian church, Easter and Christmas being the other two. Its significance is that this manifestation to the Gentiles serves as evidence that God had Gentiles in mind, too, when he sent the Jewish Messiah, Jesus the Christ. So, no surprise that the lectionary gospel reading is Matt 2:1-12. So, let's dig into this story a little closer. Now, there are many lessons here, but I will limit this sermon to three; three things we learn from the Magi.

First, they teach us that we are not to simply see the sign but follow it. V1-2 "Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ²"Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him." How many times in our lives have we seen a sign, whether it was a sign of something positive or negative, whether we realized it was from God or not, and we ignored it? We failed to follow where the sign was leading us, and in doing so it cost us. God indeed uses signs and too often we ignore or miss them all together. The Magi, most likely astrologers, saw the sign and followed it and it assisted in leading them to the Messiah, Jesus. Let me be clear. This is not an endorsement for astrology, but it is a testimony that God uses

whatever means God chooses to bring to fruition His divine purposes. Don't discount the sign, neither become obsessed with sign seeking.

Luke 2:12 ¹² “And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

Matt 16:1-5, “Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. ² He answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘*It will be* fair weather, for the sky is red’; ³ and in the morning, ‘*It will be* foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times. ⁴ A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” And He left them and departed.”

Second, they teach us that revelation and scripture work together. V-2-8 “during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ² “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.” ³ King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. ⁴ He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?” ⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote: ⁶ ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’” The birth of the Messiah was made known to them by a star, but scripture ultimately got them to the Messiah.

God may use a myriad of ways to make known that He exists, nature, celestial beings, miracles but only His word reveals who He is. The danger in simply depending on signs is what do you do when there is none or the sign is counterfeit? Church, revelation and scripture work together, but scripture, alone, will never lead you astray. Trust in the word of God above all else!

Psalm 19:1-2 “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. ²Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.”

John 4:47-50, “⁴⁷ When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to him, “Unless you *people* see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.” ⁴⁹ The nobleman said to Him, “Sir, come down before my child dies!” ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your son lives.” So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.”

Matt 24:23-25, “²³ “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here *is* the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe *it*. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand.”

Romans 10:17, “¹⁷ So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

2 Tim 3:16-17, “¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Third, they teach us to give people the benefit of the doubt, until otherwise. V7-8, 12 “⁷Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared.⁸Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!” ...¹²When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.” Now King Herod was a despicable person and his intentions regarding the newborn king were nothing but evil. However, the Magi had no knowledge of this, and they had every intention of reporting back to King Herod until God revealed his plot. Listen, wait on God to make your enemies your footstool. Do not assume everyone is against you or what you believe. Give people the benefit of the doubt, until otherwise. This is tantamount to healthy vibrant relationships. Imagine living life believing you should trust no one. God forbid! Just as God protected Jesus and guarded the Magi from making a terrible mistake, God will do the same for you and me, if we listen.

Proverbs 18:13, “He who answers a matter before he hears *it*, It is folly and shame to him.”

Luke 11:27-28 “²⁷And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed *is* the womb that bore You, and *the* breasts which nursed You!” ²⁸But He said, “More than that, blessed *are* those who hear the word of God and keep it!”

Psalms 91:1-6, “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ²I will say of

the Lord, “*He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.*” ³ Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler *And* from the perilous pestilence. ⁴ He shall cover you with His feathers, *And* under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth *shall be your* shield and buckler. ⁵ You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, *Nor* of the arrow *that* flies by day, ⁶ *Nor* of the pestilence *that* walks in darkness, *Nor* of the destruction *that* lays waste at noonday.”

The Magi teach us **that we are not to simply see the sign but follow it, that revelation and scripture work together, and we should give people the benefit of the doubt, until otherwise.** In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.