



Date 01/09/2022

Epiphany 2022
Magi Mystery and Meaning
Matthew 2:1-12

Epiphany - Manifestation of God

Christian Celebration on **January 6**; 12 days after Christmas; Christ revealed to the Magi.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶ ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Background → → → Magi.

Genesis 45:7 - But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

Exodus 7:11 (also 7:22, 8:7) - “Pharoah then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts...”

Esther 1:13 – ¹³Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice he spoke with the wise men who understood the laws...

Daniel 2:2 – So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed.

Don't do it!

Deuteronomy 18:10-11 - ¹⁰Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, ¹¹or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.
(also Galatians 5:19-21)

Magi: Greek, *magos*

A class of learned spiritual seekers and practitioners, and advisors, religious counselors. Manipulate secret worldly principles to achieve a result.

Why does God lead the Magi to visit Jesus?

1. God is Greater than the Principles of this World!

Romans 1:25 - “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator...”

2. God can lead Anyone to Christ any way He wants!

If God can lead the Magi to Jesus, He can lead you to Jesus!

3. You must Choose to believe God!

Acts 8:9 - Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria.

Acts 13:8 - But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.

Both Simon and Elymas were **Magi**.

- **Simon** chose to believe in God
- **Elymas** chose to reject God

Choose to believe Jesus!

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Opening

Something different – Celebrate Epiphany

What is Epiphany?

“Revealed of God”

One of three celebrations of the early church:

- Christmas, Easter, Epiphany
- Epiphany Celebrated the
 - arrival of the **Magi** at “house.” (our focus today)
 - Baptism of Jesus
- 12 days after Christmas, January 6 (12 days of Christmas)
- Bless people, House blessings, baptisms.

First time for me ... for you?

Feels weird talking about the Magi in the New Year.

Very insightful stuff!

So if you **like** this please hit the “Like” button, and maybe I’ll do this again next year ... or the next time I’m exposed to someone testing positive for Covid.

Magi Mystery and Meaning

Scripture Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

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The songs of the Magi are legendary, known the world over. Kings from the east, following a star, worshiping baby Jesus.

But the visit of the Magi has very **significant implications** for the **world** today, believers and unbelievers alike.

Several Key themes in this passage of scripture.

- Guiding Star,
- Gifts for royalty
- King Herod and Jewish leaders

Since the Magi themselves are central to this story, I want to focus on them.

The Magi are a bit of a mystery to us, and in order to understand the Magi's visit to baby Jesus we need to go waaaay back!

...Before the Magi existed.

The examples I give will form a background and description of what would become the **Magi**.

Let's go way back ... Genesis speaks of Joseph – dreams and interpreter of dreams.

Genesis 45:7

But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

Some people get really nervous when they hear a preacher talk about dreams and visions and deliverance. In the right Biblical context and manner, these are things God uses to guide us.

Exodus 7:11 (also 7:22, 8:7)

“Pharoah then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts...”

(exegete)

Esther 1:13 – (13) Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice he spoke with the wise men who understood the laws...

(exegete)

Daniel 2:2 – So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed.

(exegete)

Basically, everyone did it.

The Bible says sorcery and astrology a real thing. It is also a very dangerous thing. For every person who interprets these things rightly, there are a hundred that interpret it wrongly.

So, in the midst of a world where astrology, sorcery, divination are commonplace, God forbids his followers from practicing it.

• Deuteronomy 18:10-11

(10) Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, (11) or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.

So God says that astrology, sorcery, and the like is a real thing.
And God also says don't do it!

Galatians 5:19-21 says that those who practice sorcery, among other things, will not inherit the kingdom of God.

I'm going to simplify all this astrologer, sorcerer, magician, diviner, enchanter, witchcraft, spell caster into one word.

Are you ready?

Magi.

We *really* need to understand this to appreciate the visit of the Magi.

The ancients in the Middle East all understood who the Magi were, but we need some help.

Magi: Greek, *magos*

The Magi were a **class of learned spiritual seekers and practitioners**, and advisors, religious counselors.

Manipulate **worldly principles** to achieve a result.

Label "Magi" started about 500 BC.

They were **not political kings**, per se, but as we have seen, they possessed huge influence and authority.

Kings consulted **Magi** for divine advice, direction.

Another description - Certify, ratify, install and support **kings**.

One source noted that the Magi were **king-makers**.

(**Side note** - Magi at the beginning of Jesus' life called Jesus the King of the Jews. At the end of Jesus' life **Pontius Pilate** declared Jesus the King of the Jews.)

Astrology, witchcraft, manipulating natural forces were expressly forbidden for the Jews.

- Authenticates the account. If this story were made up, and Matthew wanted Jewish people to believe it, he would never include anything that might give credence to something God said was forbidden. And yet, here it is.

Magi Mystery and Meaning

Why does God have the Magi visit Jesus?

The Magi's visit shows us three things.

Two of these is what God does, one is something we must do.

First, God had the Magi visit Jesus to show that...

God is Greater than the Principles of this World.

The Magi were king-makers. Their seeking and worshiping the baby Jesus served to certify and ratify Jesus' not-so-obvious Kingship.

Sadly, we humans can often elevate lesser things as supreme.

Often we elevate principles and created things over the Creatoror.

So...

The signs Moses did for Pharaoh were designed to show us that God is Greater.

Joseph's insights about dreams are to show us that God is Greater.

Daniel's discernment of dreams are to show us that God is Greater.

Everything in this world is created. Principles, authorities, powers, animals, plants, rocks, stars, air.

Paul sums it up this way...

Romans 1:25

"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator..."

God does not want you to worship and serve creation. That's folly and idolatry.

He wants the BEST for you. He wants you to serve the Creator.

He wants you to have a **relationship** with the Him - the living God, and the loving God.

So first, God is Greater than the principles of the world.

God's second reason for the Magi visiting Jesus is to show us...

God can lead anyone to Christ ANY way He wants.

God can use a **donkey** to speak, or rocks cry out, amen!

If the heavens declare the glory of God, and the skies Proclaim the work of His hands;

And leading Magi shows that creation can to lead us to Jesus.

- And if creation clearly reveals God's invisible qualities of eternal power and divine nature ...

- ➔ then let's pray that those who consult the signs in nature and creation will - like the Magi -find the Creator!
- ➔ Let's pray that God's creation will lead astrologers and creation-worshipers, to worship the Creator, rather than created things.

All of you in **videoland** who follow Astrology and witchcraft and **principles of this age**, I pray that, like the Magi, God's creation will lead you to find the One who created all this, and worship HIM only!

The third reason for the Magi visiting Jesus is to show us that...

You must Choose to believe God

Magi points to Jesus Christ as **worthy** of true worship and offering. But it's a choice!

- The Magi made an intentional **pursuit** find the one born king of the Jews.
- They came ready with an **offering** to present to the one born king of the Jews.
- In my Bible reading, I just read that Ezra took 4 months to get from Babylon to Jerusalem. And that was because God blessed them!

➔ Visiting Jesus was a BIG DEAL for the Magi!

These Magi chose to believe and worship Jesus.

There are **two other** Magi in the Bible that I'd like to point out. You almost surely didn't know about these.

Acts 8:9

Now for some time a man named Simon had practices **sorcery** in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria.

The word sorcery is **magi**. (*mageuo*) Same as those who visited Jesus!

Simon amazed people with his magic, but... he realized that **God is Greater**, and chose to believe in Jesus Christ and was baptized.

Acts 13:8

But Elymas the **sorcerer** (for that is what his name means) opposed them (Paul and Barnabas) and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.

Elymas the sorcerer (**magos**)

Both Simon and Elymas were **Magi**.

You and I don't see that because the translators of every English translation I've seen uses an English word that hides the actual Greek word. But Simon's and Elymas' job description, occupation, skills are not any different - better or worse - than the Magi that visited Jesus. What's crucial is one's choice.

- **Simon** chose to believe in God
- **Elymas** chose to reject God

And the **Magi who visited Jesus** chose to believe God.

Isn't that insightful?

So The Magi visiting Jesus is God saying that...

- God is **greater** than the Principles of this world.
- God can lead **anyone** to Christ **any** way He wants.
- You must choose to believe God.

What does God want? He wants you to know HIM.

Prayer of Invitation.

So If you like today's sermon, click the "like" button.

And ... Happy Epiphany