**God’s Word is Our Guide**

Based on [Matthew 2:1-12](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt2.1-12)

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The Epiphany of Our Lord (Observed)

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Today’s gospel is the celebrated account of the wise men or magi who follow a star they believe to be a sign that will guide them to the king of the Jews. Today we will consider signs from God, and how to interpret them faithfully. The star that the Magi follow is the sign of the king of the Jews. How did they know?

It is likely that these Magi were from Persia, around the place where Balaam was from. Balaam was an Old Testament figure who gave a prophecy many years before about a “Star that would rise out of ***Jacob***”. That is a star will rise out of ***Israel***. So, we can theorize that a guild of Magi in Persia might have heard and taught this prophecy, handing it down from generation to generation, waiting for that star to appear. And somehow, in the fullness of time and by God’s grace, they decided that this was that star and they followed it. And they were right.

We can’t know for sure how the magi knew about the star, but the idea that they began with a prophecy from scripture is a faithful interpretation. Because the scriptures rightly understood are an infallible sign of God’s will. These magi had faith to worship Christ, and faith only comes from God’s word. So the idea that the Magi begin with the word of God before they seek the sign leaves for us a good example in how to interpret the manifold signs presented in the world around us.

The faithful christian will always begin and end with the word of God before they consider signs. But let’s be clear, this means the rightly interpreted word of God, not some private personal reading of what God’s Word says “to me.” God’s Word is clear, and no sign from God would ever go against his word. For instance, God would never give a sign to abandon your spouse, he would never give a sign to get an abortion, or to alter your sexual identity, or to steal or covet or hate. We live in confusing times and God is always guiding our lives, but clarity about his will for our lives comes from first knowing his will, knowing His word, so that we do not interpret the signs in our lives in ways contrary to it.

People today are so confused, sailing this life without a rudder, wondering what their purpose is, questioning what God wants them to do. And so they look for convenient signs to affirm what they intend to do anyway--green lights, lucky numbers, more than coincidences. But we know that God has already spoken the final word for our salvation. He has already made known the trajectory of the world and the duties in this life of the faithful christian. We are always tempted to look for signs that justify our inclinations to sin. This is why we must always be grounded and steeped in the work of God, so that we see the world rightly, as He sees it.

The Magi follow the star because they followed God’s word first. This is no ordinary star burning billions of light years away. This is an object shining supernaturally in the sky to guide the faithful Magi. Remember in the wilderness, how the Israelites were led in the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The cloud leads the way through the wilderness; the fire gave them light. The pillar of fire and the Magi’s star, these things give marvelous insight into the Psalm that reads: “Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path.”

It is true that the Magi might not have consulted the Old Testament before setting out. Scripture doesn’t say. And, after all they were likely superstitious astrologers, who dedicated their professional lives to a faulty science. And perhaps they only bumbled their way to the right destination by the grace of God. Even a broken clock is right twice a day...

But we do know that the sign disappears somewhere along the way, or else it is not precise enough to guide them to their destination. The star doesn’t take them straight to Bethlehem. They must first go to Jerusalem and ask king Herod where this new king has been born, and Herod doesn’t know either. So what does he do? He summons the Chief Priests and Scribes, the bible scholars and asks them what the scriptures have to say about it. And they tell him that, according to the Scriptures, the Savior is to be born in Bethlehem, then and only then is it clear where the star is directing them.

The Magi are lost in Jerusalem, without a star and blind until they hear the word of God. They set out travelling many miles, but it would have all been for nothing had they not had the word of God to reveal to them the final destination. They hear the prophecy that the king shall be born in Bethlehem, and then, only then the star reappears...as if to affirm their utter dependence on the word to Guide them, lest they think it is their own astrological observations and superstitions that lead them to the Christ child.

The Christ Child, Jesus, is God’s Word made flesh. It is what we are to remember and praise God for this Christmas season. He is the promise of God in bodily form. He came to do what we could not. He came to save us, to tell us that in spite of our sinful inclinations, in spite of our misinterpretations and blunders, Jesus is our beacon of light and the meaning of signs. And he’s not just a name, he is the Son of God who, if everything were written about him, the world itself could not contain the books. But we have a book about him that is our guiding star, fixed over his church where his true body and true blood are to be found for wayfaring christians in this world to congregate around, to eat and drink and worship and praise.

May your faith find it’s guidance in the eternal Word of God, inscribed in scripture, preached in the church, and made flesh for our salvation in the man Jesus Christ+, our Lord.