**Worshipping God in the Flesh**

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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The wise men began their journey when they saw a star rising. They followed the star West to Jerusalem, where it stopped. While in Jerusalem, the they visited Herod and heard the Holy Scripture. The prophet Micah (5:2) prophesied that the new king of the Jews would be born in Bethlehem. Then the star went before them again and led them to Bethlehem, to the house where Jesus was. They saw him, worshipped him, and offered him gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

Today we’re going to consider four things in the story. What of the Magi? What of the star? What of the gifts? What of Herod?

1) What of the visitation of the wise men? There are a number of Old Testament passages that foreshadow the coming of the wise men. Numbers 24:17, says “**A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel**”. Psalm 72 is talks about the “Royal Son of God”, and about kings from Sheba and Seba in the East bringing him tribute. Isaiah 60 also mentions Sheba, saying people will come from there bringing gold and frankincense to the Christ.

So, what of the wise men? In Summary, the OT taught that the glory of God would rise upon the Royal Son of God as a star, and he shall be king of the Jews. Because of this, important men from the East, foreigners, Gentiles, would to come bearing gifts to him in Israel. The wise men are a fulfillment of this prophecy.

2) What of the star? There are a lot of opinions about stars that aligned around the time Jesus was born. The idea is that such conjunctions brightened in the sky. Another opinion is that perhaps a supernova exploded, standing out to catch the attention of these wise men.

It seems very plain to me, however, that the star is not a natural occurrence. It is a supernatural light, sent by God himself. It is a manifestation of His glory that he sent temporarily for the sole purpose of guiding the wise men.

Such illuminated guidance in the sky has happened before. When the Israelites were wandering the wilderness, they were led by God in **“a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.**” In this pillar was the glory of the Lord. Exodus says Lord “**went before them” in the pillar and the fire was to “give them ligh**t” (Exodus 13:21). And when and where the pillar would stop, they knew they were to stop and set up camp. After a time the pillar would rise up and move, and they knew it was time to move on as well to set up camp in a different place (Exodus 40:36-38).

With the same language, scripture tells us that the Star “went out before” the wise men. First it took them to Jerusalem, where it stopped. Then, after hearing about Bethlehem, the star rose and began to lead them again. And the star led them to the house where Mary and Jesus were staying.

So what of the star? The star is a supernatural guide. And just as the pillar directed the wandering people of Israel, the star directed these foreigners to the place where God is to be found and worshipped. In former times, it was in the sanctuary of the tabernacle, but in these last days it is in the flesh of His Son. John 1:14 says of Christ that **The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us**. And Colossians says that In Christ “**the fullness of God *dwells/(is housed)* bodily.”**

3) What of the gifts? These gifts are signs. Scripture teaches that Gold is a gift for a king; frankincense an offering for God; and Myrrh a spice for burial (John 19:39). With this in mind Iraneus of Lyons, one of the earliest church fathers had this to say about the gifts. He said **that the wise men brought…**

*“****myrrh*, because it was He who should die and be buried for the mortal human race; *gold*, because He was a King, “of whose kingdom is no end;” and *frankincense*, because He was God, who also “was made known in Judea,” and was “declared to those who sought Him not**.” (Against Heresies, Book III, Ch. IX)

4) What about Herod? The star only led the wise men to Jerusalem, there they visited Herod’s house which is the reasonable place to look for the King of the Jews. But the guiding light would not lead them to Jesus until the Scriptures were consulted. This teaches us that any signs and wonders, even if they are from God, must be supported by Holy Scripture, and that the Scriptures are given to lead us to Him.

Also, Herod is the fulfillment of another prophecy from the Psalms. Herod immediately opposes Jesus. The psalmist says of the coming christ, the stone the builders rejected, shall become the cornerstone.

An illustration: I understand it that when someone has an organ transplant, they will have to take anti-rejection medication for the rest of their life. It’s because their body treats the new organ as a foreign intruder. **So too, when the Son of God came down from heaven, he was a foreign intruder. He was an organ of righteousness transplanted into a world of sin.** And like the body receiving a new organ; the world rejects the very thing meant to save it.

He came to save it anyway. Many in this world will never accept him, the Son of God who offers them free forgiveness and righteousness. Many like Herod will be offended by him, and violently oppose him. But others hear his voice and receive him. And though our old sinful flesh will continue to be repulsed by him, our anti rejection medication is the body and blood of Christ, given and shed for our forgiveness, life and salvation...so that we can live holy lives bearing fruit of the Spirit until we journey to see the king in glory.