**Fall Down And Worship Him**

**Matthew 2:1-12**

*Epiphany (transferred) – 01.05.2023*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever had an epiphany? An “aha” moment? A point in time when, all of a sudden ***IT,*** whatever ***it*** may be, makes sense? A moment when the lights go on. In our Gospel lesson, we literally have a light going on, the star that appears and leads wise men from the east to Jesus.

Epiphany is actually January 6, it is the first day after the 12th day of Christmas. We should have that a special service tomorrow, but not many would have attended. So, we transferred this special celebration to today.

Let us begin by addressing the question of why did the wise men go to see the birth of Jesus? Well, they had an epiphany! Literally, a light appeared! A star appeared in the heavens! These learned men lived where the Israelites had been held in captivity in Babylon where Daniel, who we know from Scripture, was in captivity and a was a great scholar. These men were scholars, probably studying astronomy, looking at the stars and studying them and their movements. They had probably studied the Hebrew Scriptures that remained in the area.

What was it about this particular star that set them searching for “He who is born king of the Jews?” We know that as the earth rotates on it’s axis and orbits around the sun, there is some variation as to how stars, planets, and such align in the heavens. Was this event something that happened in one of the constellations? Was this some aligning of the stars and planets in some specific pastern that was new and unusual?

There are many who would claim that such is the case. Most who do so, do it because they want to discredit this as some ‘miraculous’ event that could only happen one time by God’s Divine intervention. Could they be right? Could this have been a one-in-a-million alignment of heavenly bodies?

Dear friends, this was something different. This was a one-time event. We are not exactly sure, because we were not there and they did not record it on video. We do know that this star rose and signaled something incredibly significant.

We also know that it appeared and then it “went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.” What exactly that means we are not 100% sure, but most people ***do not want to speculate*** that this star came up and hung low in the sky, that it moved across the sky, and actually led them to the place where the child was. Why not? Because it does not make sense to our human reason. Stars do not move that way.

That is absolutely, correct! Stars do not move that way. This was something different. It was a sign from God. I love to look at the stars and watch them. Orion is a favorite constellation of mine, and it hangs in different places in the heavens depending on the season. And his bow is pointed in a particular direction, sometimes at the earth, but to say it is pointing at one specific home in one specific town? So, reading that this star “went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was” is exactly what it did. Let God’s revealed Word in Scripture speak – this star was so low in the sky that it led them to Jesus.

How did they know about what it meant when this star appeared? As I said earlier, these men knew the Hebrew Scriptures, that they were familiar with the prophecy in Numbers 24 which mentions a star rising, one who will rule and crush the enemies – a prophecy of God’s Christ.

Was there something more than this prophecy in Numbers that led them to notice this unusual star? Daniel’s writings might also have been helpful to them. Daniel lived in captivity in the east, and he may have written other things which are now lost but were available in that eastern area where he had been a captive. It may be that God gave them a special revelation, advising them in a special dream to follow that specific star. Afterall, He did warn them in a dream to return home and not go to Herod. Suffice it to say, we do not have all the answers, we are not certain. It has not been fully revealed to us. Nor should we speculate.

What is most important to us today is that these men were not blood descendants of Abraham. Jews thought that since they were God’s chosen people, everybody else they called Gentiles. To Jews, Gentiles are the unclean – unholy. Even converts to Judaism were second class Jews. Jews thought that the Christ was only for them.

Dear friends, consider this. Who were the first ones to know who Jesus was, and to worship Him? First it was some shepherds who had an angelic visit to inform them about their salvation. Forty days later, a man told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen his salvation, worshiped Him. That same day in the temple, an old lady worshiped Him. Finally these eastern wise men came to worship Him.

When God took on human flesh and entered the world, He did not do it in any conventional way. His birth was not announced to the great kings. Nor was His presence made known to the church leadership of that day as one might expect when God visits His people.

God placed Himself in the womb of a humble virgin, taking on human flesh. His birth announcement was made by an angel to simple shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night – those where the only Jews specifically “told” about it. Simeon and Anna in the temple were made aware by the Holy Spirit’s guidance. And God sent a special star to appear to wise men in the east – God informed these Gentiles that God's salvation was also for them.

Notice that when they came without following the star, by use of their reason, they went to Jerusalem. It was the logical place to find the One born king of the Jews, Jerusalem being the capital of Israel, where the temple was, the center of Jewish worship.

But Jesus was not there. In fact, it was the wise men who clued the church leadership in on the fact that something special was happening. The chief priests and the scribes did not realize something special had happened. Even when they went back to the Scriptures to find some sort of answer, they still did not understand.

Since these church leaders did not know what was going on, they were a bit skeptical, they were unbelieving. Human reason got in the way. And then Herod reasoned things out on his own, he also came up with the wrong conclusion.

Human reason leads people to look for God in all kinds of things. They may even believe they are seeking Christ. Many may think they have found Him where they sought Him, but they have not.

Many seek God in their emotions, in a sentimental song, in the friendliness of certain people, in their own hearts, or even in some sort of emotional high they feel “moved them” in worship. And if those things do not happen, then they believe they have not found Him.

These things are not Christ! They may seem to be so in our hearts and minds, according to our own reason. But too often our reason gets in the way of God's revelation to us.

God leads us in humble ways. When the wise men went out from the king, when they abandoned their reason, the star came to lead them. God used the star to lead them to a humble village, to a little Child, in a house with His mother. God led them to **His salvation** when they gave up following their reason.

It was to sinners that Christ came, to those who acknowledge their place before God, humble themselves, fall down, and worship Him. Shepherds and wise men were led by God to see their Savior, and seeing Him, fell down and worshiped Him.

We also celebrate that God draws us to Him, just as God drew these men to Him. God led these men to Jesus, and coming to Him, fell down and worshiped him.

God has led you here. It may not have been some special star, but God led you here. He brought you here that you might find Him. What you find is not spectacular, but it is where God has led you. Here you find Him, just as did shepherds and wise men, hidden in humble means.

They found God's salvation, God Himself, hidden in a human Child, fell down, and worshiped Him. You also find Him hidden in humble means. A little bit of water. Words spoken by a man. A small wafer. A sip of wine. In these simple things God leads you to your salvation – to Christ – when you give up your reason.

You fall down and worship Him. You come before Him bowed down in repentance. You are blessed by God in so doing. You fall down and worship Him – and He speaks forgiveness in your ear.

You fall down and worship Him – He places His own flesh into your mouth and gives you to drink of His precious blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

You fall down and worship Him in repentance and faith, and you find you salvation – God’s gifts of forgiveness and life.

Fall down and worship Him. Offer Him your humble gifts: your thanks and praise in worship; your lives in service to Him, by serving your neighbor; and even the offerings you place in the plate. Yes, fall down and worship Him. Offer Him your greatest gift, your hunger and thirst for righteousness, receiving from Him His gifts of salvation. What He wants of you is receptive hearts that come in expectant joy. In the name of Jesus. Amen.