

THIS WEEKEND WE CELEBRATE;

“THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD”

THERE WAS A FAMILY DRIVING FROM ONE TOWN TO ANOTHER,, FOR A CHRISTMAS SEASON GATHERING. AS THEY PASSED BY AN ANGLICAN CHURCH,, THEY SAW A MANGER SCENE,, IN THE YARD.

THE YOUNGEST SON ASKED HIS MOTHER;

“WHAT’S THAT?”

HONEY,, THAT’S MARY,, JOSEPH,, AND,, LAYING IN THE MANGER,, IS THE BABY JESUS.

A FEW BLOCKS FURTHER,, THEY PASSED A METHODIST CHURCH,, WHERE THE SCENE WAS PORTRAYING,, THE JOURNEY OF THE WISE MEN.

“WHO ARE THEY?” THE YOUNG BOY ASKED.

THOSE ARE THE WISE MEN,, AND THEY ARE LOOKING FOR THE BABY JESUS.

“WELL,, THEY’RE NOT ALL THAT WISE”,, THE YOUNG BOY REPLIED,, “THEY WON’T FIND HIM THERE”.

“HE’S DOWN THE STREET,, AT THE ANGLICAN CHURCH!”

***EPIPHANY!* WHAT DOES THAT WORD MEAN?**

IN THE WEBSTER’S DICTIONARY,,

EPIPHANY IS EXPLAINED AS;

”A MOMENT,, WHEN YOU SUDDENLY FEEL THAT YOU UNDERSTAND”.

IN OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH,,

EPIPHANY IS EXPLAINED AS;

“THE SHINING FORTH,, OR THE REVELATION OF GOD,, TO MANKIND,, IN HUMAN FORM,, THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST”.

OR TO SAY IT ANOTHER WAY,,

EPIPHANY SIMPLY MEANS:

“THE VISIT OF THE MAGI,, THAT REVEALED,, OR,, MADE JESUS KNOWN,, TO THE WORLD”.

BUT,, TO MANY PEOPLE,, THE WORD *EPIPHANY* WILL

MEAN NOTHING!

IN FACT,,, MANY CHRISTIANS,,, WILL PROBABLY SAY,,, THAT THEY'VE HEARD THAT WORD,,, BUT,,, THAT THEY'RE NOT SURE,,, OF IT'S MEANING!

THAT'S,,, UNTIL YOU MENTION THE WISE MEN,,, THEN,,, YOU'LL DISCOVER,,, THAT THEY KNOW THE STORY OF THE THREE WISE MEN,,, FROM THE EAST,,, WHO VISITED JESUS,,, MOST LIKELY,,, TWO YEARS AFTER HIS BIRTH,,, AND *WHO GAVE HIM GIFTS OF GOLD,,, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH.*

OUR CHRISTIAN TRADITION PICTURES THESE WISE MEN (OR MAGI) AS KINGS; BUT,,, IT'S MOST LIKELY,,, THEY WERE ASTROLOGERS FROM BABYLON,,, WHO,,, HAD HEARD ABOUT A PROMISED MESSIAH.

IT'S ASSUMED,,, THAT THERE WERE THREE MAGI,,, ONE FOR EACH GIFT,,, GIVEN TO JESUS. HOWEVER,,, NOWHERE,,, IN THE BIBLE,,, ARE THERE ANY REFERENCES,,, TO INDICATE,,, THAT THERE WERE ONLY THREE.

AND BY POPULAR OPINION,,, IT'S HELD,,, THAT THESE WISE MEN SHOWED UP,,, ON THE VERY NIGHT OF OUR SAVIOR'S BIRTH; REGARDLESS OF THE FACT,,, THAT SCRIPTURE,,, MOST HISTORIANS,,, AND THEOLOGINS AGREE,,, THAT THE VISIT TOOK PLACE,,, WHEN JESUS WAS ABOUT TWO YEARS OLD,,, SO,,, HE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN IN A MANGER.

SO,,, WHAT ARE WE TO BELIEVE?

I BELIEVE,,, THAT OPINIONS,,, ASSUMPTIONS AND EVEN TRADITION,,, EVEN THOUGH THEY MAY BE GOOD,,, ARE NOT ALWAYS THAT CLEAR,,, YET,,, THEY DO NOT INTERFERE WITH THE MESSAGE,,, WHICH IS; **THAT JESUS,,, WAS PRESENTED TO THE WORLD,,, IN HIS FULL DIVINITY!"**

MATTHEW,,, TELLS US,,, WHAT OUR REACTION SHOULD BE,,, TO THIS BIRTH;

IT SHOULD BE A REACTION,,, WHICH ASKS:

WHO EXACTLY,,, IS THAT BABY IN THE MANGER?

LATER ON,, JESUS HIMSELF ASKED HIS DISCIPLES THAT VERY SAME QUESTION,,

“WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM”?

ACCORDING TO THE APOSTLE MATTHEW,, WHILE WRITING TO HIS FELLOW JEWS,, SAID; JESUS,, ***IS THE KING OF THE JEWS,, THE PROMISED MESSIAH AND THE CHRIST***; AND MATTHEW GIVE TWO PROOFS:

THE FIRST PROOF,, WAS THE STAR: THE PEOPLE OF MATTHEW’S TIME,, WOULD NOT HAVE FOUND THE MAGI’S CLAIM,, ***THAT A STAR ROSE TO HERALD THE BIRTH OF THE KING OF THE JEWS,,*** TO BE BIZARRE. IT WAS ACCEPTED THAT BIRTHS AND DEATHS OF GREAT MEN,, WERE OFTEN MARKED BY HEAVENLY SIGNS AND THE JEWS OF MATTHEW’S TIME,, WERE WELL ACQUAINTED WITH PROPHECY. SO THE STAR ***WAS A SIGN FROM GOD.***

THE SECOND PROOF,, WAS THE PLACE OF HIS BIRTH: WE’RE TOLD THAT JESUS WAS BORN; IN BETHLEHEM. WHEN KING HEROD HEARD ABOUT THE MAGI,, HIS CHIEF RELIGIOUS ADVISORS,, TOLD HIM THAT ***“THE CHILD WOULD BE BORN IN BETHLEHEM,, IN THE LAND OF JUDAH”***. THE MESSAGE WAS CLEAR,, THE BABY,, BORN IN THE MANGER,, IS THE KING OF THE JEWS,, THE CHRIST,, THE MESSIAH.

BUT WHEN THE WISE MEN ARRIVE,, THEY FIND MARY,, JOSEPH AND JESUS,, LIVING IN A LOWLY HOUSE,, AND WHEN THE MAGI,, ANNOUNCED THAT JESUS WAS THE MESSIAH,, HEROD,, THE PEOPLE AND ALL JERUSALEM,, BECAME GREATLY TROUBLED.

KING HEROD,, WHO WAS NOT A GOOD MAN,, OR RULER,, WAS TROUBLED; ***BECAUSE HE THOUGHT JESUS WAS A RIVAL TO HIS THRONE.***

SO ***HEROD***,, AFTER CALLING THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS TOGETHER,, ASKED THEM,, WHERE THIS MESSIAH WAS TO BE BORN AND THEY TOLD HIM THAT JESUS WOULD BE BORN IN BETHLEHEM OF

JUDEA,,, AS IT IS WRITTEN IN SCRIPTURE.

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS,,, HAD THE KNOWLEDGE OF WHERE JESUS WAS TO BE BORN,,, BUT,,, THEY REFUSED TO LISTEN TO THE SCRIPTURES,,, OR TO WORSHIP THEIR NEW MESSIAH,,, AS SO MANY “SO CALLED” RELIGIOUS PEOPLE DO TODAY.

THEY DID NOT DESIRE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST,,, BECAUSE THEY DID NOT SEEK HIM OUT AND WORSHIP HIM.

IN ORDER TO INSURE THE DEATH OF THIS NEWBORN KING OF THE JEWS,,, HEROD,,, HAD ALREADY BEGUN PLANNING TO KILL ALL THE INFANT BOYS OF BETHLEHEM. HEROD KNEW THAT HE HAD ONE MORE PERSON,,, TO DISPOSE OF,,, AND THAT’S JESUS.

HEROD MET WITH THE MAGI,,, IN SECRET,,, TO TRY TO HAVE THEM FIND JESUS FOR HIM AND HE SENT THEM TO BETHLEHEM SAYING: SEARCH FOR THE CHILD. “AS SOON AS YOU FIND HIM,,, REPORT TO ME,,, SO I MAY GO AND WORSHIP HIM!”

BUT,,, THESE WISE MEN KNEW SCRIPTURE,,, AND BELIEVED IT! THEY HAD FOLLOWED THE STAR TO BETHLEHEM,,, WHICH LED THE MAGI OVER 800 MILES,,, THROUGH THE DESERT,,, TO JERUSALEM,,, TO FIND THE CHRIST CHILD AND TO WORSHIP HIM.

AFTER THEIR VISIT WITH HEROD,,, THE STAR MIRACULOUSLY REAPPEARED AGAIN,,, AND LED THEM TO THE EXACT HOUSE WHERE JESUS AND MARY WERE STAYING.

AFTER FINDING JESUS,,, THE MAGI PROSTRATED THEMSELVES,,, BEFORE HIM AND PAYING HOMAGE TO HIM,,, OFFERED HIM THEIR EXPENSIVE GIFTS OF GOLD,,, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH.

THE WISE MEN KNEW SOMETHING THAT KING HEROD WOULD NEVER KNOW.

THEY KNEW,,, THAT THIS LITTLE BOY,,, IN THAT TINY HOUSE,,, WOULD SOMEDAY RULE THE ENTIRE WORLD.

THE ORDINARY PEOPLE,,, WERE TROUBLED,,, BECAUSE THEY KNEW,,, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WHEN HEROD,,, WHO WAS ADICTED TO POWER,,, FELT THREATENED.

HE HAD ALREADY PROVEN HOW CRUEL HE COULD BE,,, AND TO WHAT LENGTHS HE WOULD GO,,, TO REMAIN IN POWER,,, WHEN HE PILLAGED THEIR HOMES AND MURDERED MANY OF THEIR PEOPLE,,, EVEN MEMBERS OF HIS OWN FAMILY.

AS FOR THE **PRIESTS AND PHARISEES**,,, THEY WERE TROUBLED TOO,,, BECAUSE THE MESSIAH'S BIRTH,,, THREATENED THEIR POLITICAL STATUS AND THEIR PUBLIC POSITIONS. SO,,, THEY REFUSED TO REJOICE,,, AT THE BIRTH OF THEIR KING.

THE WISE MEN LEFT THE SAFETY AND COMFORT OF THEIR HOMES,,, RISKING EVERYTHING,,, TO FIND THE NEWBORN KING AND PAY HOMAGE TO HIM.

BEFORE THE WISE MEN DEPARTED FOR THEIR HOMES,,, THEY WERE WARNED,,, IN A DREAM,,, NOT TO GO BACK TO HEROD,,, BUT TO RETURN TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY,,, BY ANOTHER ROUTE. THEY LISTENED AND THEY OBEYED BY FAITH!

*WITH THE DEPARTURE OF THE MAGI,,, IN ORDER TO INSURE THE DEATH OF THIS NEWBORN KING OF THE JEWS,,, HEROD ORDERED THE KILLING OF ALL THE BOYS,,, TWO YEARS OLD AND YOUNGER,,, AROUND THE VACINITY OF BETHLEHEM. **HEROD KNEW THAT HE HAD ONE PERSON TO DISPOSE OF,,, AND THAT WAS JESUS!***

HEROD POSSESSED EMENSE POWER. HE WAS A TYRANT,,, WHO MANIPULATED,,, DECEIVED AND WAS CONSUMED WITH SELF-INTERESTS.

HE HAD EVERY MEANS AVAILABLE TO BE ABLE TO ELIMINATE THIS INFANT KING AND HE TRIED THEM ALL.

BUT HEROD,, DID NOT PREVAIL.

HEROD REPRESENTS THE KINGDOM OF THIS WORLD!
BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, THERE'S NO EVIL,, THAT
CAN STAND AGAINST GOD'S DIVINE PLAN.

JESUS WAS A SERVANT! HE HEALED,, TOUCHED,,
TAUGHT AND LOVED. HIS DESIRE WAS TO PLEASE
GOD THE FATHER AND TO SERVE OTHERS.

JESUS THE CHRIST, REVEALS THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

HEROD,, WITH ALL HIS WEALTH AND POWER,, DIED
IN GREAT PAIN AND HE CAME TO RUIN!

JESUS,, WITH A LIFE OF POVERTY AND LOWELY
POSITION,, **DESCENDED EVEN FURTHER,, UPON A**
ROUGH HEWN CROSS!

BY GIVING UP HIS SPIRIT,, JESUS DIED A HORRIBLE
DEATH,, **FOR YOU AND ME!**

HEROD COULDN'T SAVE HIMSELF FROM DEATH!

JESUS,, COULD HAVE,, BUT,, HE CHOSE NOT TO!

BELOVED,, ***GIVEN THE RIGHT TIMING,, THE RIGHT***
SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES,, THE RIGHT SITUATION,,
WE'RE ALL CAPABLE OF BECOMING A BIT LIKE
HEROD,, ESPECIALLY,, IF IT GETS US WHAT WE WANT!

IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL,, OUR OLD SIN NATURE,,
OUR SELFISHNESS,, TRIES TO COME OUT IN US.

WE REALLY CAN'T FULLY PARTAKE,, IN A SUPPER
WITH OUR LORD,, IF WE'RE ALREADY STUFFED,,
WITH ALL THE EMOTIONAL AND MATERIALISTIC
EXCESSES OF THIS WORLD.

LET'S REMEMBER,, THAT JESUS IS OUR KING AND WE
MUST ALWAYS MEET HIM,, ON TERMS OF OUR
COMPLETE SUBMISSION OF HEART!

TODAY,, I'D LIKE TO ENCOURAGE YOU,, WITH THIS
SHORT PRAYER AND REMEMBER; WE MAY HAVE TO

LIVE IN THIS WORLD,, BUT,,
WE DON'T HAVE TO BE OF IT!

*FATHER,,, BLESS US THIS DAY,,, THAT,,, AS WE FACE 2019
WE DON'T HAVE TO FACE IT ALONE.*

*WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'S IN FRONT OF US,,, SO,,, LET US
KNOW THAT YOU ARE WITH US,,, GUIDING US,,, EVERY
STEP OF THE WAY,,, BY THE POWER OF YOUR MOST
HOLY SPIRIT.*

*WE THANK YOU FATHER,,, THAT JESUS,,, IS OUR
MESSIAH,,, OUR SAVIOR,,, AND OUR KING*

*LIKE THE WISE MEN,,, SO LONG AGO,,, WE'RE
GATHERED HERE TODAY,,, TO WORSHIP HIM AS LORD!*

**SO AS WE BOW DOWN BEFORE JESUS AND PAY HIM
HOMAGE,,, AS OUR LORD AND SAVIOR,,, LET US
OFFER UP OUR LIVES TO HIM,,, WHILE WE
CELEBRATE HIS EPIPHANY,,, HIS REVELATION,,, TO
US,,, AS WE PARTAKE OF HIS PRESENCE,,, IN THE
EUCHARIST,,, AT THIS HOLY ALTAR TODAY!**

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER,,, AND OF THE SON,,, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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1603 Wds, 7 Pgs