

## I.N.I.

Epiphany Sunday  
January 6, 2013  
Matt. 2:1-12

In Christ Jesus, the One who has appeared as the Savior of the world, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Welcome to the 12<sup>th</sup> day of Christmas. No, I do not have 12 drummers drumming to give to you, but I do have the Good News of Epiphany. As many of you know, Epiphany means — **to appear, to make manifest, to show forth.**

Today is a holiday chosen by the early Church. It concludes the Christmas season and helps lead us into Lent and Jesus' passion. It answers for us the question: Who is this Christ-Child? It also helps keep the Christmas spirit alive for more than just a day. All of the Gospel readings or sermon texts during these next 4 weeks will show forth and present Jesus as true God, the Lord and Savior of mankind.

The early Church chose this text from Matthew 2 as its Epiphany text because it tells how God, by leading the Wise Men to Jesus, showed that the Messiah had not only come for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. This truth was new and wonderful in those early years as Christianity spread from one Gentile, heathen nation to another.

Many people at that time had the idea that every tribe or nation had its own god, or that its rulers were human-gods and they didn't really care about any other nations. There really wasn't a God of all the earth, who ruled over everyone and everything and cared about everybody. Even some of the Jews felt that their God—Jehovah--was theirs only; that He cared only for them; saved only them.

So God had to teach them that the Messiah who was sent as the Baby Jesus, born in Bethlehem, was and is for all people, for all nations, as we heard in our Scripture reading from Isaiah 60.

Our text is one that every child from little on knows. We see it portrayed in our nativity scenes, even though it is not historically accurate. We hear it very often in our Christmas Eve Children's Programs. But for a Bible story that is as well known as this one, we still do not know very much.

Many questions fill our minds. When did this story take place? Who were these mysterious wise men? Where did they come from? How many of them were there? What was the special star?

Tradition and legends have tried to answer these questions, even giving names to the wise men. But from these traditions and legends we get misleading ideas. As many of you know the Christmas carol, "We Three Kings of Orient Are," is not one of my favorite carols for it leads us to believe that there were 3 Magi, that they were kings, and that they came from the far east, the orient. But the fact of the matter is we don't know how many there were (our Bible lesson never says); they were not kings, but astronomers and men of science--men who served the king as close advisors; and they probably were from the area of Babylon, not the far east, the orient.

We must be careful not to say more than the Scriptures say. So many of these questions must go unanswered. But there is one question that these wise men asked that we are able to answer:

### **WHERE IS HE WHO HAS BEEN BORN KING OF THE JEWS?**

If that question were asked of you, what would you say?

The wise men had seen the star in the east. It was a special star, one that they immediately knew, from their knowledge of the Old Testament, was to signify the birth of the Savior, the King of the Jews. How they knew this we can only guess. These wise men were similar to Daniel and his three friends; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were exiled to Babylon. No doubt these believers spoke of their faith in Jehovah and the coming Messiah and that was passed down through the generations.

Or perhaps it was Queen Esther who was responsible for spreading the Good News of the coming Messiah or maybe it was some unknown faithful child of God who spoke these words of promise that were then handed down through the centuries so that these wise men were aware of the promise from Numbers 24:17 **A STAR SHALL COME OUT OF JACOB; A SCEPTER SHALL RISE OUT OF JACOB.** This verse means that a star will appear from Israel to announce that the King of Israel has arrived.

When the wise men saw the star they knew in their hearts of faith that this was God's special sign

that the Savior was born. They got ready and followed that star for hundreds of miles as it directed them to Jerusalem. But then it disappeared.

So it wasn't the miracle of the star that answered for them the question: **WHERE IS HE WHO HAS BEEN BORN KING OF THE JEWS?** but the simple message of God's Word. The scribes and the chief priests when asked where the Christ was to be born simply looked into God's Word and there was the answer: **IN BETHLEHEM OF JUDEA....so says the Lord through the prophet Micah 5:2.**

Even as the Word led the wise men to the Savior so:

**I: IT IS STILL ONLY THE WORD THAT LEADS US TO HIM.**

It is not true that we can find God and our salvation out in nature, or by meditating within our own sub consciousness or by contacting spirits from the past, or by listening to learned philosophers. We find Jesus only in His Word. The same Word that directed the wise men to Jesus some 2,000 years ago.

But in answer to this question: **WHERE IS HE WHO HAS BEEN BORN KING OF THE JEWS?** we also see that:

**II: MANY IN THE WORLD STILL DO NOT KNOW HIM.**

It must have been completely amazing and shocking to these wise men who had traveled hundreds of miles to find that no one else in Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, even knew that Jesus was born, or for that matter, cared. They were completely in the dark. They were not watching and waiting for this blessed event of His coming. There was no room in the inn for the Christ child in Bethlehem, and there was no room either in the hearts of most of the people in Jerusalem.

But are things really any different today? Notice how some people, some of you will travel 45 minutes to an hour to faithfully come to worship your Savior while other people won't even go across the street or down the block. In our text we are not told of anyone from Jerusalem going the 7 miles to Bethlehem to see the Christ child, but these wise men willingly traveled hundreds of miles.

Just like in the wise men's day we still live in a world that ignores this greatest of moments in the history of the world: God taking the form of a human being and being born in the flesh, the birth of the King of both the Jews and all of mankind. For many if not most in the world, Christmas is over.

We see from our text that the people got stirred up, they were aroused, but only because Herod was aroused. Thoughts of bloodshed and rebellion raced through their minds. Everyone knew all too well what could happen when Herod got upset. He had already killed one of his many wives and three of his sons because he suspected them of plotting against him. The birth of Jesus did stir them up, get them excited but for all the wrong reasons. When the events of the slaughter of the babies in Bethlehem took place, nothing happened; they did not seek to see if the baby Jesus still lived, they soon forgot about the God-child, ignored the news of the wise men and soon went back to their everyday routine of life.

So also we see the world settling back into its daily routine. Where are those who made such a big fuss just twelve days ago; who attended the special services and sang the Christmas carols. When it is all over with, when the news is proclaimed, when the excitement is gone, Jesus is forgotten and ignored. **The majority of the world still does not know that this baby born in Bethlehem is the God-Man, the Lord and Savior who came to suffer and die for the sins of all people.**

So **WHERE IS HE WHO HAS BEEN BORN KING OF THE JEWS?** King Herod knew and he tried to do away with Him. He secretly called the wise men to ask them to find the child and tell him exactly where he lived so that he could also worship Him. Herod's desire was not to worship Christ as his King but to kill Him and remove this rival King. So also today:

**III: MANY IN THIS WORLD STILL WOULD DO AWAY WITH CHRIST.**

Many who came to the manger to see the baby Jesus during Christmas time, who went through the motions of worshiping Jesus at this beautiful time of the year, really reject Him as their Lord and Savior, they will have nothing to do with Him as their King. They show this by their self chosen lifestyles that they have no king but themselves. There is no one who is lord of their life but themselves. No one can rule their lives, no way will they subject themselves to any lord or king.

So finally we ask **WHERE IS HE WHO HAS BEEN BORN KING OF THE JEWS?** The answer:

**IV: HE IS FOUND IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO STILL WORSHIP HIM.**

As we said the wise men traveled hundreds of miles for one visit with their new born King. What a sight to see grown adult men, truly godly “wise men” bow down and worship this little infant and honor Him with special costly gifts. The Word of God was for them a **LAMP TO THEIR FEET AND A LIGHT FOR THEIR PATH.** When they were told that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem, they left Jerusalem immediately and when they again saw the star leading them they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy; they were thrilled. Soon they would see and worship their Savior and Lord. Does the light of God’s Word that leads us to our Savior fill us with such great joy?

Oh, to have the kind of worshipful hearts these wise men had. To prostrate ourselves before our Savior God with a humble confession of our sins, with repentant hearts seeking from this Savior full and free forgiveness. To come to Jesus through His Word and grow daily in heart-felt thanks for this greatest Gift ever given; the gift of salvation wrapped up in the Christ child. To lay before our Savior our own gifts of our time, of our talents and of our treasures, all blessings that God has already given to us.

The wise men show us Christian giving at its best. Not because of the value of the gifts, and they were costly, but because they gave freely and gladly from the heart and intently, not letting distance, time or difficulty stop them. They made no excuses but wanted to give to the One who was going to give of Himself someday for them.

They also gave obediently of their lives. When God came to them in a dream and warned them not to go back to Herod, but to return home another way they willingly obeyed. They did not want to do anything that would hurt their Savior. This command from God may have required them to go many more miles, miles on less traveled, less safe roads and maybe added many more days to their journey home; yet the wise men did not consider this sacrifice to be a burden to them for they were filled with God’s love in Jesus Christ.

May we also look upon God’s commands to us not as burdens that take all of the joy and fun out of life, but as blessed opportunities for us to show our gratitude and love for Jesus, to gladly obey Him and to avoid hurting or displeasing Him with any sinful thoughts, words or actions.

That is why you and I are here this morning, after the holidays are over. That is why we are **STILL** here this morning to continue our worship and our praise to honor and glorify Christ the new born King throughout the year and throughout our life.

That is why we earlier this morning prostrated ourselves before our Savior in humble repentance of our sins and rejoiced when we heard the Good News of forgiveness through Jesus and will in a few minutes receive with glad hearts His very body and blood in, with and under the bread and wine for us to eat and to drink for the blessed assurance of our forgiveness.

There are **STILL** many questions we do not know about this Bible Lesson of the Wise Men. But we may we **EVER** be able to answer this question:

**WHERE IS HE WHO HAS BEEN BORN KING OF THE JEWS?**

With this statement of faith:

**HE IS FOUND IN HIS WORD THAT LEADS US TO HIM THROUGH FAITH SO  
THAT HE WILL BE FOUND FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS.**

Amen.