

Epiphany Wisdom  
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Behold, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it arose and have come to worship him.' (Matthew 2:1b-2)

They were star gazers from pagan lands. They did not know that the world's Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, so they arrive, understandably, in Israel's capital, (but still the wrong city) to find the new King who had recently been born. They inquire about the new King with the current king who happens to be the evil King Herod. They do not seem to detect his wicked plot to use them to find this new-born King in order to kill Him, as they need to be warned by the Lord in a dream not to return to Herod to report the location of the Child. Wise men? It hardly seems the case that Matthew is presenting these gentile representatives of other kings in any light that we might rightly describe as wise.

Yet there is wisdom for us in pondering the visit of the magi, each January 6, in celebrating the Epiphany of our Lord. What is the significance of the presence of the magi as an aspect of Jesus' infancy story? Too often we might conclude that the cliché about this event is its true application for us, that "wise men still seek Him." However, the magi are not in Jesus' infancy story to spur humanity on to seek Jesus. They are there as a joyful sign that Jesus has come to seek all nations, including you.

While the magi may have journeyed from a far-away land their journey pales in comparison to the journey Jesus makes to seek and to find them, and us. He comes all the way from His Father's right hand in glory to be born in the no-account city of Bethlehem in a lowly manger. He journeys from His place of almighty glory to the frailty of human flesh. He moves from sinless Son of God to the curse of sin and death on the cross. He makes this sacrificial journey because that is where He finds you and me, lost in sin and death. He gives the gift of Himself in life, death, and resurrection, that we might be redeemed.

The magi are a sign that Jesus is salvation from God not only for those Israelites who will believe in Him. He is also for believers from every nation to whom He will be revealed as Savior even as He sends His Church into the world to proclaim at the end of Matthew's Gospel. The magi are reminders the gift of Jesus is there for all peoples, including you. Blessed Epiphany!