

“I’ve had an epiphany!” You’ve probably heard someone use that saying before. “I’ve had an epiphany!” It means that I’ve been wrestling with a difficult and perplexing problem for a long time and I’ve finally figured it out! “I’ve had an epiphany!” The problem with the way most people use that saying is that it implies that I figured it out by my own investigation and my own cleverness. But the word epiphany means “to appear or to reveal.” And so “I’ve had an epiphany” actually means that I couldn’t have figured it out on my own. I was hopelessly lost on my own, but the answer was revealed to me, “I’ve had an epiphany.” Today we enter into the season of the church year called Epiphany. It’s the season of the church year where we celebrate the fact that we wouldn’t have known about Jesus on our own, but God revealed him to us. We’ve had an epiphany! And the perfect way to start this season of Epiphany is to look at the Magi and think about the epiphany that God gave to them. Today I’d like us to think about two things: the epiphany that God gave to the Magi and then their response to the epiphany.

First, we want to look at the epiphany or the revelation that God gave to the Magi. The Magi knew a lot of things. They were experts in looking at the stars. They knew the constellations and the planets. They meticulously tracked the stars and the planets. They knew a lot of things, but there was one thing they didn’t know. You see they studied the heavens, but they didn’t know how to get to heaven. And so God revealed to the Magi that he was going to send a King to the Jewish people. How did God reveal that to them? God revealed that to them in his Word. The Magi apparently had some knowledge of God’s Word. They ask **“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?” (Matt 2:2)**. Since they come asking about the King of the Jews, it seems the Magi had some knowledge of God’s promise to send a king. Now how would the Magi come into contact with God’s Word? Well, Matthew says that they came “from the East.” It could be that the country they came from was Babylon. In Babylon they could have come into contact with God’s Word. You see hundreds of years before, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and forced the people to leave Jerusalem and live in Babylon. It was sad for the Jews to leave their homeland. But God worked it out for good. Because you see the Jews brought their Bibles with them from Jerusalem to Babylon. And so God’s Word came to the country of Babylon and God’s Word was passed down in the country of Babylon. At the time of the Magi there was still a large Jewish community in Babylon and so the Magi could have read Bible passages like this one in Numbers 24:17, **“A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. ... A ruler will come out of Jacob” (Numbers 24:17, 19)**. The exile to Babylon happened hundreds of years before the Magi, but God was ruling history in such a way so that the Magi would read God’s word and have the epiphany that God was going to send a King.

Babylon is a far way away from Jerusalem. And so it’s amazing that the Magi from Babylon came into contact with God’s Word. But Burlington Wisconsin is much further away from Jerusalem. How you ever stopped to wonder how amazing it is that you have come into contact with God’s Word? For many of us, we came into contact with God’s Word because hundreds of years ago German immigrants came to the United States and brought their Bible with them. No matter how it happened for you, God ruled history in such a way so that you would come into contact with God’s Word. God orchestrated your life so that you would receive the Epiphany that Jesus is your Savior. The Wise Men were wise in a lot of things, but it was Scripture that made wise for salvation. And the Scriptures have also made us wise for salvation. We know how to get to heaven. It’s through faith in Jesus. Thank God that he has given you that epiphany.

God used his word to reveal to the Magi that he would send a King and then he put a special star in the sky to lead them to that King. That star led them first to Jerusalem and then the Bethlehem. **“After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child.” (Matt 2:9-11)**. The star that God gave to the Magi led them to *Jesus*. God always wants to lead us to *Jesus*. The Magi were looking for a king and the star led them to a very special king.

A king who would die for the sins of the world. The Magi asked in Jerusalem where is the one who has been born King of the Jews (Matthew 2:2). Can you think of another time where Jesus is given the title The King of the Jews? Remember what it said above the cross? Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. This king came to die for our sins. That's the epiphany that God has given to us.

So we've looked at the Epiphany that God gave the Magi. That God would send a king and that that King was Jesus. Secondly today I would like to talk about the Magi's *response* to the epiphany. To see the Magi's response to the Epiphany we have to contrast it with Herod's response to the epiphany. How did Herod respond to this epiphany? **"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed." (Matt 2:1-3)** King Herod was disturbed because he saw the newborn King as a threat to his power. There can only be one King. Do we ever see Jesus as a threat to our power? Do we ever think, "If Jesus is the King of my whole life, then he might ask me to give up some things that I don't want to give up. If Jesus is the King of my whole life, he might ask me to volunteer my time to help others." "If Jesus is the King of my whole life, then I'm going to have to give up this sin that my sinful nature enjoys." We too at times might see this newborn King as a threat. But later on Jesus said, **"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it" (Matthew 16:35).** Jesus here gives us an epiphany. He reveals something to us. And the epiphany is this: When I give up my selfishness and my sins in order to serve Jesus, then I find a much more fulfilling life.

How did the Magi respond to the Epiphany? First, they believed it. They responded with faith. They believed it so much that they traveled a long distance to find the new-born King. So we too should respond to this good news of a Savior by believing it. Second, the Magi responded to the epiphany with great joy. **"When they saw the star, they were overjoyed" (Matt 2:10).** If you're in this room, God has revealed to you that Jesus is your Savior. Let that give you great joy. You have heaven as your inheritance. Let that give you great joy. Respond to the Epiphany with great joy. Third, the Magi responded to the epiphany by worshiping Jesus. **"On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him" (Matt 2:11).** Let's also respond to the epiphany by coming to church every Sunday and worshiping Jesus. And finally the Magi responded to the epiphany by bringing their gifts. **"Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh" (Matt 2:11).** This king is worthy of the very best that we can offer him. He's worthy of our offerings. He's worthy of us using our talents to serve him. Let's respond to the Epiphany by bringing our very best to Christ the King.

In many ways, we are the heirs of the Magi. We are Gentiles. We are not part of God's Old Testament people, the Jews, but by grace and by faith we are included in God's people because God told Abraham that through his offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed. We're heirs of the Magi because we've had an epiphany. God has revealed to us something that we would not have otherwise known. God has revealed to us that Jesus is our King and our Savior. Let's respond to this Epiphany by believing, by rejoicing, by worshiping, and by giving our best to him. Amen.