

Church Year Story 7 The Epiphany of Our Lord

Catechism and Memory Verse
from the Congregation at Prayer for the Week

BIBLE STORY: THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD THE HOLY INNOCENTS AND THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT Matthew 2:1-12 (13-23)

Central Thoughts

- Jesus is revealed as the Christ, the King and Savior of all the nations.
- All the events surrounding and involving Jesus' birth fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures and proclaim Him to be the Christ, who will suffer and die for the sins of the world.
- Those who reject Christ are often filled with bitterness, resentment, and hatred toward Him because they cannot be their own king and savior.
- True worship is faith and trust in Jesus for salvation.

Key Questions and Answers

What does "epiphany" mean?

To be revealed or to be made manifest

What is revealed in the Epiphany of Our Lord?

That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and the Savior of all nations (Promise to Abraham, Gen. 22:18)

What does the light of the star signify?

The light of Christ's forgiveness that shines throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel (Is. 60:1-5 and John 8:12)

Who were the wise men or magi?

Scholars, astronomers, and men of royal station who studied ancient texts

Where did the wise men come from?

The East, Persia, present-day Iran or Iraq

Whom were they seeking?

The King of the Jews

What did they mean by the expression "the King of the Jews"?

That Jesus was the Messiah, or Christ, promised in the Old Testament Scriptures

How would they have known about prophecies concerning the coming of the Christ?

From the Old Testament Torah, the Promise made to Abraham, "in your Seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." (The Torah would have been brought to Persia with the Jews during the Babylonian exile.)

What would have caused them to believe that the appearance of the star signaled the Messiah's birth?

The prophecy from the Torah: "A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17)

Why did they believe that the Messiah of the Jews was also the Savior of all people?

The promise made to Abraham that in his Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed

What did the wise men ask of Herod?

Where the King of the Jews was born

What had the wise men come to do?

Worship Him

How did King Herod and all Jerusalem react to the news of the Messiah's birth?

They were troubled.

Why were they troubled?

Herod feared for his throne, and sinners are always troubled at the news of the Lord's coming.

How did Herod find the answer to the wise men's question?

He inquired of the chief priests and scribes who would have known the prophecies of the Old Testament.

What does this tell us about Herod?

He believed the truthfulness of the Scriptures, even though he did not have faith in the Lord.

Where did the Scriptures say the Christ would be born?

In Bethlehem of Judah

Where is this prophecy found?

Micah 5:2

What is significant about Bethlehem of Judah?

Bethlehem was the ancestral city of David, the first king of Israel from the tribe of Judah, from whom the Scriptures said the Christ would descend.

What did Herod tell the wise men to do?

Search for the Child and bring back word to him so that he might worship Him also

What happened after the wise men left Herod?

The star appeared again to confirm the message of the Scriptures.

What did the wise men do when they saw the star again?

They rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

What did the wise men do when they saw the Child?

They fell down and worshiped Him and presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (See Isaiah 60:5-6)

What does it mean to worship Jesus?

It means that they believed in Him as their Savior.

Why did the wise men give the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh?

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh were all associated with worship at the Old Testament Tabernacle of the Lord. Gold overlaid the Ark and the sacred vessels. It was the precious metal of kings. Frankincense is the incense used by the priests in their daily sacrifices and prayers for forgiveness. Myrrh is the fragrant oil used to anoint the priests and kings. It would also be used to anoint Jesus' body for burial. Jesus is prophet, priest, and king. He is anointed to die for the sins of the world and by the sweet-smelling aroma of His sacrifice, will continually intercede for us as our great High Priest and also reign forever and ever as King of kings and Lord of lords.

What does the visit of these Gentile wise men signify?

That the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for all people, Jew and Gentile alike

Why did the wise men not return to Herod?

God warned them in a dream not to do so

What did the angel of the Lord tell Joseph to do?

Flee to Egypt with Jesus and Mary because King Herod sought to destroy the Child

Why was Jesus sent to Egypt?

That the Scriptures might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called My Son" (Hosea 11:1)

Whom did Jesus represent in Egypt?

Israel

Why did Jesus represent Israel?

He would be faithful to the Lord, doing what Israel had failed to do: cling to God's Word

How did Herod react when the wise men did not return to him?

He was angry and ordered the slaughter of all the male children in Bethlehem and its surrounding districts.

What was fulfilled by the death of these innocent children?

The prophecy from Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more". (Jeremiah 31:15)

Who did the death of these children foreshadow?

The death of Jesus, God's only Son

Who was Rachel?

Jacob's wife, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, she represents all the mothers of Israel who lost children

When did the angel of the Lord appear to Joseph in Egypt?

After Herod's death, telling him to take the young Child and His mother and return to the land of Israel

What prevented Joseph from settling in Judah?

God warned him in a dream so that he settled in the town of Nazareth in Galilee

Why did Jesus live in Galilee?

That the Scriptures might be fulfilled: "He shall be called a Nazarene" like the Old Testament Judge Samson, who was a "Nazarite"—one dedicated to the Lord from the womb to deliver God's people (Judges 13:5)

Why is it important that the events of the Epiphany, the Slaughter of the Holy Innocents, and the Flight into Egypt, all took place according to the Scriptures?

Because faith and salvation are dependent upon the Word of God

Meditation on the Bible Story

The star appeared in the East, according to the Old Testament prophecy, proclaiming the birth of the Messiah and announcing Him to be the Savior of all the nations of the earth. The light of the star signifies the light of Christ that goes out into all the world through the preaching of the Gospel to draw all nations to Jesus, so that people of every tribe and language might worship Him. Worship is faith that desires to receive Christ and that trusts in Him for salvation. The wise men offered their gifts to Jesus as a confession of their faith in Him and to proclaim the purpose of His coming. He was born to be our prophet, priest, and king. He will faithfully preach the Gospel as the Father's prophet. He will faithfully offer His own body into death for the world's salvation as our great High Priest. And He will faithfully conquer sin, Satan, and death by His own death and thereby reign forever and ever as King of kings and Lord of lords. All the events surrounding the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus unfold according to the Scriptures that we might be saved from our sins. Wherever the Gospel of Jesus is proclaimed there will be those who receive it and those who reject it. King Herod and his wicked slaughter of the Holy Innocents signifies the bitter hatred of the Gospel that often flows out of the hearts of impenitent sinners who will not repent of their sin and let go of their own works for salvation. Herod's violence and murder directed at the Lord's Christ is a sign that the Gospel is true and ultimately predicts Jesus' own suffering and death at the hands of sinners for the salvation of sinners.

Prayer on the Bible Story

O God, by the leading of a star You made known Your only-begotten Son to the Gentiles. Lead us, who know You by faith, to enjoy in heaven the fullness of Your divine presence; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



The Epiphany of Our Lord

Matthew 2:1-12