

“The Visit of the Magi”

INTRODUCTION: *Epiphany* is a “lost holiday” in Evangelicalism.

1. “Epiphany” comes from the Greek word *epiphaneia*.
 - a. Meaning: *the appearing or appearance; the coming*
 - b. Root word: *epiphaino*: to appear or to give light; in the passive: to be revealed
 - c. Adjective: *epiphanēs*: glorious; used of a god appearing in human form (a manifestation of a god)
 - d. Hence: *Antiochus Epiphanies* = Antiochus the Glorious or Antiochus the Manifestation of God
2. We use this word, colloquially, when we say, “For me it was an *epiphany!*” (i.e., a moment of enlightenment).
3. **Webster’s Dictionary:** a Christian festival, observed on January 6th, commemorating the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles in the persons of the Magi; the appearance or manifestation especially of a deity.
4. **Ace Collins:** *Stories Behind the Best Loved Songs of Christmas*; p. 178.
 - a. *The story of the wise men was the focal point of the post-Christmas celebration of Epiphany. In many places the holiday, observed on January 5, once rivaled Christmas. Since the celebration of Epiphany has declined over the past century, many today don’t know what it is. Literally, Epiphany is the last of the twelve days of Christmas, the day the wise men finally found Jesus. The Episcopal Church celebrated Epiphany in both America and the United Kingdom. During the 1800s the special day was traditionally the day the Christmas tree was taken down and children received the gifts and treats that had been hanging on it since it had been cut, brought home, decorated, and had presents hung on the branches. Even then, as many little ones counted the moments until they could raid the evergreen, a great number of them didn’t know the symbolism behind Epiphany or why gift-giving was a part of it.*
 - b. The 12 Days of Christmas: Dec. 26 – January 6
 - c. The genesis of *gift-giving* at Christmastime
 - d. The Orthodox Church in Russia celebrates Christmas on January 7th.
 - e. The American Church considers January 6th as Christmas.
5. **Epiphany** has a very rich and fun-filled history around the world:
 - a. It commemorates the Wise Men visiting Christ and so it is always associated with gift-giving (gold, frankincense and myrrh)
 - b. Many churches also commemorate the Baptism of Jesus on Epiphany (Jan. 6th).
 - c. Spain: *Fiesta de las tres Reyes Magos (The festival of the three kings)* – when children receive their presents and folks go to a bakery and purchase special pastries for the occasion
 - d. France: People eat special almond cakes; in Mexico these are cakes in which are hidden a figure of the baby Jesus

- e. Italy: children put up stockings and receive gifts on Epiphany
 - f. Austria and Germany: people write the date and the letters *CMB* over their doors: *Caspar, Melchior, Balthazar* – the legendary names of the 3 Wise Men
 - g. Belgium: children dress up, go house to house, sing carols and receive candies, cakes or coins
 - h. Ireland: Epiphany is *Nollaighna mBean* (Women’s Christmas): women get the day off and the men do the cooking and housework
 - i. Epiphany Eve (Jan. 5th) is known as *Twelfth Night*, the day to end Christmastide and take down the Christmas decorations
6. Why all this hoopla? Gifts, celebrations, special food? **Answer:** *Christians have desired for millennia to celebrate and rejoice in the greatest of all events in history: The **Incarnation** of God in Jesus of Nazareth?*
- a. A day when the Gentiles (most of us!) first saw the Messiah, through the eyes of three Gentile “Wise Men”
 - b. A day for gift-giving, like the Magi did for Jesus
 - c. A day to receive God’s greatest gift: His Son
 - d. And, most of all, a day for **THE** Epiphany: the manifestation of God in Jesus; the day mankind saw God!
7. **My favorite Christmas Carol** is really an Epiphany hymn: *The First Noel*
- a. In fact, only 4 of our Carols are about Epiphany
 - b. *The First Noel* (not in *Trinity Hymnal*)
 - c. *We Three Kings* (not in *Trinity Hymnal*)
 - d. *As With Gladsome Men of Old* (#226)
 - e. And lesser known *Saw You Never, in the Twilight* (#228)
8. It seems our *Trinity Hymnal* has some doubts about the information in some of our Epiphany Carols.
- a. In fact, many people are uncomfortable with the story of Matthew 2:1-12.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men 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 rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

*“‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’”*

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” After listening to

the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. (Matthew 2:1-12)

- b. Who were these *mysterious travelers*?
- c. Were they really following *a star* to Bethlehem?
- d. Why did they come in *search* of Jesus?
- e. Let's turn to the narrative of Matthew to answer these questions.

I. WHO WERE THESE MAGI? (Matthew 2:1-6)

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men 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 rose and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

*"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel." (Matthew 2:1-6)*

1. **Marvin R. Vincent** states this in his book, *Word Studies in the New Testament*; p. 19-20, vol. 1

Many absurd traditions and guesses respecting these visitors to our Lord's cradle have found their way into popular belief and into Christian art. They were said to be kings, and three in number; they were said to be representatives of the three families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and therefore one of them is pictured as an Ethiopian; their names are given as Caspar, Balthazar, and Melchior, and their three skulls, said to have been discovered in the twelfth century by Bishop Reginald of Cologne, are exhibited in a priceless casket in the great cathedral of that city.

2. And yet this story is true. These "*wise men*" actually came to see the infant Jesus, in fulfillment of yet more prophecy –

- a. The prophecy of Jacob in Genesis 49:8-10

*Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's sons shall bow down before you.
Judah is a lion's cub;
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He stooped down; he crouched as a lion
and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?*

*The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (Genesis 49:8-10)*

- b. The prophecy of Balaam of Beor in Numbers 24:17

*I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near:
a star shall come out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;
it shall crush the forehead of Moab
and break down all the sons of Sheth.
Edom shall be dispossessed;
Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed.
Israel is doing valiantly.
And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion
and destroy the survivors of cities!" (Numbers 24:15-19)*

- c. The prophecy of Isaiah in Isaiah 60:1-6

*Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.
And nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your rising.

A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD. (Isaiah 60: 1-3, 6)*

- d. The prophecy of Micah in Micah 5:2

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days. (Micah 5:2)*

- e. A star, kings from the east, gold and frankincense, and a birth in Bethlehem! *More than just a myth or a grand coincidence!*

3. **Knox Chamblin:** *Matthew: Mentor Comm.; vol.1; p. 220.*

Matthew writes in light of all those prophecies. In Matthew's narrative the very first persons to pay tribute to Jesus come in response to his star. That they are also Gentiles from the east strikingly recalls the prophecies that nations would be drawn to light in Israel, and come under the rule of Israel's Messiah.

4. When David writes, *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork* (Psalm 19:1), he did not know that the Star of Bethlehem would declare the glory of Christ and point to the “handiwork” of God in the **incarnation!**
5. Who were these “wise men” of verse one?
 - a. *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. (Matthew 2:1)*
 - b. The Greek is *magoi* (plural of *magos*): magician, sorcerer, astrologer, “wise men” as in one trained in divination, casting spells, reading the stars or interpreting dreams; an enchanter.
 - c. e.g., *Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego* were trained in Babylon to be “magi.”
 - i. *As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. (Daniel 1:17, 20)*
 - ii. In Daniel 2:2 = *magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and the Chaldeans*
 - d. Wise men (**ESV, RSV, JB, TEV**), Astrologers (**NEB, Phillips, Living**), men from the east (**KJV**); “Magi” (**NASB, NIV**)
 - e. **R. T. France:** *Matthew: TNTC*; p. 86.

The wise men are, more correctly, ‘Magi’, originally the name of a Persian priestly caste, but later used widely for magicians and astrologers, a numerous class in most countries in Western Asia at the time. Astrology had been developed into a sophisticated science especially in Babylonia, and there is evidence for its influence also in Palestine. From what part of the East these Magi came can only be guessed; their gifts are most likely of Arabian origin, but would be available to and used by the Magi of Babylonia, and this is perhaps their most likely place of origin.

6. They travelled to Jerusalem for obvious reasons:
 - a. This was the capital of the King of the Jews; and they were looking for “*he who has been born King of the Jews.*”
 - b. They ask their question as if they were familiar with the Old Testament prophecies of Micah 5:2 and others.

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
 who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
 from you shall come forth for me
 one who is to be ruler in Israel,
 whose coming forth is from of old,
 from ancient days. (Micah 5:2)*

- c. How would they have known this? They had come into contact with the Jews of the *Diaspora*, the descendants of Daniel, Ezekiel and other exiles in Babylon and Persia.
 - d. They studied the sacred writings of several religions.
 - e. And they had been alerted to a great event by an omen in the sky: *A Star*.
 - f. Note well how they refer to this star...
 - i. *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men 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 rose and have come to worship him."* (Matthew 2:1-2)
 - ii. "*his star*" – a portent of a King
 - iii. To *worship Him*: they believed he would be a divine King; some "son of God" or the gods.
 - iv. Or...at least to pay homage to a new King
7. Herod hears this report and asks his "wise men" ("*chief priests and scribes*") to search the Old Testament scriptures to find out -
- a. *When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:*

*"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel."* (Matthew 2:3-6)
 - b. "*where the Christ was to be born*"
 - c. Please **note**: The Magi did **not** ask about *the Christ* but rather about *the King of the Jews*. It was Herod who made the connection!
 - d. In other words, Herod intended to kill the Messiah in order to save his throne!
 - e. The Scribes confirm the Magi's question: *The Messiah would not be born in Jerusalem, but in the suburb town (village) of Bethlehem – the City of David.*
8. Herod asks them to find this miracle child and let him know so that he too could pay Him homage.
- a. *Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."* (Matthew 2:7-8)
 - b. A ruse: He really wants to kill the Baby.
 - c. So the Magi innocently head off toward Jerusalem.

II. WERE THE MAGI REALLY FOLLOWING A STAR? (Matthew 2:9-10)

After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. (Matthew 2:9-10)

1. Yes, they were. That's what the Scripture text says.

- a. Three times this text says "star"
- b. *aster*: a star; but it can also mean any observable heavenly body – planets, comets, novas, etc.
- c. **Commentators** (Bible Scholars) tend to be very cautious in explaining the star.
- d. **David L. Turner**: *Matthew: ECNT*; p. 80.

Modern readers wonder whether the rising of the star may be explained scientifically as a comet, a planetary conjunction, or a supernova providentially arranged by God. Whether these modern explanations have merit or not, Matthew would evidently view the occurrence as a miracle.

e. **R. T. France**: *Matthew: TNTC*; p. 86.

No known astronomical phenomena account for the movement of the star as described in v. 9, and this indicates that what Matthew describes is guidance by a miraculous occurrence, even if the initial interest of the Magi was aroused by a nova (or a planetary conjunction – or both).

2. On the other hand, **Scientists** seem more comfortable explaining the star astronomically.

- a. **Johannes Kepler**, 17th Century German Astronomer and Mathematician, observed a Supernova, in 1604, and with other scientists calculated that it appeared every 805 years.
 - i. Around 800 and the birth of *Charlamagne*
 - ii. Around 5 B.C. and the birth of *Christ*
- b. The **Chinese Astronomical Tables** also attest to a bright Nova (Supernova) occurring every 800 years on this same schedule.
- c. **Alexander Von Humboldt**, 18th Century Geologist and explorer, confirms the accuracy of this 805 year cycle (5 B.C., c. 800 A.D., 1604 A.D., next: 2,400 A.D.)
- d. i.e., a special and astronomical constellation that God used to direct the Magi to Jesus.

3. **Paul L. Maier**: *First Christmas: The True and Unfamiliar Story*; 69.

- a. *The Star of Bethlehem has puzzled scholars for centuries. Some have skeptically dismissed the phenomenon as a myth, a mere literary device to call attention to the importance of the Nativity. Some Christians, at the other extreme, have argued that the star was miraculously placed there by God to guide the Magi and is therefore beyond all natural explanation. Most authorities, however, take a middle course which looks for some astronomical and historical explanation for the Christmas star, and several interesting theories have been offered.*
- b. In 7 B.C. in May, in September and in December, a unique constellation appeared in the sky.
- c. *Jupiter, Saturn and Mars* "combined" (overlapped from our viewpoint)

- d. Then, two years later, *Comet #53* on the Williams List appeared near the Constellation of Capricorn, visible in Palestine.
- i. A *Nova*: an exploding star with a “tail”
 - ii. A comet: burning-out planet (star) with a trail of gases and particles reflecting the sun’s light – “glowing”
 - iii. Moving past Palestine in early 4 B.C.

- e. **Paul Maier** explains all this –

Because of the rotation of the earth, anything in the night sky appears to move generally westward as the night progresses, except Polaris and the relatively few stars north of it. And, as people travel, the stars do seem to move with them or before them, stopping when they stop. So when it reached a zenith in the skies over Bethlehem, the gleaming blue-white star of Christmas would indeed have seemed to stop for the Magi as they reached their destination. Even the artistic conceptions of the star shedding its rays down on Bethlehem might not be quite so fanciful as one would think. In subtropical latitudes on very clear nights, a faint luminous band similar to the Milky Way is visible on the southwest horizon called zodiacal light. The reflection of sunlight on meteoric particles concentrated in the plane of the ecliptic, zodiacal light appears as a luminous cone shining from the planetary path down to earth at the point where the sun has set. If it appeared to the Magi leaving Jerusalem, zodiacal light might have seemed to beam down from the Christmas star to intersect Bethlehem at the southwest.

4. This is what I believe happened:

In the Fall of 7 B.C. the Magi in Persia saw the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn that grew brighter in February 6 A.D. For 10 months it glowed. As they studied it, Comet #53 streamlined through the sky in 5 B.C. for 70 days, moving westward (toward Palestine). The Magi set off to follow the Comet, and after several months arrived in Jerusalem under the glow of Nova #53.

5. **One more thing of interest:** The ancient Rabbis wrote that a special star would appear in the sky indicating the Messiah’s birth!

- a. Look at verse 7...

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. (Matthew 2:7)

- b. Then he later gave this order...

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. (Matthew 2:16)

- c. Herod died in 4 B.C. (born 37 B.C.; died 4 B.C.)
- d. This unique “star” first appeared in 7 B.C.
- e. In 5 B.C., the Comet #53 “moved” toward Bethlehem.
- f. Hence: *Scholar’s assessment that Jesus was born c. 5 B.C. (but no later than early 4 B.C.)*

- g. Herod knew of the Rabbinical “prophecy,” Micah 5:2, and the Star of the Magi: 1...2...3... = Messiah!
- 6. I believe God supernaturally placed these celestial bodies in orbit and in conjunction every 805 years, intending them to converge between 7 and 5 B.C., in order to point the Magi to Bethlehem and the Christ child: *scientific...mysterious...supernatural* – all rolled into one!
- 7. **Another Wonder of Christmas!!!**

III. WHY DID THE MAGI SEARCH FOR JESUS? (Matthew 2:1-2, 11-12)

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men 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 rose and have come to worship him.”

And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. (Matthew 2:1-2, 11-12)

1. Simple answer: *to worship Jesus!*
2. Notice: Time has elapsed since Luke 2:1-20.
 - a. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are no longer in a manger in a barn.
 - b. They’ve moved into a *house*.
 - c. Joseph, a carpenter, has found work, and they’ve resettled from Nazareth to Bethlehem.
 - d. Why? Bigger place (Jerusalem metro-area) with more work...
 - e. ...and a new place where people will not always be gossiping about the immoral girl who got pregnant before she was married, and tried to explain it with a most blasphemous story of a virgin conception and a Messiah Son!
3. King Solomon wrote of this moment in his beautiful *Psalms* 72.
 - a. *May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth!
May desert tribes bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust!
May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands
render him tribute;
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts!
May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!* (Psalm 72:8-11)

- b. *Long may he live;
may gold of Sheba be given to him!
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all the day!* (Psalm 72:15)
 - c. If the Queen of Sheba brought gifts to King Solomon, how much more the Magi from the East give gifts to King Jesus!
4. Three gifts fitted for a King –
- a. **Gold:** the wealth fit for a King (tribute)
 - b. **Frankincense:** resin of trees; used primarily in incense (worship). The only incense allowed in the Temple.
 - c. **Myrrh:** a gum resin used for perfumed oils (anointing)
 - d. *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.
The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;
you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;
your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.
From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad.* (Psalm 45:6-8)
5. By the way: *This is why we speak of “Three Wise Men,” – because of the three gifts. I personally accept the traditional view that the Magi numbered three. A giver of gold, a presenter of frankincense, and a provider of myrrh.*
6. There is something **profound** in this simple verse:
- a. *And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.* (Matthew 2:11)
 - b. These men and their entourage were **Gentiles**, pagans, idolaters, Eastern sorcerers and astrologists, given over to dark arts and forbidden divination –
 - c. Men who practiced the occult!
 - d. *But the star, the ancient prophecies, and the Spirit of God had drawn them to Bethlehem and to Jesus. And when they saw Him – an infant – they believed in Him and worshipped Him.*
 - e. Did they become believers? Converts? *I think so!*
7. **John C. Ryle:** *Expository Thoughts on Matthew; pp. 12-13.*

These wise men believed in Christ when they had never seen Him; but that was not all. They believed in Him when the scribes and Pharisees were unbelieving; - but that again was not all. They believed in Him when they saw Him a little infant on Mary’s knees, and worshipped Him as a King. This was the crowning point of their faith—They saw no miracles to convince them. They heard no teaching to persuade them. They beheld no signs of divinity and greatness to overawe them. They saw nothing but a new-born infant, helpless and weak, and needing a mother’s care, like any one of ourselves. And yet when they saw that infant, they believed that they saw the divine Savior of the world! “They fell down

and worshipped Him.” We read of no greater faith than this in the whole volume of the Bible. It is a faith that deserves to be placed side by side with that of the penitent thief. The thief saw one dying the death of a malefactor, and yet prayed to Him, and “called Him Lord.” The wise men saw a new-born babe on the lap of a poor woman, and yet worshipped Him, and confessed that he was Christ. Blessed indeed are they that can believe in this fashion!

8. God honored these simple Magi’s faith, and He protected His Son from Herod...
 - a. *And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. (Matthew 2:12)*
 - b. Perhaps that same busy angel – *Gabriel* – who came to Zechariah in the Temple, Mary in her home, and Joseph as he slept, now appears to the Magi in a dream.
 - c. They obey him – as people of faith always respond to God’s leading – and sneak home by an alternate route...
 - d. ...to avoid returning to Herod.

CONCLUSION: Here are four kinds of people and how they respond to Jesus...

1. There are *shepherds*, the first to hear the Gospel news, see Jesus, embrace Him and worship Him.
 - a. *And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,*
“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”
When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. (Luke 2:10-17)
 - b. Social outcasts, poor men (and women), uneducated, even base.
 - c. But God tells them first: *Come to Jesus.*
 - d. This is why Jesus came; He said so!
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed. (Luke 4:18)
 - e. Today, by the thousands, and this year by the millions, the poor of *Malawi, Peru, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Haiti, Albania, and homeless in America* will come to Jesus.

- f. In this world, He's all they'll ever have that is good, and safe, and pure, and hopeful. Jesus loves them, and they love Him!
2. There are *Priests and Scribes*: Educated clergymen and serious academics, those who struggle to embrace Christ.
- They know all kinds of *facts* about Him, but they may never really come to know Him...personally.
 - For them, Jesus is an idea (and ideal), a system, a philosophy, a religious ritual.
 - Perhaps they're always searching for the **historical Jesus**.
 - Their problem? *They are too educated, too scientific, too sophisticated to believe in Incarnations, Virgin Births, Angels and Visions, mysterious stars or "Wise Men" on camels?*
 - They want God on their terms – the Academy. But God can only come to us on His terms: *The Supernatural*.
 - God, you see, is like us: *He can act only according to His nature. For us, that is the nature of a creature in the "natural" order; for God, that is the nature of the Creator, in the realm of supernatural (above nature).*
 - And so, to help that doubting priest, that liberal pastor, that agnostic scholar or atheistic scientist, God does something *miraculous*: He takes up and puts on humanity, becomes one of us, so that we can see God!

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:1-9)

3. There are *Powerful Men of the World*, like King Herod: CEO's, University Presidents, Captains of Industry, Senators, Generals, Presidents, Premiers, Prime Ministers, and Kings!
- They *fear* Jesus because He calls Himself "*Lord*", and demands that we do the same.
You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (John 13:13-14)
 - But the world's great men and women serve no one; they expect to be served, to be obeyed, to be in charge.
 - Power*, and *Wealth*, and *Influence* are three things they had to give up – like gold, frankincense and myrrh.
 - Gold*: the currency of wealthy people
 - Frankincense*: the aroma of adored people

- iii. *Myrrh*: the oil of anointing for important people
- d. But the comparison isn't fair; it doesn't even make sense: You're not choosing between yourself and...
 - i. *Donald Trump, Barak Obama, or Beyoncé!*
 - ii. Your competing with *God in the Flesh*
- e. It is **never** defeating, demeaning or disappointing to bow to God!
- f. In fact, any life that does not is a house built upon shifting sand!

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. (Matthew 7:24-25)

- 4. And, finally, there are *Wise Men* – inquisitive, open-minded, sincere of heart and honest men and women looking for God!
 - a. They use whatever God gives them to point the way to Christ and find salvation...
 - b. Science (like Astronomy), Scripture (ancient prophecies), information from others, (church), and their own response to God's promptings
 - c. They are **not** naïve but pure-hearted; they are **not** uneducated but informed, and they are **not** predisposed to pride but responsive to overwhelming evidence that God has become a man, in Jesus of Nazareth.
 - d. *They don't care what their fellow men say; they are ruled by truth and not by ignorant peer pressure.*
 - e. They are neither too *imperious* nor too *sophisticated* to reject God's witness in Christ.

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (1 Corinthians 1:20-25)
 - f. **These are the people who find Christ, worship Him, and give themselves to Him...the gift of their own lives.**

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)
- 5. Who are you? Where are you in this line up? Poor and needy, intellectually biased, afraid to surrender to Jesus as Lord, searching for God and suspecting that all the evidence – natural and supernatural – points to **Jesus?**

6. This is a *fair question*, because for five weeks, in 8 messages, examining in detail three chapters of Scripture, 155 verses, and the 8 stories of 8 people who encountered Christ personally, you have been fully exposed to the **Incarnation**.
7. **How God became a man.**
8. You have all the evidence you need to make up your mind: *Will you believe the Bible, bow to God's will, receive Jesus the Christ sent to save you, in faith give yourself to Christ, and join His people – the church – and follow Him?*
9. You'll do one of two things: fall on your knees and worship Him or seek to destroy Him.
10. I'll give you one guess what *wise people* do!

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:11-13)