

# Epiphany

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“The Epiphany of Our Lord” is celebrated every year on January 6<sup>th</sup>, marking the end of Christmastide and the beginning of the season of Epiphany, which lasts until the beginning of Lent. Epiphany comes from the Greek word meaning “manifestation” or “appearing” and draws attention to the fact that God has revealed Himself in Jesus as the savior of the Gentiles. The mystery of the gospel that was long hidden but is now revealed is that Jesus has come to unite Jew and Gentile in Himself (Eph. 2:11-3:6).

Besides Matt. 2:1ff., the classic biblical passage associated with Epiphany is Isaiah 60:1-6 because it looks ahead to the coming of the Lord in glory that will draw Gentiles and kings, who come on camels and bring gifts for the worship of the Lord. For this reason, the visit of the Magi (“wise men” or “kings”)<sup>1</sup> is closely associated with Epiphany. In fact, many cultures celebrate Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> as “Three Kings Day”.<sup>2</sup> The visit of the Magi is a firstfruits of the harvest of the nations. They are the first of many Gentiles who will see the light of God’s glory and bow down before the King of kings (Ps. 72:11).

The season of Epiphany also focuses on other events early in the ministry of Jesus such as His presentation in the Temple, His baptism, His temptation, and His first miracle at Cana, all of which portray Jesus as the Messianic Servant who inaugurates God’s kingdom and manifests God’s glory in the world as a light to the nations. In some traditions the season of Epiphany culminates in Transfiguration Sunday, which foreshadows the glory of Christ that will be revealed following His death, resurrection, and exaltation.

Just as the Spirit-anointed Jesus proclaimed the coming of God’s kingdom and revealed the glory of God as the Savior of the nations, so too the Church is baptized, anointed, and sent as a light to the nations. As His body, our mission in the world is an extension of the ministry of Jesus Himself. Jesus shines the light of God on His people so that they reflect God’s glory and become the light of the world.

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<sup>1</sup> The Magi (from the Persian word “great”) of Daniel’s day (Dan. 2) were most likely priests of some sort who were experts in astronomy. The conversion of Nebuchadnezzar and his court gives us every reason to believe that the Magi became God-fearing Gentiles. Zoroaster was born into this priestly caste and probably adopted the faith taught by Daniel & Co. Although the Zoroastrians opposed sorcery, their skill in astrology was later associated with occult practices and is the origin of the English word “magic”.

<sup>2</sup> The inference that there were three Magi is based on the fact that three gifts are mentioned in Matt. 2.