

Epiphany: A Gift Fit for A King

Introduction:

People of God, Epiphany marks the revelation of God's salvation in Christ to the nations. The story of the Magi is not merely an account of a remarkable journey, but a fulfillment of deep biblical patterns. These wise men from the East, traveling westward to find and worship Jesus, mirror the hope of humanity's return to God's presence—a return to the fellowship lost long ago in Eden. Their journey points us back to the Garden of God, where humanity once walked with the Creator.

The Magi's pilgrimage also prefigures the ingathering of the nations into Christ's kingdom, a key theme throughout Scripture. In their westward movement, the gifts they bring, and the worship they offer, we find a rich typology of God's plan to restore His people to Himself.

Let's examine their journey under three themes: the westward return, the gifts they bring, and the act of worship they offer.

1. The Westward Return: Humanity's Path Back to God

When Adam and Eve sinned, they were exiled from the Garden, sent eastward away from the presence of God

(Genesis 3:24). Cain likewise was sent further eastward to dwell in the land of Nod – the land of Wandering. From that moment, eastward movement symbolized separation from God, and in contrast, returning westward symbolized the journey back into His presence.

This theme is woven throughout the Old Testament. Abraham was in the East of Ur of the Chaldees, and he was told to go West to the land of promise. Later on, when Israel came out of Egypt, God had them enter in from the east across the Jordan into the land. The entrance to the tabernacle and the temple both faced east, signifying that to approach God, one must move westward—a symbolic return to Eden.

The Magi's journey from the East to Bethlehem reflects this larger narrative. Their travel westward represents the nations beginning their journey back to God through Christ, the true King who restores what was lost in Adam. In this, we see also the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham—that all nations would be blessed through his seed (Genesis 12:3). The long-awaited restoration has begun, and the Magi are the first fruits of this cosmic return.

Application: Like the Magi, we are all on a journey toward God's presence. Our lives had been theologically east of

Eden, wandering with Cain and marked by separation from God due to sin. But Christ calls us to return to Him.

This Epiphany pilgrimage is not a mere physical movement; it is a call to spiritual journey. Are we returning to Christ with intentionality, as the Magi did, or are we content to remain in exile, far from God's presence?

Faith requires us to take intentional steps westward—to experience the light and glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ through deep prayer and meditation with God in the Scriptures, and through loving the brethren, and by providing help for those who are still wandering in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

2. The Gifts: Honoring Christ with Our Best

The gifts brought by the Magi—gold, frankincense, and myrrh symbolized a specific truth about who Christ is.

- **Gold** is a gift for a king, signifying Christ's cosmic rule.
- **Frankincense**, used in temple worship, represents Christ's role as our High Priest, who mediates between God and man.

- **Myrrh**, a spice used for burial, foreshadows Christ's sacrificial death for our redemption.

When the Magi brought these gifts to Christ it signified the wealth of the nations being brought to the King and God of Israel. This truth was first hinted at in Genesis 2.

In the Garden of Eden, God established man as His priest-king, calling him to exercise dominion over the earth, cultivate it, and bring its treasures back to the Garden Sanctuary for God's glory. The river flowing out of Eden into the lands of Havilah and Cush, rich in gold, bdellium, and onyx (Gen. 2:10-12), symbolizes this mission of gathering the earth's wealth for the beautification of God's house—a mission the Magi fulfilled when they traveled westward to offer their treasures to the Christ-child.

Coming from the lands “downstream,” the Magi's journey represents mankind's purpose of laboring in the world and offering the fruit of that labor to God. Their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh symbolized the wealth of the nations, pointing forward to the prophetic vision in Revelation 21:24-26, where the glory and honor of the kings of the earth are brought into the New Jerusalem.

Thus, the Magi's offering not only honors Christ as God and King and sacrifice, but were also the first-fruits of the

final fulfillment of man's dominion mandate, when the wealth and riches of whole earth will be gathered into the glorified city of God, where Christ reigns supreme.

This truth was also revealed when the Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon in 1 Kings 10. She brought gifts of gold, spices, and precious stones, symbolizing the wealth of the nations being offered to God and King of Israel. Solomon's reign foreshadowed the time when the nations would come into the glory of God's kingdom by paying homage to Israel's God through the King.

Psalm 72, written about Solomon, expands this vision:

*"May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute,
may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts!
May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!"* (Psalm 72:10-11)

Epiphany fulfills this psalm in a far greater sense. While Solomon's wisdom and reign foreshadowed the coming of God's kingdom, Christ's birth ushers in its reality. The Magi, bringing their gifts and worship, fulfill this prophetic vision of Psalm 72. They demonstrate that the greater Solomon has come, and His reign extends over all nations.

Isaiah 60 echoes this hope:

"Arise, shine, for your light has come,

*and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your rising.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall bring good news, the praises of the Lord.” (Isaiah 60:1-3, 6)*

In Matthew 2, the Magi’s journey is the tangible fulfillment of these prophecies. They come to worship the true King, bringing gold and frankincense, foretold in Solomon and Isaiah, and in fulfillment of man’s destiny from the beginning of creation.

Application: What, then, are we offering to Christ? What gifts are you giving Him to glorify Him? The most valuable gift we can give to honor Christ as God and King and sacrifice, is to give Him our heart—our full devotion to Him. A few tangible ways we can do that are by giving Him the best of our time, talents, and resources.

- **Time:** Do we offer God the firstfruits of our day, or does He only get what’s left over after we’ve attended to our own concerns first? If even that.
- **Talents:** Each of us has been gifted in unique ways. Are we using our abilities to glorify Christ and serve His kingdom, or are we burying them in

pursuit of worldly ambitions? Or are we hiding them in the ground because we didn't think we had anything worth offering back to God?

- **Resources:** The Magi gave physical treasures. Are we generous in supporting the work of the Church and helping those in need, or do we hold back, thinking our wealth is ours alone? Giving is a tangible expression of our worship. Just as the Magi honored Christ with costly gifts, we, too, are called to honor Him with lives marked by generosity and self-sacrifice. Consider giving to the Deacons fund to help support others in need.
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3. Worship: Entering God's New Creation

The Magi's journey culminates not in giving their gifts, but in their worship. Upon seeing Jesus, they "fell down and worshiped him" (Matthew 2:11). When the Magi worshiped Christ, they returned to the presence of God in the Garden of Eden, where they communed with the God of Heaven and Earth.

Similarly, when we gather for worship, we are entering to God's Holy Garden, where heaven and earth meet, where Christ, the Lord of glory, receives the worship of His

people. Here we experience our participation in the fulfillment of God's redemptive mission to save the world by bringing us into His glorious presence.

As we worship, we remember our connection to something larger than ourselves. Let us therefore, worship Christ our King on this Epiphany with joy and reverence, anticipating the day when all nations will honor Him and bring the treasures of their lives and praise, just as the Magi did.

Conclusion:

The journey of the Magi is a theologically rich story of humanity's return to God through Christ. Their westward travel represents the nations coming back into the presence of God. Their gifts proclaim the glory of Christ's kingdom, and their worship points us to our ultimate purpose: life in communion with God.

As we celebrate Epiphany, may we, like the Magi, set our hearts on seeking Christ, offer Him our best gifts, and bow in worship before the King who restores us to His own light and glory. Amen.