

The Star of Christ!

Matthew 2:1-12

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Do you agree? God created all things, and such a marvelous creator can act miraculously, parting and reuniting the Red Sea, moving a shadow backwards 10 steps, making a virgin give birth. Do you believe that God can make a light appear to astute men who study the night skies for meaning? Do you believe in the star of Christ?

The Bible tells us nothing about the Magi that followed the star. We don't know their number, identity or faith-system that identified the star with a Jewish king. The Bible says that Magi traveled to Jerusalem seeking to meet and worship "the one born King of the Jews" because they saw his star. After learning about Bethlehem from a biblical prophecy, they set out for the birthplace of Christ. The star reappeared and moved until it stopped over the home of baby Jesus. The wise men bowed down and worshiped the child, presenting him with gifts.

God used a star and a prophecy to lead wise men from a distance to meet and see a baby. They were not led to another religion. They were not led to another philosophy. They were led to a person and to a relationship with that person.

Christianity is not about a set of rules, traditions or practices. It is not about dogma or teaching. It is all about meeting a person. It is all about meeting the Anointed One of God.

The wise men honored Jesus with gifts as a king. What more could you do with a child? Jesus is not a child now. What do we do with him? Do we demand things from him? Do we ignore his commands?

I commend you for coming to worship Jesus today. I commend you for joining others in singing his praise, and bringing gifts as you are able. However, in the end, what really matters is that we know Jesus and that he knows us. What matters is that we come to him, so that in no way could he ever speak to us, “I never knew you.” He knows us because we relate to him as our divinely-given king.

We do that when we receive his message and him in repentance and faith. If he says, we are forgiven, we believe it. If he says forgive, we do it. We surrender our right to direct ourselves because he is king!

We do that in sports. Quarterbacks Brett Favre, Tom Brady and Peyton Manning do not direct themselves although they lead their teams. Each of these leaders submits to their coaches and the regimen they prescribe. They each are changed and formed by that relationship. Similarly, the Magi recognized and related to Jesus as king. Is that true for you?

You probably were not brought by a star to the Christ, but did somebody have an effect on you? Would you take a moment and write in the space provided on the sermon insert the name of one person who was like that star for you? Let’s take a moment and give thanks.

PRAYER

Do you know why that person was a star to you? Can you think of what they did and said that affected you? When I went to South Dakota State University, I lived in a dorm. One semester I got a new roommate that sauntered into our room drunk. Frequently, he was red-faced and his eyes were bloodshot. I decided not to confront him as long as I did not have to clean up after him. Instead, I just determined to be his friend. I can’t remember that we did a great deal together; however, every day, he would wake to see me reading my Bible and praying. I didn’t talk about it. I just did it. Soon he stopped walking in drunk. One morning, there he was...

reading a Bible. That kept up morning after morning. He soon identified himself as a believer and follower of Jesus, and he began to act like it.

Turn with me to Philippians 2:14-16. You'll find it on page 913 of the Pew Bible. I will read this in the New International Version.

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life. (Philippians 2:15-16, NIV)

The Bible teaches that we live in a crooked and depraved generation. That means the people we live around lack sound judgment and don't do the pure thing. Consequently, we all experience a great deal of social, emotional and even physical pain. We are to shine like stars in this darkened universe. We're to live as stars of Christ that guide our brothers and sisters, our neighbors and associates to their king. It was the star and a word of prophecy that brought the Magi to Jesus. Stars and the word of life are to lead our families and communities to the king.

Stars result from fusing together light elements like hydrogen. There is tremendous energy released when one light element is fused with another. The most destructive bomb on earth is not a fission bomb where you split an atom. It is a hydrogen bomb, which relies upon fusing hydrogen atoms together. If heavy elements, like iron or zinc, are fused, that action absorbs rather than releases energy. A star that fuses heavy elements neither burns brightly nor lasts long.

The Bible teaches that when we repent before Jesus and receive him as our Savior King, we are fused with him through the Spirit. This bond created through repentance and faith results in forgiveness and love. Energetic love is released from this fusion. We and others are warmed by it. It also becomes a guide for others. When we walk with Jesus and one another in love, tremendous energy is produced in our relationships. When we choose to give thanks, sing,

encourage and forgive, we fuse with the Spirit of Jesus and experience a renewal in the love of God. This is like fusion of light elements that release great energy. We shine in the dark world around us. We shine in our workplace. We shine in the grocery store. We shine in our neighborhoods. As we share the word of life, some people understand and come meet their savior. However, when we complain and argue, we grieve the Spirit, douse his fire and dim what is a sign, what is a signal that salvation has come. The star of Christ goes missing and the word of life leaves people confused.

Individually, each of us can shine as stars of Christ as we fuse with the Spirit of Jesus through acts of repentance and faith. Collectively we can shine even brighter. God brought you to visit or be part of the Bethany family so that this amazing fusion with Jesus would occur. You are to interact with the Bethany family, in good times and rough times, receiving encouragement and correction so that the heavy elements like pride, self-reliance, fear, selfishness, bitterness, greed, lust, and unbelief may no longer separate you from Jesus and his plan for your life.

The Bible calls us in verses 12 and 13 of Philippians 2:

Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (Philippians 2:12-13, NIV)

We must cooperate with Jesus' saving work so that what we want and do honors God. The way we treat each other, deal with concerns and handle disagreements must express our fusion with Jesus through the Spirit. If we speak evil of anyone, we frustrate our king.

When I began today, I asked if you believe that God could make a light appear to astute men so that they would come a great distance to meet the Christ. Now I ask, "Do you believe God can make you the star of Christ for others?" Are you ready to walk in repentance and faith and hold out the word of life?