

## Epiphany 2026

**Isaiah 60:1-6, Psalm. 71, Ephesians 3:2 – 3.5-6, Matt 2:1-12**

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A star  
Wise men from the East  
An ancient Hebrew prophecy  
A child  
An evil king  
Gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh  
An angel in a dream warning of danger

These are the key components of Epiphany, a word which means 'manifestation' or 'realisation'. For Christians the story is a sign that God came into the world not just for his chosen people, the Jews, but for all peoples, both Jew and Gentile. Gentile means all those who do not know the true and living God.

It is also a story that has been the source of much enquiry as to historical exactitude: what was the star really? Was it a meteor? Was it the conjunction of the planets Mars, Jupiter and Saturn?<sup>1</sup> Who were the wise men? Were they worshippers of Zoroaster and astrologers from Babylon or Ethiopia. When did we identify there being three of them, and what is the source of those familiar names: Caspar, Balthasar, and Melchior?

All this is of value because it paints us a picture as to how God draws people to himself: through nature, through their own religious beliefs and through knowledge, as well as through vision and direct

experiences. But it also has a much more straight-forward narrative which we could be in danger of losing if we come enmeshed in 'fact-finding'. The story of Epiphany is foremost about responding to God, which makes it a story of Good and Evil.

Put simply: all people - all of us - are in a process of opening up or closing down to God. As we get closer to God the gravity of attraction becomes stronger, as we get further away the more we feel repulsed by God. Only when we are dead is it finally resolved that we are entirely open or entirely closed to God. The choices that we have made along our path of life dictate whether we choose heaven or hell as our final home.

The wise men are open to God although they do not yet know Him. They use their knowledge and their material gifts to go and see 'the infant King'. They are not in love with knowledge for its own sake, they use knowledge to gain wisdom. The two are not the same. When they meet Jesus, they recognise who they see, and they give their gifts. Their gifts are laden with meaning: Frankincense for God, Myrrh for the dead and sorrow, and Gold for a king. But we should not be so mesmerised by the gifts that we miss the giving. The wisemen reveal the type of people they are by the opening of their hands and letting go of what they possess. They reveal who they are by listening to the angle because they do not wish harm to befall the child. They reveal who they are by leaving their kingdom of comfort and going out to meet the one who is calling to them. This is love. This is God's domain.

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<sup>1</sup> in the year 6 or 7 BC which is the most likely the true year of birth of our Lord

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Herod is closed to God, although he does know him. Herod is a vicious and tyrannical king, driven by fear and greed. His hands are closed around what he wants and he assumes that because he wants it all others do as well. He would rather kill God than see God. Or let God see him. There will be others like him. Herod is pretty much already dead. He has been bled to death by his sins and his hatred of the good. His only gift is evil because that is all he can hold, that is to say he offers 'nothing'. This is the devil's domain.

We are called to walk with the Wise men to the Child and to see Him. We have a tremendous advantage over the uncertainty of the wisemen, in that we know who the Child really is. We also know that he is offering us a gift, that we have nothing to offer him except to accept it. That should fill us with a desire to give thanks and glory. But we do need to be aware of Herod. He is real and he is waiting in our path. We need to protect and honour the child. We need to carry him safely in our hearts and in our arms. We need to avoid Herod and not return to him. It is a simpler choice than we often make out. Together, over the coming year, we will let the Epiphany of the Lord reveal who we are becoming.