

Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. 'Where is the infant king of the Jews?' they asked. 'We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.' When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 'At Bethlehem in Judaea', they told him 'for this is what the prophet wrote:

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
you are by no means least among the leaders
of Judah,
for out of you will come a leader
who will shepherd my people Israel.'

Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared, and sent them on to Bethlehem. 'Go and find out all about the child,' he said 'and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.' Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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DAWN OF A NEW ERA

In the midst of the tribulation of the exile, Isaiah had a vision of the birth of a new time when the nations would no longer be enemies of God's chosen people but would even assist in bringing them back from exile in Babylon. Recognising the God of Israel and expressing their praise by means of treasures offered in tribute, all peoples would now worship the living God.

As the Gentiles responded to the preaching of Paul and others, they knew that the vision of Isaiah was becoming a reality as former enemies were now united by their faith in Jesus. The dividing wall of hostility had been broken down through the death of Jesus (Ephesians 2:14) and a new human family was being born where the Gentiles and Jews were all members of the one body.

Matthew wrote his Gospel sometime after Paul's letter to the Ephesians but shared in the same vision of Isaiah and Paul. He knew that the birth of Jesus meant not only the dawn of the time of the Messiah but also the dawn of a new humanity where Jews and Gentiles would be united in their belief. The Magi were the first of many Gentiles who would come to see Jesus as their Saviour, their King, and their Lord. As they worshipped before Jesus, Isaiah's vision and dream had become a reality, one that is still in the process of being fulfilled.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Isa 60:1-6

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The glory of the Lord shines upon you.

Arise, shine out Jerusalem, for your light has come, the glory of the Lord is rising on you, though night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples. Above you the Lord now rises and above you his glory appears. The nations come to your light and kings to your dawning brightness. Lift up your eyes and look round: all are assembling and coming towards you, your sons from far away and daughters being tenderly carried. At this sight you will grow radiant, your heart throbbing and full; since the riches of the sea will flow to you; the wealth of the nations come to you; camels in throngs will cover you, and dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; everyone in Sheba will come, bringing gold and incense and singing the praise of the Lord.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 71:1-2, 7-13

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

1. O God, give your judgement to the king,/to a king's son your justice,/that he may judge your people in justice/and your poor in right judgement. **R.**
2. In his days justice shall flourish/and peace till the moon fails./He shall rule from sea to sea,/from the Great River to earth's bounds. **R.**
3. The kings of Tarshish and the sea coasts/shall pay him tribute./The kings of Sheba and Seba/shall bring him gifts./Before him all kings shall fall prostrate,/all nations shall serve him. **R.**
4. For he shall save the poor when they cry/and the needy who are helpless./He will have pity on the weak/and save the lives of the poor. **R.**



SECOND READING

Eph 3:2-3, 5-6

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

The revelation means that pagans now share the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body.

You have probably heard how I have been entrusted by God with the grace he meant for you, and that it was by a revelation that I was given the knowledge of the mystery. This mystery that has now been revealed through the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets was unknown to any men in past generations; it means that pagans now share the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body, and that the same promise has been made to them, in Christ Jesus, through the gospel.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Mt 2:2

Alleluia, alleluia! We have seen his star in the East; and have come to adore the Lord. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 2:1-12

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

We have come from the East to worship the King.

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in