

## The Epiphany of Our Lord

Isaiah 60:1-6

Jesus arrived in this world for all of the peoples in the world. He wasn't just the Savior of the Jews or even just of the peoples of the vast Roman empire. Isaiah says that peoples from all over the world would come to God's Light. God announced the birth of the Savior in the heavens themselves, so that even those who did not know Him (the magi for instance) could know that God was interceding in the world.

Isaiah lived in the partial darkness of unfulfilled prophecy. He would not see the Light in Bethlehem as the Magi would (Matt. 2). Isaiah didn't know that John would write of the Light of the World in his gospel. What Isaiah did know was that God was impressing upon him that the promises of God were unbreakable. God had promised that He would be the salvation of His people and that His people would be restored to Him. Through faith Isaiah knew that all of this would come to pass. Isaiah's faith resulted in an unquenchable desire to tell the people the good news that God's light would intervene and that all the world would know and come to Him.

Is our faith today reflected in our actions and words as was Isaiah's? We live on the other side of the Cross from Isaiah and sometimes it seems that we take it for granted that Jesus is our Savior. Really, it's no big deal—right? That is the message that we often send to those around us. Jesus is right for us, but He's not right for everybody, or that's how it seems to others.

Isaiah had a hunger to tell the good news of God. Unbelievers have a hunger to hear the good news of God, though it may not seem like it at times. Isaiah had the same scoffers. People laughed at him for what he preached, but he knew it was worth all of the frustration and trouble, just to tell people about God and His love.



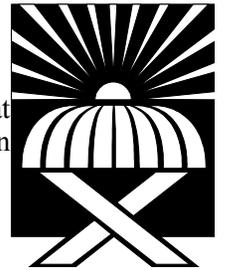
**Join a Bible study and learn more about Isaiah and his faith!**

*(A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee)*

## The Epiphany of Our Lord

Isaiah 60:1-6

1. The call of the day of Epiphany (and season of Epiphany) is summarized in vs. 1. What is Isaiah's call to God's people of long ago and today?
2. What is the "darkness" (vs. 2) that covers the earth? How do we see that darkness in our world? In our own personal lives?
3. Who is the "light" that has come? What does that light mean to our world? What does the light mean to you personally?
4. How do we see the fulfillment of these Old Testament words in today's Gospel lesson (Matthew 2:1-12)? Find as many connections as possible between the two texts.
5. Today begins the Epiphany season of the church year. What is the theme of the season? What is the color of the season? How long does it last?
6. Epiphany is a time of witness and outreach. Do the words of vs. 5 describe you? How can your Epiphany light shine to others?



## **Epiphany of Our Lord**

Matthew 2:1-12

The Magi were not Jews, nor were they believers in God. They were educated men who rejoiced at seeing a long-prophesied star, came to find the new King of the Jews, and worshiped Him.

Herod presented himself as a Jew, ruled the Jews, and yet saw the birth of a new King only as a threat to his own power.

How do we greet the birth of the Son of God? How do we act as we approach His person? Are we like the Magi, seeking the King with joy and anticipation? Or, are we like Herod, fearing that He will somehow come in power to rule our lives and threaten our own rule?

I was once in a Bible study in which the group was talking about letting Jesus rule in their lives. One member voiced an honest personal opinion. She did not care to turn all of her life over to Jesus. She said that she would rather rule her own life than trust someone else with it, and she felt that she was doing a pretty good job. She had a typical problem that affects most Christians in one way or another. We love the idea that our lives with God will go on eternally; that Jesus died for our sin so that we can one day see Him in person and live in joy with fellow believers. On the other hand, we would really rather not give Him much authority in our lives today.

When confirmation class is over and the big “graduation” day is done, many of our youth leave their churches. Many return, but only as they finally learn that maybe they aren’t as able to be in charge of who and what they are each day as they believed.

Why do we drift from the truth that God should be our Master every day; that He should have input in our decision making? We have all seen it happen in our own families—our kids learn at an early age that they are responsible for their own decisions; in charge of their lives; able to do whatever they choose; and wise if they make their own choices in life without the input even of parents.

We look at the mad King Herod and are offended at the thirst for power that would lead to the deaths of the innocents in Bethlehem. But, what message do we send to the child Jesus that the Magi worshiped? Do we also tell Him that our own power is just too valuable to lose?

Grow in your trust of Jesus in a family Bible study!

*A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee*

## **Epiphany of Our Lord**

Matthew 2:1-12

1. What does this text tell us about King Herod? Did Herod really want to “go and worship him” (vs. 8)? Using the Concordia Self-study Bible or another commentary find out more about this ruthless king.
2. What does this text tell us about the Magi? From where did they come? Why did they come? What gifts did they bring? How many visited Jesus?
3. Nativity scenes frequently show the Magi at the manger. Did they visit the Savior in the stable? What factual information do we have in this text?

### **For Family Reflection**

4. The Magi brought gifts to Jesus. What gifts do we have to bring Jesus?
5. The Epiphany is sometimes called “The Christmas of the gentiles.” How does this story emphasize that Jesus came for all people? Why is this good news for us?
6. Today marks the conclusion of the Christmas season and the beginning of the Epiphany season. Share a special memory of your Christmas celebration this year. Offer a special family prayer asking that the Light of Epiphany shine in your home and in your church.