



The Epiphany, or the Manifestation of Christ
to the Gentiles.

[January 6.]

The Collect.

O GOD, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; Mercifully grant that we, who know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¶ This Collect is to be said daily throughout the Octave

NOW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, **2** Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. **3** When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. **5** And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, **6** And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. **7** Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. **8** And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. **9** When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. **10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. **11** And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. **12** And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. (Matt 2:1-12)

Monday was Epiphany at which time we observe the Lord's introduction to the Gentile peoples. It represents the beginning of our own coming, as former Gentiles, into the inheritance of Israel through that Seed of Promise made known in Abraham and all of faith since his time. We were once, as the Wise Men were, a people afar off from the promises of God in Israel, but a great Light has appeared unto those of us who sat in darkness, and we have followed that Great beam of Light from God's Light House to Christ.

I have been following that Star which lighted the path of the Wise Men from the first moment that it appeared to me. It is the Bright and Morning Star of my, and your, salvation. There have been times in my life, just as did the wise Men, that I detoured from following that constant Light and wound up in Jerusalem, or the city made with hands, instead of following the constant Star to Christ. The false lights of the city will often distract us, for they appear bright and many. We mistakenly suppose that Christ will always be found in the seat of great worldly power; but we err greatly in that supposition. He is more likely to be found along the road to Damascus, or along the path leading to Jericho, or along the quiet, still waters of Galilee. The great multitudes do not seek Christ and His Light among humble shepherds on the dark slopes of little Bethlehem; or in the rude, wooden frame of a manger for cattle. Most will not seek Him in the lonely little Mount of Olives, the Gethsemane Garden, nor even at Calvary. They seek Him, as at first the Wise Men sought Him, in the palace and lights of Jerusalem – the center of power! Though we may be wise, God is always the wiser. If we will disregard our own frail, human reason and follow that Light which God provides, we shall never go astray.

It is interesting to note in our text today that the Wise Men had followed the glorious Star, which they had seen hundreds of miles away, to Palestine. As they drew nearer, they disregarded the Light of the Star and began to lean upon their own understanding. They reckoned that the King of Israel should be born in the King's Palace at Jerusalem, - but they were wrong. Their wisdom was interrupted by a moment of foolish self-reason. Once they departed the gates and false lights of Jerusalem, they saw the Star again and were glad. It happens sometimes that, as we undertake to serve God with open mind and heart, we begin, as the Wise Men, to follow the Light of Christ. But as our labors grow constantly more fruitful in building a work for the Lord, we are distracted by some false and cheaply glittering worldly light. It may be that our ambitions for a church of great size has blinded us to the purity of truth and worship upon which we at first embarked in our labors. BIG is always better, isn't it? NO – a resounding NO! It is NOT always better. Witness the millions who follow the false prattle of Joel Osteen and his ilk in our day! If the foundation is build well and measures four-square, so shall the structure which is built upon it. Our foundation in the Church is Jesus Christ and His Word.

It is a curious thing to note that *When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.* I am less surprised at the troubling effect the birth of Jesus had on Herod than I am to see that **ALL JERRUSALEM** as well were troubled. It is not surprising that governments despise Christ because His government is perceived by them to usurp their own power. But the government of God can only bolster and secure the rightful powers of government. It is the greed for power, and more power always, of men that cause their hatred of Christ. But all of those who surround the king were also bewildered at the news of the birth of Jesus. It is true today that the government wishes to extinguish the Star of Christ from the minds of men; and it is also true that the great merchants and commercial interests likewise wish to be complicit with what they ignorantly consider to be the greater power. As long as the merchants make Caesar happy, they are free to trade in lewd pornography, prostitution, homosexuality, drugs, and every other evil influence imaginable in the minds of men.

Let us examine the possible cause for all of Jerusalem being troubled at the news of Christ's birth:

1. There was nothing of the nature of alarm in the news. There was a baby born whom the Wise Men simply came to worship. There was no armed military at His command – He was but a baby! Herod was a ruthless king. Why would the inhabitants of Jerusalem not have been overjoyed that a king, as innocent as a baby, were exalted to some political throne over them?
2. The news was of a wonderful nature – it was GOOD NEWS! Do not men usually celebrate the birth of a pretender to the throne?
3. The news was such as had been prophesied by the prophets. Even the Scribes and Jewish leaders knew of it; yet, they sided with Herod. It was the elders of the Jews that informed Herod, at his inquiry, as to where the Child should be born – Bethlehem!

Christ came to Bethlehem, and mighty Jerusalem was troubled by it without cause. Christ came to Asia Minor, to Rome, to Spain, to Europe and England – and they were troubled by His coming. He came into MY heart, and I was, at first, so troubled that I could scarcely rest until I had discovered that He would abide in my heart. It is also quite profound to learn that not everyone sees that Light of the Star that was so visible to the Wise Men, just as has all others who have met the Bright and Morning Star. If the eye is not trained to see the value of a ruby, a diamond, or an emerald, it will easily be deceived by the false stone made of dough. If the eye is full of Light, then the whole body shall be full of light. But if the eye is darkened, the whole body will be full of darkness and oblivious to the resplendent Light without!

Man will not foil God's purpose. Herod desired to destroy even a Baby who was rumored to be King. So the wise Men were warned of God not to return to Herod with the news of their discovery. They departed "*another way.*" Notice that they came to Bethlehem by way of the manmade city – Jerusalem; but once you have come to Christ, your life will continue on "*another way.*" No longer will you be drawn to seats of worldly power and commerce, but by another way governments and men do not understand – and they cannot follow. Consider how blessed you are by this wonderful fact!