

Epiphany – The Mystery Revealed! [Ephesians 3: 1-12](#), [Matthew 2: 1-12](#)

When writing a story to pique the reader's interest, the usual instructions to aspiring authors of all ages are to remember the four Ws: who, what, where and when.

By this token, Matthew's Gospel appears to offer us a very sketchy tale. We don't know even know how many men there were, let alone what their names were, or even much about where they were from beyond a general direction: "from the east." We presume they made their journey on camels.

It's a mystery! Wise men: were they ancient scientists? Astronomers? Were they from some kind of ancient fellowship, a first-century Royal Society, or were they a loose group of individuals, who happened to discover more by chance that each had had the same inkling about a strange star in the sky? What was it that motivated them to go and worship the King of the Jews?

They must have been people who were used to unlocking secrets. They must have been particularly determined to discover this King of the Jews. They were motivated to get up and travel a long and dangerous distance, not really knowing quite what they would discover when they reached their destination – wherever that turned out to be – just relying on a vision of a star which had set them on their course.

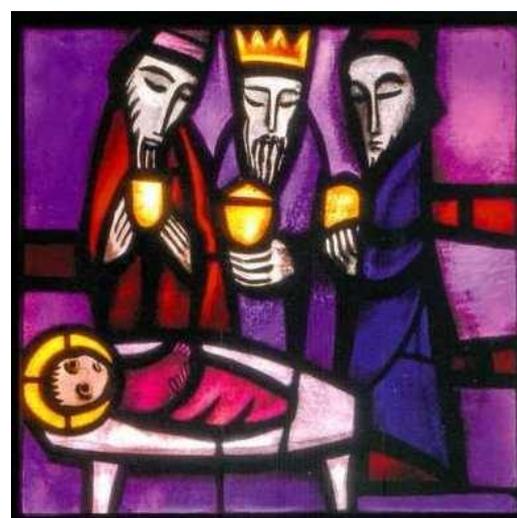
The short stop-off at Herod's palace in Jerusalem is something of a red herring in the tale. There is an affirmation of their vision through the words of the prophet Micah, written some seven hundred years earlier:

“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

These visitors are unfamiliar with these words; their insight comes to them from another source. Their expectations led them the wrong way. The wise men have relied on their own assumptions of where a King would live, and do not look so very wise at this point at all.

Yet, urging them on to their true destination, the star reappears in the heavens. There is an urgency in the story, hurrying them on to Bethlehem. The star stops its course over the place where Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus are staying, just to ensure that the wise men know that their quest is indeed complete.

It is at this point that the mystery is revealed. The epiphany, the shining lightbulb moment of, “Oh yes!” as the King is revealed. The King, made manifest, present before them in a humble building. The King in all his glory is a young child, with his mother beside him, caring for his every need.



The wise men do not query this moment of revelation. They can only look on in wonder and adoration, offering their gifts, rich, rare and fit for a King.

The wise men did not stay frozen, kneeling in wonder at the Christ-child like a beautiful Renaissance painting. Their minds and hearts were filled with a new energy and wisdom, which could not be held captivated and captive at the feet of a child.

They have solved the mystery. They have made a new discovery. They return to their own land by a new route. Nothing will ever be the same again.

But this isn't the end of the story. These wise men were from the east, not part of the Jewish faith. They show that Jesus Christ is revealed to people of all nations, if they seek him. They took a different route home, both to avoid a dangerous encounter with Herod's hit-men, but also in a symbolic way. Their new way home took their story of the Christ-child into new places, to different audiences.

The story of the wise men has meant that countless people have heard the story of this wonderful King, in whose presence all the mysteries of the universe are revealed.

How many countless people over continents and thousands of years have found that new way to kneel in wonder and adoration at the King, born not in a fine palace but a simple building in a village most would sneer at?

The wise men's story has no end: if we have found ourselves drawn to the side of the Christ-child by what we have heard, whether it is for the first time or the thousandth, we too are part of their story. We are part of the unfolding revelation of Christ's majesty.

Our next part in the story is how we might take that new road home ourselves, and tell others of what we have seen and heard.

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