



**HAPPY
EPIPHANY!**

This week's Revd. Morris' message: **Can we become 'Star Witnesses' in 2025?**

Today's Gospel, featuring the worship of Jesus by the Wise Men, is **jam packed** with mystic meanings and metaphors that would be all too easy to miss for us modern Westerners but would have been strongly resonate for its' first century Jewish audience. Here

are some of the allusions highlighted by Biblical Scholars:

1. The **'Wise Men from the East'** were probably nobles who were Counsellors and Advisers to an Eastern potentate [similar to the Privy Counsel in medieval England]. However, these advisers in addition to their wisdom and insight also were thought to possess unique abilities to foresee the future [e.g. by access to Divine insights, magic, dream interpretation, astrology, or the like e.g. see the reference to the King's Wise Men in Daniel chapter 2] So, it is probable that they travelled lavishly and with a large entourage of attendants and guards. Note that in v.3 'all Jerusalem' knew that they had arrived and were troubled. No one wanted to upset or offend such important emissaries!
2. Further, **why did God pick these to be amongst Jesus' first worshippers?** Their probable occult practices were prohibited by Jewish law [see Deuteronomy 18:9- 14]. Yet, there were many prophecies that the Messiah would be worshipped by Gentile Kings who would shower him with their treasures including Gold and Incense [e.g. see Psalm 70:10 and Isaiah 60]. Perhaps, like the selection of the lower class Shepards, God delights in honouring those outsiders who the powerful ones would consider 'least likely' outcasts to be chosen to witness the coming of the Messiah in their midst?
3. **Herod and his wise men knew where the Messiah was to be born** - but, unlike the Wise Men, they didn't go there. They may have been 'wise', but their main job was to be looking for the coming of their Messiah and they missed it! Herod's and their fake worship and enthusiasm is contrasted with the faith and belief of these exotic foreigners.
4. Notice that the Wise Men in verse 2 call Jesus the title that ultimately was also placed upon the Cross- **'The King of the Jews'**.
5. The unexpected appearance of a 'Star' [or more accurately translated from the Greek 'Astronomical phenomena'] was considered by many first century Jewish Scholars to have been foretold in **Numbers 24:17 as a reference to a heavenly sign announcing the coming of the Messiah** ['a Star shall come out of Jacob ..'] By the way, some scholars believe that the 'Star' could have been more of an Astrological alignment [see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_of_Bethlehem] Further, the Greek expression for 'the East' literally includes the concept of 'from the dawn' and thus engaging the notion of the bursting forth of light and the Glory of the Lord [hence the angel's announcement in

Luke 1:78- 79 mirroring the prophecy in Isaiah 60:1+2]

6. **'Epiphany' literally means 'manifestation', 'revelation' or 'appearance'** [often associated with the appearance of a Deity or Divine insight.] Thus, the worship of the Wise Men foreshadowed that Jesus was to be not only the King of the Jews and Messiah but also the Saviour of the whole World - including Gentles. Thus, here at the beginning of Matthews Gospel we can see foreshadowed Great Commission to *'go therefore and make Disciples of all nations.....'* [Matthew 28:19.]

7. In Matthew, **Jesus is being presented as a second Moses** e.g. both were saved from the deadly wrath against infants of a tyrant and were also called out of Egypt [see Matthew 2:15; Hosea 11:1]



Well, what does this all mean for us today? *I wonder what Divine epiphanies may go past us unrecognised? Will we be like Herod's wise men and not recognise what is happening or will we be like the Wise Men of the East and seize the day? I wonder if we may discount an Epiphany that comes from an unexpected source? God seems to delight in using these. I wonder if God is calling us to be His 'Star Witnesses' and, like the Wise Men, not only recognise and worship Jesus but also go back amongst our own and witness to Jesus, His Salvation, His ways and pointing others to Him?*

Gospel reading: Matthew 2:1-12. Some resources to dig deeper: <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/epiphany-of-our-lord/commentary-on-matthew-21-12-5> ; <https://www.catholicireland.net/the-origins-and-spirituality-of-the-epiphany/>

Upcoming Parish Activities: Midweek service Wednesday 10:30 am. All regular parish activities are in recess.

Today's Notices Highlights: Video Training available; **Calendars** available \$20; **Behind the scenes thx:** Our Cleaning teams! **Readings for Next Sunday: Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 29; Acts 8: 14-17; Luke 3:15-22**

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Public Site: <https://www.facebook.com/StMatthewsHollandPark> ;

Tipper's Treasure's Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559040358754>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY:

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge their continued spiritual connection to country and surrounding land, sky and water. We pay our respect to their Elders, past present and emerging and pray that we may continue to learn from and nurture one another in the spirit of Reconciliation.

STOP PRESS RAFFLE RESULTS: **First prize [pick of Rangis bikes] - Tina and James;** **Second prize [Ruth and Tim's Pamper Pack] - Carol Matthews;** **Third Prize [Op Shop Christmas Hamper] - Imelda;** **Fourth Prize [Randal's Prosecco] - Dorothy.**

Thanks to our Prize Donors and to all those who bought tickets- we raised approx. \$500.00!