

Epiphany Sermon Series  
Following Christ's Call: A Journey of Transformation – Step Into the Light  
Matthew 2:1-11  
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The Star of Bethlehem: A Sign of Past, Present, and Future

During this past Advent season, we could have been exploring the prophecy of Isaiah, who described signs foretelling the dawning of God's New Creation in Jesus Christ. Isaiah's words paint a vision of a transformed world:

“The wolf will live with the lamb,  
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;  
The calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf together;  
and a little child will lead them.” (Isaiah 11:6)

“Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.  
Then the lame man will leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the mute will sing...” (Isaiah 35:5-6)

“Behold, the virgin will conceive and bear a son,  
and shall call his name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)

This morning, as we transition from Advent to the Epiphany season, I invite us to reflect on another sign—one that captured the attention of magi, startled a nation, and continues to inspire wonder: the Star of Bethlehem.

**A Sign that Stirs Debate and Awe**

The Star of Bethlehem has been the subject of much debate. Was it a nova, a supernova, a comet, or a rare planetary conjunction? Some suggest it's best understood metaphorically. Others turn to science, tracing celestial patterns to the year of Jesus' birth.

One fascinating theory comes from Johannes Kepler, a 16th-century mathematician and astronomer whose laws of planetary motion allow us to recreate the night sky at any point in history. Based on his findings, some believe that a series of extraordinary conjunctions occurred between Jupiter—the king planet—and Regulus—the king star—around the time of Jesus' birth. Together, these celestial bodies seemed to proclaim, “A King is born.”

Even the star's apparent "stopping" over Bethlehem can be explained by retrograde motion, a phenomenon that occurs as Earth's orbit changes our perspective of the stars. To the magi, these heavenly events were not coincidences but divine declarations.

Moved by the sign, the magi embarked on a journey, their camels bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They followed the star first to Jerusalem, then to Bethlehem, where they knelt before the Christ child. In their gifts and worship, we see their understanding: this child was no ordinary king but the Savior of the world.

### **God's Use of Signs in Scripture**

The Star of Bethlehem fits a pattern seen throughout Scripture, where God uses the natural world to reveal divine truths:

- The rainbow: A sign of God's covenant with Noah, promising never again to destroy the earth by flood (Genesis 9:9-17).
- The pillars of cloud and fire: Guiding the Israelites through the wilderness (Exodus 13:21).
- The sun standing still: Giving Joshua victory in battle (Joshua 10:12-13).
- The heavens themselves: Declaring God's glory, as the psalmist writes:

"The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1).

The Star of Bethlehem is one more example of God speaking through creation to announce something extraordinary: the birth of Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

### **The Star's Meaning for Us**

So, what does the Star of Bethlehem mean for us today?

#### **1. It Confirms the Past**

The star confirms that something extraordinary happened on that holy night. God stepped into our world, not as a distant deity but as Immanuel—God with us. In Jesus, we see the fullness of God's love, humility, and grace. As Martin Luther so beautifully wrote:

"This is the Christ, God's son most high,  
Who hears your sad and bitter cry;  
He will himself your Savior be,  
And from all sin will set you free."

#### **2. It Affirms the Present**

The star also reminds us that Christ's coming was not a one-time event. Jesus continues to live in the hearts of those who follow him. His light shines in our acts of love, service, and worship. Charles Wesley captured this beautifully:

“Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Sun of righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Risen with healing in His wings.”

### **3. It Reconfirms the Future**

Finally, the star points us forward. Just as Christ came as a child in Bethlehem, so he will come again in glory. God’s plan is not yet complete, but we can trust that he is working to reconcile all creation to himself.

“The kingdom of this world  
Is become the kingdom of our Lord,  
And of His Christ,  
And He shall reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 11:15)

### **An Invitation to Wonder**

Recently, you may have seen videos of choirs singing the “Hallelujah Chorus” in unexpected places—at shopping malls, food courts, and department stores. These performances catch people off guard, but as the music builds, you see astonishment give way to awe, and finally to worship. This is what the Star of Bethlehem does for us. It interrupts our ordinary lives with the extraordinary. It calls us to pause, reflect, and worship.

### **A Closing Charge**

As we pack away the ornaments and take down the tree, let the Star of Bethlehem linger in your heart. Let it remind you of God’s faithfulness in the past, his presence in the present, and his promises for the future.

The Star invites us to do more than simply admire its glow. It calls us to *step into the light*—to live as people transformed by the coming of Christ. Just as the magi followed the star to worship Jesus, we are invited to follow the light of Christ in our own lives, allowing it to guide us in faith, hope, and love.

John H. Hopkins, Jr., captured this spirit in his beloved hymn:

“Star of wonder, star of light,  
Star with royal beauty bright,  
Westward leading, still proceeding,  
Guide us to thy perfect light.”

Friends, as you step into the light of Christ, let his presence transform you. Let his love shine through you. And may the light of the Star of Bethlehem guide you in the year ahead, as you live in the joy, peace, and grace of our Savior—our King, our eternal light. Amen.