

**1“God’s Guidance”**  
**Sunday, January 4, 2009 - Epiphany**  
**Rev. Paul Johns**

Matthew 2:1-12

Question – How many Wise Men came to Bethlehem to pay homage to Jesus? We really don’t know. But our Gospel for today says that they presented three gifts.

Which now leads us to ask, And who were these people that the English Bible translates as “Wise Men?” In the Bible there is a footnote that says “astrologers.” The Greek word is “Magi.” The ancient Roman statesman by the name of Cicero says Magi were not opportunists who said, “Give me your sign and I will tell your future.” We don’t even know what is going to happen tomorrow. Rather they were persons seeking truth in all kinds of ways, including astronomy.

One of those astronomers was John Kepler. In 1604 he saw a phenomenal sight. The royal planets, Jupiter and Saturn, with Mars close by, had come together in the House of the Hebrews. Then he was able to calculate that this phenomenon happens every 805 years. If you add 805 plus 805 you have 1610. 1610 from 1604 means minus 6. Kepler was disappointed. Wasn’t Jesus born in 0? From history we know that the answer is no. King Herod died in 4 b.c.; 6 b.c. could be a logical date for the birth of Jesus.

One of those recent astronomers who has recently been studying that data is a Lutheran born in Latvia by the name of Karlis Kaufmanis. Dr. Kaufmanis believes that the truth of the heavens witnesses to the birth of Jesus. No one has been studied and analyzed like Jesus, and now even his birth story bears witness to his coming.

The Wise Men saw this happen and they said, “Let us go to the House of the Hebrews and find out what is happening.” They came to Jerusalem because that was the capital city. They asked, “Where is the royalty who has been born to the Jews?” King Herod was a total paranoid, but at least he had the good sense to call the scribes. They said, “The Scripture says, ‘He will be born in Bethlehem.’”

Then Herod tells the Wise Men, “Go to Bethlehem, and when you find him, come back and tell me that I too may go and worship him.” But the Wise Men were warned not to go back to Herod, because he wanted to kill this new king.

We are entering a new year. How can we be wise people? The Bible says wisdom and knowledge starts with seeking it. Seek wisdom, seek understanding. It may be like Dr. Kaufmanis in astronomy. Who would have guessed that we today have such evidence for the star which led the Wise Men of old?

First and foremost, however, seek wisdom by searching the Scripture. That same Scripture, which revealed that the King of Kings would be born in Bethlehem, can be a wonderful guide for us today. “A lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”

The other day a doctor was talking about new year’s resolutions. What is the number one resolution? Lose weight. This doctor suggested not just a vague thing like ‘lose weight,’ but set a goal – for example 15 pounds. Then set a plan to get there. The Wise Men had probably come from Persia. They had come a long way, and they had a plan to see the King of Kings and were successful.

This, however, also means that they were open to prayerful guidance not to go back to King Herod. And that was good. Some of you have mentioned the article on Herod in National Geographic. The Bible says he slaughtered all the baby boys. We, from history, know that Herod killed his own wife Marianne when he worried about her loyalty. Then he also killed the children born to himself and Marianne. He was certainly capable of doing what the Bible says he did. And the Wise Men were guided to avoid Herod.

God wants the very best for our lives, and God gives us the good guidance to get the very best.  
Amen