

A New Year's Epiphany?

Hello and welcome back to our new term, I hope that however you may have marked Christmas, you had a good time – but even though the holidays are over, Christmas isn't over yet, not in church terms anyway! That's because for the Church, the season of Christmas only starts on 25th December and it carries on right the way through until the end of January, so Merry Christmas! I know, it sounds weird now doesn't it?

So this week, we're reading the second part of the story of Christmas which is known in the church as the Feast of the Epiphany and I wonder if you know what an 'Epiphany' is? According to the Cambridge Dictionary, an epiphany is a moment when you suddenly feel you understand or become conscious of something that is very important to you. It can also be a way of describing having a powerful religious experience.

So, the reason we call this season Epiphany is because the bible tells us that the Magi, or Wise Men, had been on a very long journey, following the pattern they saw in the stars, as they tried to find out where Jesus, the Messiah had been born. The moment when they finally discovered where he was, they laid eyes on him and the bible says they, "were overwhelmed with joy" – they had a moment when they suddenly understood the reason for their journey, they understood that this child was someone incredibly important who would ultimately change the world, and they understood that he was very important to them and to their own journey of faith. It was for them a profound religious experience where they suddenly became conscious of something (and someone) who was very important to them.

I wonder if you've ever experienced a moment like that - one where you suddenly feel as though you understand something you've been struggling with or searching for the answer to, a moment when something just "clicks" for you, or otherwise described as having a "lightbulb moment"? If so, then you will have some idea what the Magi experienced in the moment when they finally met Jesus because that 'epiphany' made their long journey worthwhile and changed their lives forever.

So, this new term, I genuinely hope that at some point, you too have an epiphany where you suddenly understand something you've been struggling with, have some new insight into something that is important to you, or perhaps even, you have some kind of profound religious experience where you meet Jesus in a new way – just like the Magi did.

Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "*In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'*"

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.



Father God, the star that led the Magi to the stable announced to the world that its Saviour was born. Today we live in a world that is still covered by darkness, and still needing to make that journey to the stable door. May our lives reflect your light day by day, as we seek to serve where you have placed us. That we might be the means through which others can encounter Jesus