

"A Star"

Matthew 2:1-11

24 December 2007

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Matthew 2:1-11

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." 3When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; 4and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

6'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.'"

7Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8Then 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."

9When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11On 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.

Prayer.

Stars

Have been important

To every culture

In every time.

Once believed to be affixed

To a heavenly sphere

Stars were thought to be unmoving.

Stargazers came

from all corners of the world:

Mayan aligned their temples,

Pre-history English erected

Stonehenge,

Ancient Egyptians created the first
charts,

And Greek thinkers

Were the original theorists

That stars are other suns.

Islamic astronomers

from the east

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Created over 10,000 celestial
manuscripts,
Much of which has never been
Read or catalogued.
Chinese observers
Even further east,
Watched and recorded the sky
For more than 8,000 years.
They were the first aware that
New stars could appear
And that established stars
Might possibly move.¹

Who has not laid on their back
In the middle of a field
On a cloudless and moonless night
To take in the celestial realm?
Distance and size
We are taught in Earth Science
Approaches infinity.
Trillions of worlds
Expanding or contracting
Whirling in every direction
Following laws not even yet dreamed
Causes the earthly observer
To be enveloped with awe,
An awareness of insignificance
When compared
to extraterrestrial realities.

Two thousand years ago
The heavens moved.
They reacted to an earthly action:
The birth of a baby.
Faster than light
The Divine stirred,
And a star was moved.
Eastern astrological observers
Made the connection with prophecy,
Named the moving star "his star"

¹ With thanks to Wikipedia's article on "Star"
as found at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star>

And came searching for
the newborn baby Jesus,
The King of the Jews,
The Messiah,
To pay him homage.

The star first led them to Jerusalem
Where the wise men
spilled the beans to Herod,
in their excitement
to learn where
the new King might be found.
Herod was half Jew by blood,
And we learn,
Even a fraction of a half
In faith and experience.
The Jewish authorities
Inform the witless Herod,
Who passes on
the prophecy of Micah:
Bethlehem was the place
Where Messiah was to be born.
But Herod was shrewd
in the ways of the world
thought not keen of intellect;
his paranoia sensed danger
round every turn
and secretly,
homicidal plans began to take hold
of his stone-cold heart.
"Send back word,"
his insincerity obvious
by the disconnect between
his words and his expression,
"That I, too, may also go
and pay him homage."

The star moved again
And led south
the wise men from the east
until it stopped
Over the place where the child was
That they might praise him

And offer him gifts
Worthy of a king.

The star moves
And wise men follow.
The star leads
The willing and the aware
To the Christ child.

What stars have you witnessed
This past year
That have led you to Jesus?
Please don't tell me you've been
unwilling or unaware!

In the side room
Of this church building
stands a tree;
I know-
The same old, same old
As every other year,
Soliciting mittens and gloves
For Cameron neighborhood children;
The poorest of the poor
Urban children.
These kids did not choose their lot.
It wasn't lack of ambition or education.
It isn't personal or intentional.
It isn't race, or party, or religion.
They just don't have
gloves, mittens, hats or scarves.
The star moves
An artificial tree shakes
And leads us to Christ
To share and give of our abundance
Just as Jesus did
To those who were in need then,
To those who are in need today.

The star moves
And wise men follow.
The star leads
The willing and the aware

To the Christ child.

What stars have you witnessed
This past year
That have led you to Jesus?
Please don't tell me you've been
unwilling or unaware!

When I consider the trials
Of health care
that have plagued our people
this past year
I can't help but see
Stars moving everywhere.
Even the deaf can hear
And the blind can see
The miracles of Jesus
Drawing all near,
Just as the star
Drew the wise men forward
To Bethlehem's babe.
From Cancer and Colons,
To Kidneys and addictions,
The healing power of Jesus Christ
Has been at work
Right here in our midst
Even in spite of
our more proper interference.
Each healing star
Is moving,
Begging all those who observe
To come,
To draw close
To enter into the crèche
And touch the swaddling clothes of
Jesus.
Every recovery
Every witness and testimony
Is a moving star
Leading one and all
To see and touch
The Incarnational King.

The star moves
And wise men follow.
The star leads
The willing and the aware
To the Christ child.

What stars have you witnessed
This past year
That have led you to Jesus?
Please don't tell me you've been
unwilling or unaware!

I know you have laid awake at night
Troubled by the day's fair.
I know that you have stared into the
darkness
Wondering if anyone was out there
Or anyone cared.
I know you have asked yourself the
question
Does it all make a difference?
Or will it matter in the end?
I'm here to tell you
To look and to pay attention
To listen and to be aware:
Moving stars are all around us,
Just like of old,
People and ministries
All leading the willing to Christ
All drawing the curious to Jesus
All inviting the unworthy to leave their
sin behind-
To come to the manger
To come to the child
To give him our praise
And to leave him our gifts.

The greatest gift we can give
Even more valuable than
gold, frankincense, and myrrh
is the gift of yourself
your love
and devotion

and faithfulness.

Moving stars are all around us.
Those who follow moving stars
Until they stop
Are overwhelmed with joy.
Those who follow moving stars
End up finding Jesus.
Will you follow his star at its rising?
Will you follow the Star this Christmas
Eve night?

Amen.