

CRIBB<S>NOTE – January 6, 2008

The Magi who traveled a great distance in search of Jesus turn our attention to their purpose and the place whence they came. Who were they? Where was their home? What did they do? Why did they go to Herod? How did they find their way to Christ?

The Epiphany was an incredible experience of overwhelming joy. Imagine that split second when the Three Wise Men realized they had arrived at the site of the ‘new born child’ who was destined to become the ‘King of kings.’ After making their way across deserts, through foreign territories, they came face to face with the child of their dreams. But who were they and why did they put themselves through all that?

We have some clues about what manner of men they were. The fact that they came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (expensive oil and lotion) indicate they were wealthy. They observed the stars for guidance shows they had studied astronomy and understood how to navigate their way around the world. When they went to Herod, King of Judea, for directions suggests they were accustomed to being in the presence of royalty.

We are told they came from the East. What does that mean? Most commentators agree the Magi probably came from what we now call Iraq or Iran. They were informed about the ancient prophesy pertaining to the birth of Messiah. No doubt they learned about the promise from their contact with Jews who had remained in Babylon and did not return to Jerusalem after the Exile. When they put together all the details and timing of events, they felt compelled to leave everything and go in search of the long-awaited Christ-child. Most amazing is that they found him.

Men who were powerful, wise, and exuberant in their display of praise availed themselves to the mystery of God’s grace and gift to all humanity. A bright star in a sky filled with stars stood out to point the way. Yet, they were off just enough from their destination that they felt it was necessary to inquire about directions. That took them to Herod, the evil and insecure king of Judea, who encouraged them to continue their search and bring him news as soon as they found the baby.

Here, God intervenes again and warns the Magi not to return to Herod but to go back home another way. The Epiphany is filled with the hand of God actively engaged in human affairs. The Magi were foreigners who experienced the awesome presence of holiness. The Epiphany was an ‘Aha moment.’ They were forever changed.

Given the current conflict in Iraq, how do you think we would respond to political leaders and religious leaders from that nation who come to us with their wisdom? How would we receive them? Would we listen? Would we reject them and turn them away?

God’s love is given to everyone. The Magi demonstrated how God is present to all people in all places. There is no such thing as people on the inside with a privilege relationship with God and others on the outside who are beyond the reach of God’s grace. Although the Magi came from a place far from the birthplace of Jesus, they became one with Christ when they encountered him. God is in all of us. We have received the Holy Spirit as a source of comfort and peace.

How far will we go to find Christ?