

Title: LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, MATTHEW 2:1-12
(Chatham, NJ; 01/08/12, AM) [Pt – Topical]

Theme: The story of the Wise Men from the east demonstrates that God enlightens mankind that we might know his ways and find salvation from darkness.

Purpose: To explain that by seeing Christ's light all men have the opportunity to know and return to their creator.

Introduction:

1. See Metaxas' article, "Does Anyone in the Media?"
2. Among the many mistakes we make is the timing of visit by the wise men.
3. They did not come to the stable; they came much later. (Perhaps it's a minor point.)
4. Their appearing, however, is no minor point.
5. That Israel and Israel's king were to be a light to the Gentiles is demonstrated here.
6. Think of humanity as trapped in a cave without knowing the way out; some have discovered an ancient map; others claim to already know the way out but only get to other caves.
7. Thursday in NY I made it from Penn Station to Flushing without seeing daylight by simply reading the maps.

I. Who Were the Wise Men?

- A. Priests (astrologers) from the East
 1. East=Arabia, Babylon, or elsewhere
 2. Usually these were advisors and guides to monarchs (Book of Daniel)
 3. Traditionally there were three (because of the gifts) and some ancient writings actually name them
- B. A light to the Gentiles, Isaiah 49:6 – what they symbolize
 1. It is contrary to our thinking that God used pagan magic, astrology, to reveal his king to the Gentile pagans.
 2. We have no clue how they discovered the star of the new king.
 3. God used every means possible to move humanity from the unknown to the known, to bring them to the light
 4. This was also a sign for Israel: all Jerusalem was troubled, 3.
 5. How ironic that God used pagans to announce the birth of the Messiah to the Jews!
 6. The stars only told them so much, and then they turned to Scripture revelation to find out the place of his birth, Micah 5:2).
 7. A revelation was dawning on those in the cave.

II. The Gentiles Brought Near, Ephesians 2:13 (note the movement from the unknown to the known)

- A. Unknown and not known
 1. Separated from Christ, alienated from Israel, and strangers to the promises
 2. No hope and without God in the world, Ephesians 2:12
 3. The rest are still darkened in their understanding, 4:18, and alienated from the life of God
 4. 1 Peter 2:10, once you were not a people, once you had not received mercy.
 5. Many still stumble around in the cave not knowing where they are going
- B. Brought near by the blood of Christ, Eph. 2:13
 1. Follow the blood trail out of the darkness
 2. We have access to the Father, 18

3. Built into a dwelling place for God, the church, 22
4. In the church the salvation of God is made known

III. Mystery Revealed – The Unknown Made Known

- A. Gentiles are fellow heirs, Eph. 3:6
 1. Made known to Paul (3) and the apostles (5)
 2. The mystery: Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the body, partakers of the promise (6)
 3. Not such a mystery to us in the 21st century, but we must remember that we are the beneficiaries of God's revelation always intended for worldwide consumption
- B. Revealed through the church
 1. Paul given grace to reveal the mystery, 3:8, to bring light for everyone
 2. God's wisdom is made known, 3:10
 3. Daniel 2:20-23, it is the God of Israel who reveals mysteries and endows wisdom as opposed to the gods and magic arts practiced by the Babylonian priests (Read this prayer)
 4. Access is the great privilege, Eph. 3:12, given through the revelation of the unknown

Conclusions:

1. In the story of the Wise Men from the east God shined a light to some Gentiles; it pointed to the king who established the Kingdom of God for all men.
2. When the angels proclaimed peace on earth, they referred to peace between God and mankind. By the blood of Christ all can have access to this peace through his Spirit.
3. In the church by the revelation of this great mystery we have freedom and confidence to enter into the light of God's presence.
4. We have followed the trail of blood into the light of God's presence and to salvation.
5. All men must follow that trail of blood.
6. We put off our old way of life and put on a new self, Ephesians 4:22-24.
7. We do so by dieing in baptism and rising to walk in newness of life.
8. Come out of the darkness and walk in the light.