

NAME\_\_\_\_\_

## EPIPHANY STAR OF BETHLEHEM

**Historical Background: The word “EPIPHANY” means:** To show; to reveal; to become aware; to appear....

In the very early Church, the celebration of the EPIPHANY included the nativity (Jesus’ birth), the visit of the MAGI, miracle at Cana, and the Baptism of Jesus. This celebration originated with the early Eastern Catholic Church around 385 AD. The main feast day celebrated was the Baptism of Jesus.

From the fifth century, January 6th was designated as the feast of the EPIPHANY, and it still is today. It is the 12th day of Christmas... When the Church became more ROMAN, (440-461 AD) the Adoration of the Magi became its own feast and is referred to by the Latin Church as the Epiphany and is no longer a combination of feasts.

So who were the Magi? The Magi were astronomers; astrologer; priests of Zoroastrianism, which encouraged interpretation and study of the stars and celestial events. They lived in Persia... (Came from the East).... We know about the Magi from a philosopher and historian named PHILO, who wrote many books that survived through the ages. And some theorize they may have ties with Daniel of the Old Testament. because they seem familiar with the prophecy of the Jewish Messiah.

Never is it mentioned in the story of the MAGI that there were only 3 of them. In the 6th century the names of **Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar were given to them.** **The three Magi represent the 3 known races of the ancient world: Arabian, European, and African.**

**The gifts: frankincense, gold, and myrrh had significant meanings in the ancient world. Frankincense and Myrrh are saps that are harvested from trees that only grow in certain regions of the Middle East. They harden into small chunks. Frankincense is usually burned as incense. It is very Fragrant, and has medicinal qualities when used as an ointment. Myrrh is also a sap harvested from bushes/trees. It is very rare, and very bitter. It is used for burial rites, and for medicinal purposes. When Jesus was laid in the tomb they used myrrh in his burial rite.**

**Frankincense: denotes divine birth; one is of GOD.**  
**Myrrh: denotes mortality and kinship with the human race.**  
**Gold: denotes royalty**

**Scriptural References used: Psalm 72; vs. 10**

**Isaiah: 60 vs. 6**

**Matthew: 2: vs. 1-12**

The three MAGI represent strangers, foreigners searching for salvation. Salvation is through Israel, who is the beloved people of God. It is in Israel that salvation comes to the world through Jesus, the SON OF GOD. The MAGI required that the experts in Jewish scripture and divine revelation interpret for them what it all means and where to seek the one they were looking for. The Magi were looking to know and understand the will of God by observing the signs in the heavens.

What the Magi experienced was not a God who was distant, but a GOD who came among us, who looked us in the eye, and presented himself as a vulnerable baby/child. His kingdom was different, and HIS rule would originate from outside and enter our world because we cannot save ourselves. Grace (God's life within us) entered the world and the MAGI who were seekers grew to understand this mystery of salvation.

\*\*\*\*\* When the Magi saw Jesus, Jesus was NOT a tiny baby, but a toddler. It took many months- 1-2 years after the star's first appearance for them to reach Bethlehem.

### **STAR OF BETHLEHEM**

**Throughout history people have tried to figure out what the STAR OF BETHLEHEM was and when it appeared. Today we know.**

**Background:** In the 1600s an astronomer, Johannes Kepler discovered that stars/planets moved in a very precise way, and their position at any time could be determined using a very complex mathematical formula. Because it is so complex and did not have the assistance of computers, he was only able to calculate out very few scenarios of stars and planets...

**However, today with computer programs, used by NASA, we are able to see what the skies looked like at any time in history and from any location on Earth. The program called STARRY NIGHT, has been used to figure out what the STAR OF BETHLEHEM WAS AND THAT IT IS REAL!**

**A documentary called the "STAR OF BETHLEHEM, the movie" has been produced and one can view it by just googling it.**

**Using Biblical references, Rick Larson determined the dates: year, month and day of Jesus birth; and the star's appearance. Actually there were 2 celestial events that announced the coming of the savior of the world:**

**The first event :** The Annunciation: It was discovered that two celestial bodies; the planet, Jupiter and the star, Regulus within the constellation of LEO came very close to each other and Jupiter loops back around Regulus, 3 times creating a halo effect... **WHY is this significant? Because the star and the planet are referred to both as being, KING... The Constellation LEO is the LION: Judah, (The area of Israel where Jesus was born... Bethlehem) and the one who is to rule (the**

**Messiah) is called the LION of Judah.... Jupiter loops back around Regulas 3 times creating a crown or halo... Three times... Father, Son and Holy Spirit have entered the world through Mary... God's reign begins! This happens September 3 BC.**

**NINE Months Later: 2BC....The star's appearance begins: What was it? It was the Conjunction of the Planets Venus and Jupiter. Venus is the Mother Planet and Jupiter is the King Planet.... They did not over lap, but laid side by side and with an unaided eye, it looked like one giant star! This conjunction was in the constellation of Virgo- the Virgin! It was not until later in the year, October, November, and December that this phenomenon peeked and hovered over Bethlehem and it lasted long enough for the Magi to continue to see it in their journey to Bethlehem...**

Throughout Scripture there are references to celestial events:

JOB: 9    ISAIAH: 40: 26

Romans 10: 17-18

Revelation 12: 1-5

**Why is verifying that the STAR OF BETHLEHEM is a real event and not just a literary device important?**

- 1. It shows that the authors of scripture used facts, and did not make up things. Nothing in scripture is unimportant or is a mistake.**
- 2. It shows that God intended from the beginning of time to send HIS SON and enter into a very personal relationship with humanity.**
- 3. It shows that God is NOT a distant God and desires to share HIS divinity and kingdom with us. HE is apart of HIS creation! He announces HIS entry into the world, by signs that are precise and cannot be refuted.**

## Worksheet:

1. Epiphany means:\_\_\_\_\_.

2. In the early Church, the feast of the Epiphany included:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

3. What were the names assigned to the MAGI? \_\_\_\_\_,

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Name one fact each about gold, frankincense, and myrrh:

Gold \_\_\_\_\_

Frankincense \_\_\_\_\_

Myrrh \_\_\_\_\_

5. Who were the Magi? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What do the Magi represent? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. What does this tell us about God? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Who discovered the mathematical formula that determined the position of the stars? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is the computer program called that can calculate the stars and planets position in space \_\_\_\_\_.

10. What celestial event happened that has connections to the Annunciation? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. What is the Star of Bethlehem? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_