

Foreign Visitors

Intro. Astronomers continue to be fascinated by our solar system. Recently they have been glued to the sky exploring the moon again, landing on Mars and going beyond Pluto. A sign like a supernova or a comet in the night sky would be quickly seen by even the most casual watchers of the heavens.

Trained observers would be curious enough to search out its meaning. In ancient times, a sign like a new star would be understood to mean something had changed or someone important had entered or departed the world. Inquiring minds would want to know what or who.

I. Enter three foreigners. Most of the paintings of the mysterious visitors show them as well-dressed, important-looking guys who caused quite a stir as they entered the gates of Jerusalem. They rode up to

Herod's court and asked to see the man; a signal for the people of Jerusalem that something big was happening. Asking about a new king got *everybody's* attention. Herod didn't usually cooperate with the religious leaders of Jerusalem, but the chief priests and the scribes had something he needed: prophecies about the Messiah's birthplace. They told Herod about Bethlehem and then amazingly, the religious leaders did not go with the magi to see the "newborn king of the Jews." How strange is that? Non-Jewish visitors traveled *many miles* to see the "king of the Jews" and they wouldn't travel *five* miles to see him! They decided to ignore the news and refused an opportunity to discover the Messiah. The visitors found the child they had journeyed so far to see, paid their respects and opened gifts that no carpenter and his wife would ever see: gold, frankincense and

myrrh. The visitors got a message to leave quietly as did Joseph who took the family to Egypt out of harm's way. All left Bethlehem and the town returned to its quiet anonymity. The hand of God was clearly guiding and protecting not only the Lord and his family but also the foreign visitors.

Concl. We know when something big happens in the world because our phones, watches, televisions and radios blare those jarring alert tones. My weather radio erupts so often I usually punch the off button rather than listen to another announcement about a rain squall off the coast of Georgia. (One day I'll miss something I shouldn't.) It can be tempting for us to blow off important signs, especially in our relationships with the Lord and each other. We don't get many obvious signs so we should pay attention to them. The star was both

guide to the foreign visitors and a sign of grace for the Gentiles who would share in God's plan of salvation. Many people are seeking a "star," to guide them on their journey through life, including finding the Lord. Some have left their religious communities, including the Catholic community, to search elsewhere. We must get off our complacency and become "stars" to guide others to the "spiritual nourishment" of a life in Christ [M.McGlone, NCR].

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