

Greetings in our Lord's name.

LET'S BEGIN WITH PRAYER:

Loving Father, again we are blessed to meet without fear, and to fellowship with joy. Thank you for all we have, and all we take for granted. Help us to be mindful of others who have a daily struggle just to claim they are your people.

So, Lord, join us now as we worship and open our hearts and minds to your Word, and the presence of your Spirit.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen

SONG: (262 SIS Book 2) by Dave Richards

For I'm building a people of power, and I'm making a people of praise
That will move through this land by my Spirit
And will glorify my precious name

Build your Church, Lord, make us strong, Lord

Join our hearts, Lord, through Your Son

Make us one, Lord, in your Body, in the kingdom of Your Son.

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CALL TO WORSHIP:

Hosea 11:VS 1—3: "When Israel was a child, I loved him. And out of Egypt I called my Son. But the more they were called the more they went away from me."

They sacrificed to the Baals, and they burned incense to images.

God called his "son" Israel out of the gentiles, only to see "him" worship idols, and disobey the law, probably practices seen in Egypt, then compounded by peoples surrounding Israel.

The second calling "out of Egypt" will be no less than God incarnate—Jesus Christ. (Matt 2:15)

SONG: "In Christ Alone"-- Adrienne Camp

1. In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song;
This corner-stone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My comforter, my all in all, here in the love of Christ I stand.
2. In Christ alone! Who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save;
Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid; Here in the death of Christ I live.

3. There in the ground His body lay, Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious day up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ.

4. No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

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MESSAGE: Epiphany

The Oxford says about the word:

- The manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, represented by the Magi in Matthew 2:1-12
- A moment of sudden and great revelation or realization

The Magi found their way by God's direction. Maybe they came from Persepolis. Maybe they were Zoroastrians who were known to study the stars, and were followers of Zoroaster, an Iranian prophet around 600 BC. Whatever they were or where they were from, they certainly sought Jesus a few months after His birth (Jesus is called a child, not a baby, in Matthew) and they called at a house, so things had moved on a little. But the world's evil is at work with the scheming and devious Herod trying to self protect. The gentile Magi brought 3 gifts to Jesus. Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh—wealth, air freshener, medicament—all quite valuable in the day.

Epiphany is prophetically and historically a very important faith event for gentiles, commencing with these gentiles bearing gifts for the child Jesus and his parents.

So the Magi arrived with their gifts, which no doubt enabled Joseph to finance taking his family to Egypt very soon (God provides). Isaiah 60:5 "to you the riches of **the nations** will come". Ephesians 3: 6 "this mystery is that through the gospel the gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus". Things have moved on from that first gentile visit to a child messiah! (Isaiah 49:6- "a light to the gentiles".)

"Out of Egypt" – Jesus, like his ancestor Joseph and his nation Israel, found shelter within gentile Egypt, returning to Israel when it was safe to do so after Herod's death. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records Herod's death after a very painful illness, around 4 BC. Acts 12 is a reminder of the depth of evil in this man (and his death-- which may be different to the Josephus record).

For us, there is great comfort in Epiphany in that Gentiles have a significant part in prophecy (we were always included) and in the events surrounding Jesus' birth and early life.

It is my prayer that many will experience the birth (or rebirth) of Jesus in their hearts, a renewed Epiphany event.

God bless.

PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD:

Focus Barnabas- Afghanistan:

Lord, our thoughts are troubled by the condition of women in Afghanistan. We pray that the hearts of Taliban leaders will be softened, to allow women into education, and to fully take their place in the rebuilding of their country. O God, what waste of talent this is. We pray Lord that there will be an awakening there.

In Jesus' Name we pray.

SONG: (269 BOOK 2 SIS) by Steve Stewart

1. Father, I thank you for all that you've done, You gave your Son freely for me,
And I praise you for calling me, drawing me near,
Out of blindness, You caused me to see.
2. Spirit of life, You are God's holy fire, You've kindled my heart with your blaze,
And I know You're refining me, changing my life,
And by faith, You're revealing your ways.
3. Jesus I need you as Lord of my life, I give all I have unto you,
Lord I want to come under Your heavenly hand,
And to praise you in all that I do.

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Blessing: Psalm 71

In You, oh Lord, I have taken refuge. Let me never to be put to shame. In your righteousness rescue me and deliver me. Turn your ear to me and save me. Be my Rock of refuge.

Amen

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