

## Epiphany of Our Lord devotions written by Robbie Schwartz

January 7, 2019

Matthew 2: 1-12 provides us with the well-known account of the Magi, though some details do differ in various accounts. But what should not easily be overlooked is the fact that God in not only his infinite wisdom but also his limitless power, reached out to non-believers and revealed the birth of Jesus. Throughout much of early history – be it Greek, Roman, Chinese or Christian – the Magi are were scientists or those whose faith lied in interpreting the stars (they are the basis for the term magicians today). It was they who revealed the birth of the King of Jews to King Herod. Despite not being true believers in Judaism or Christianity, God worked through them to spread the story of the greatest gift of all. God revealed the birth of His son through a star to the Magi and used angels to reveal it to shepherds. God was and is able to do what is necessary to reach out and embrace all people.

January 8, 2019

The star that God used in Matthew 2: 1-12 to guide the Magi is just one example of how God is the light of the world. From a burning bush to the light that blinded Paul, there are so many references to not only God using light but God being the light. In the text, God used the light of a star to guide the Magi, who were non-believers. After creating the heavens and Earth, God separated light from darkness. God saw that light was good, and He has been using it as a tool to guide us every day. It is not the only tool He uses, but each day we are greeted with the light from the sun to remind us a new day is upon us to lead our lives for Him. God finds a way to guide us along the path He has set before us – we must simply be prepared to find His grace in our lives each and every day.

## Baptism of Our Lord devotions written by Vernon Mukhlall

Wed Jan 9 The Savior Is Seen

*“And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest: for you shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.” Luke 1: 76 – 77.* Zachariah, a priest who walked blamelessly before God, was a proud father of a son, John. When the angel announced the birth of John, Zachariah knew the key role that John would play, that is, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1: 15 – 17). Zachariah was filled with joy in becoming a father at his old age but that did not stop him from looking beyond the birth of John to the coming of the Savior. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit enabled him to prophesy the coming of the Lord. God’s promise of a Savior is being fulfilled. John’s task was to prepare the people by informing them of their need to repent of their sin and to open their hearts to receive the One who is bringing salvation to the world. The people had the misconception that the Messiah would bring them political deliverance from Rome. John’s task was to turn their minds from that idea to a spiritual deliverance – the One who will baptize, “with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3: 16). Here we see the Divine compassion and grace of God towards us and the world. The shadow that obscured heaven has been moved away and now the path to our God is made plain. As we walk on that path, we walk in the light and have become children of the day. So everyday let us prepare our hearts to receive and abide in our Savior’s love and grace. **Prayer:** Loving Father, you sent John the Baptist to declare hope and light for the people and to prepare them for the coming of your Son. In the same way, may you prepare my heart for the reality of His righteousness as well. Amen.

Thu Jan 10 The Power Of God Over The Flood

*“The LORD sits upon the flood; yea, the LORD sits King forever. The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.” Psalm 29: 10 – 11.* The imagery that comes to mind in these two verses is that, ‘The Lord presides over the Flood, The Lord is King forever, The Lord is able to give strength and peace to his people’. The Canaanites worship Baal because they believe that Baal is victorious over the waters. But here David recognizes that God is the true victor over the Flood. God even controls the waters at the height of their destructive power. In the case of Noah, it was God who controlled when the Flood should be boisterous, when it should calm down, and when it should recede. Noah put his trust in God and God brought him safely through the Flood. In this life one can face many problems which can sometimes turn into an avalanche of problems and which can be very devastating to one’s life. In such a case why should one hesitate to put his/her trust in this powerful and majestic God? Our Lord, through the Holy Spirit, gives us wisdom and strength to live a victorious life despite the many problems that we may encounter. God has also given us the assurance that he is in control of all of his creation and He wants to give us his strength, wisdom and peace to live our lives in Him. **Prayer:** Almighty and Living God, you are the creator of heaven and earth. You have power over all of creation. Help me to grow in my understanding of your love and power and open my heart to the mystery of your ways. Amen.

Fri Jan 11 The Spirit reveals God’s Deep Secrets

*“But we speak wisdom among them that are mature: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nothing: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” 1 Corinth 2: 6 – 8.* The salvation of sinners through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross is a mystery that was hidden in God and was revealed in God’s own time. The Jews who heard the message thought it to be a stumbling block and the Greeks regarded it as foolishness. This is wisdom that humans cannot understand except if God reveals it. The political, religious and social elites could not understand this mystery based on purely human wisdom. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the climax of God’s plan of salvation for the world. This is what the Holy Spirit is revealing to the Corinthian church. God’s plan of salvation is still hidden to the unbelievers either because they refuse to accept it, choose to ignore it, or simply have not heard about it. The Holy Spirit who abides in us from the moment of our salvation, reveals the depth of God’s purpose and plan for us through His Word when we diligently and reverently seek Him. **Prayer:** Gracious God, your wisdom is hidden on high, and you ordained your plan to reveal it before the world began. May your Spirit of wisdom always be with me guiding me closer and closer to you. Amen.

Sat Jan 12 Repentance And Baptism Prerequisite For Salvation

*“The people who sat in darkness saw great light; and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matt 4:16 – 17.* Matthew records that John the Baptist came preaching repentance and he was baptizing the people. This ministry was placed on his shoulders to prepare the hearts of the people to receive the coming Messiah. But why repentance and baptism are necessary? By nature mankind is susceptible to sin and was on the road to eternal death. “The soul that sinneth shall die”. Repentance is a prerequisite for salvation through Jesus Christ. Repentance means that we must acknowledge our sin and our need of the Savior, confess our sin, and turn to Jesus Christ. We are to believe that He is the Son of God, that He has the power to redeem us from the darkness of sin and bring us into His righteousness. In the above verse, Jesus Himself, calls on the people to repent of their sins. John refers to Jesus as the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Though Jesus Himself did not baptize, however, He gave authority to His disciples to perform the baptism (John 3: 22, 4: 1 – 2). Jesus gave them authority to baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Repentance and baptism are very necessary for one to be saved. Jesus reminds us that those who believe and are baptized shall be saved (Mark 16: 16). If you have repented and baptized, you are saved. If not you are urged to do so now. **Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you emphasize the importance of repentance and baptism for our salvation. Thank you for your servants whom you have called and given the authority to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thank you for giving me a repentant heart and the opportunity to be baptized by one of your ordained servants. Amen.

Sun Jan 13 The Baptism Of Jesus Christ

*“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that when Jesus also was baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, You are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased.” Luke 3: 21 – 22.* Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, was hidden among humanity. His ministry was about to begin, His presence must now be manifested, and He is about to set up His Kingdom. Passing from His hidden into His active life, Jesus identifies Himself with humanity whose likeness He has taken. As John was baptizing people in the Jordan river, Jesus came to be baptized too. However, His baptism was different from that of the people. John called on the people to repent of their sin and be baptized. Jesus had no sin to repent but yet He was baptized. He wanted to identify Himself with those who were repenting of their sin, those whom He had come to save. As Jesus was coming out of the water heaven was opened and God’s revelation followed: The Holy Spirit descended on Him in the bodily form of a dove fulfilling the promise, “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him”. (Isaiah 61:1) and the voice of the Heavenly Father declaring Him as the promised One, “You are my beloved Son: in you I am well pleased”. In our baptism, Jesus takes away our sin, clothes us with His righteousness, sealed us with the Holy Spirit, and brings us into the presence of God making us children of God. **Prayer:** Almighty God, you anointed Jesus at His baptism with the Holy Spirit and revealed Him as your beloved Son. As one who is born of water and the Spirit at my baptism, keep me faithful in your service, that I may be worthy to be called one of your children. Amen.