

The Epiphany of Our Lord

OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 60:1-6

The Glory of Zion

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. ² See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. ³ Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. ⁴ “Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm. ⁵ Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. ⁶ Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.

Ch 60 The way to glory is the transfiguration of mankind’s gloom into the radiance of salvation. In chs 58–59, Isaiah declared “the way of peace” (59:8) barred to all who choose to love wickedness more than they love the Redeemer. In ch 60, the road to blessed communion with the Creator is bathed in “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). This highway of lights is to emerge out of Israel’s liberation from Babylonian slavery and the rebuilding of the city of David. (TLSB)

60:1–2 *glory*.† Probably an allusion to the pillar of cloud, but announcing a new manifestation of God’s redeeming glory (see 58:8 and note). (CSB)

60:1 **ARISE, SHINE** – Arise is *koom* and means to rouse or stand up. Shine is *ore* and means to cause lamination or be like the break of a day. Both of these call God’s people to attention. They have been enslaved in the darkness that is all around them. God is getting them ready to hear some really great news.

The imagery of light and darkness in the first section of today’s Old Testament lesson is striking. The imperatives “arise” and “shine” presuppose the coming of the light that pierces the thick darkness covering the earth. This is the light of the Christmas gospel: “In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it” (John 1:4–5). John also records Jesus’ saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The prophet rouses Israel from the dark night of sin and captivity. God’s creative Word enlightens them like a match lighting a candle. (TLSB)

The people appear to be lying in the dust and in the darkness. They are by nature like all other people of the earth. They are troubled and despondent. But something spectacular has happened. Their light has come; the glory of the Lord rises upon them. (PBC)

This is a symbol of gloom and sin. – Imagine the whole earth wrapped in total darkness. Imagine Zion, the OT church, also as being overcome by this darkness of hopelessness. Then of a sudden to her, and her only, the glory of the Lord flares up. It is as though the day had dawned with the abrupt rising characteristic of the Oriental sun. This sun is God's heavenly glory, this glory of which Isaiah speaks so frequently (6:3; 24:23; 40:5; 58:8), this glory which some have called the central theme of the chapter. The vision goes on to show that the rest of the world is still shrouded in darkness. (Leupold)

This is our plague and wretchedness, that we are unable to recognize the exceeding greatness of the treasure because of its lowly appearance. Even though it hears this treasure, our foolish reason judges it on the basis of its lowly appearance. The Gospel, however, is such a treasure that is lowly in appearance and can be perceived only through the Holy Spirit. Reason cannot recognize it but thinks that the prophet speaking of such lofty matters is out of his mind. The Gospel is the Word of life and salvation, and it offers everything. (Luther)

light. See 58:8 and note. Here the Lord himself is viewed as the light (see vv. 19–20). (CSB)

Matthew and Luke tie together today's two themes of light and glory. Matthew quotes Isaiah who says about Galilee of the Gentiles, "the people living in darkness have seen a great light" (Is 9:1–2; Matt 4:15–16). Blessed Simeon declares the baby Jesus in his arms to be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:32). Isaiah's prophecy of light and glory is illuminated by its New Testament fulfillment, and the preacher's conceptual matrix of light and darkness should include the New Testament to highlight the prophecy and fulfillment motif. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

This light is manifested in the church through the preaching of Christ and his salvation. This brings us to Is 60:4–6, the second section of our lesson. All nations will come to see God's glory in Jerusalem. Since the epiphany of God's light and glory are now manifest in Christ, Jerusalem is invited, "lift up your eyes and look about you" (Is 60:4) to see how this light and glory are a magnet for Israelites and Gentiles who stream into the holy city to see God's salvation in the Christ child. The prophecies from Isaiah 40 quoted by John the Baptist are coming true: "Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low" so that no obstacles remain for "all mankind [to] see God's salvation" (Luke 3:5–6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Light is always associated with God.

Your light is the light promised you in Abraham and now set forth. This is the Gospel which sets you free from death and sin. *Your light*. These are very intense words. This light, I say, is not only in your midst but also in the midst of others. With these words it arouses the weak and the believers not to be offended by the persecution of the many and the small number of the believers. In spite of everything, he says that this is a light. This is what Paul labored to do, to urge the Word alone, in order that the people might hold on to it. Thus to the Thessalonians he says that they should hold fast the Word of life as lights in a perverse generation (cf. Phil. 2:16, 15). (Luther)

GLORY OF THE LORD – *Glory* means the same as *light*. He uses the metaphor of the sun, which rises over the earth. So the brightness of the Gospel and its divine light rise by means of preaching and trumpeting. *Glory* in Hebrew denotes the glorious thing itself, as in Matt. 6:29, “Solomon in all his glory.” So in Proverbs (26:1), “Honor is not fitting for a fool,” that is, things, abilities, riches. Thus here and there in the Scriptures glory is an eternal matter and an incomprehensible treasure. Thus the Gospel and the glow of God are themselves things which are brought by God. Summary: Believe while you have the light, and make use of it in an accepted time. The exhortation is that we diligently learn and study the Word and grow in its understanding, so that we may be filled with the light of this glow. Those who regard this light as a treasure hold all glow of the flesh to be nothing. This is what we see in the martyrs. By comparison with the Word they spurned all things. Therefore he admonishes us not to pass this preaching by in vain, for in it there is announced the opening of heaven, the closing of hell, and the destruction of death. In this way he wants us to hold fast to the Word. (Luther)

Cf 4:5; 9:2; 24:23; 30:26; 40:9–11; 46:13; 49:14–21; 51:3; 52:7–10; 54:11–17 (TLSB)

60:2 *darkness*. A symbol of gloom, oppression and sin (see 8:22; 9:2; 59:9). (CSB)

By comparison with the evil, the prophet wants to commend to us the inestimable glory which we have, as if to say, “The others who do not believe are simply condemned.” See what kind of people they are. *Darkness* means all the most imposing and impressive laws of Moses, civil laws, statutes, and regulations. However good these are, they do not illumine consciences. The Gospel reproves them all as being unable to bring glow and a good conscience. As the sun brings light and useful function to all things, so the Gospel gives strength to all others. Meanwhile, however, the Gospel appears to be the worst and the most poisonous teaching. To the believer it is life, salvation, and God. To the ungodly it

is death and darkness. Meanwhile they have their own idea of the light, but their light will be excrement and a detriment conducive to all evil. (Luther)

GLORY – This is to remind them of when he led them out of Egypt and in the desert by pillars of fire and smoke.

Here he says that it is not only a light, but he calls it the Lord Himself. All verbs must be construed in the indicative. *His glory appears*. He is hinting at the text where the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud and in fire. Here, however, there is another glory and light, since *the Lord arises*. Not Caesar, not Moses, arises, but the Lord Himself. He is Himself your light and your salvation. These are precious words, but they cannot be grasped by the flesh. Who can define and grasp this, that the Lord is a lamp and a light and that His glory, risen upon us, illuminates us and gives us life? (Luther)

60:3 *Nations will come*. See vv. 5, 10–12 and notes. This theme was first mentioned in 2:2–4 (see note there). (CSB)

This influx of all nations to Jerusalem causes it to shake and tremble with delight, fear, and awe. What marvelous metaphors Isaiah uses to express the joy of the moment: “Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy” (Is 60:5). It is impossible to fully appreciate the events of Christmas and Epiphany without understanding the prophecies of Isaiah! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The Gospel and Epistle lessons portray the salvation of the Gentiles. How surprising that the Magi, Gentiles from the East, are the first to worship the Christ child. The verb *proskuneō*, “to worship,” is used three times in Matthew 2:2, 8, and 11. It is a word for worship of the one true God, emphasizing both the deity of Jesus and the faith of the Magi. Matthew had already suggested that Gentiles are part of the kingdom in his record of Christ’s genealogy (Ruth and Rahab), and he concludes his gospel with the great commission to all nations. In the Epistle, the Gentile mission is given ardent support by the evangelist to the Gentiles. The mystery is now revealed—all people, Jew and Gentile equally, are declared righteous through the blood of Jesus Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Although God shows judgment through darkness upon the nations, Israel will bask in light that graciously draws the nations. (TLSB)

He simply cannot get away from the light. He is clearly repealing all of Moses and enlarging the church beyond the limit of the synagogue and extending it to the Gentiles, since the light and the glory will be spread and poured out. There will be no law to oppress the people. (Luther)

light. See 42:6; 49:6 and notes. (CSB)

The Messiah was born a Jew, but the light of God's grace attracts the attention of all nations. Even kings will come to the brightness of God's grace in the Messiah. The entire chapter draws a vivid picture of the NT church. (PBC)

That light and glow is multiplied for the nations, that is, the Gospel will be a proclamation to illuminate the whole world. This text does not persuade us that we have this light, since it says *the nations shall come*, although it is a light not of the Gentiles but of the Jews. *And kings to the brightness of your rising*, that is, all walk in the very brightness of the Gospel. Light, brightness, rays, these are the greatest names of the Gospel. The first designation of dignity is light. (Luther)

6:4-9 Not only do the people of the Lord return, but the wealth of nations is also brought to the people of God. (TLSB)

60:4† The first two lines are almost identical to the beginning of 49:18, the last two to the end of 49:22 (see note there). The setting there was the return from exile, but it is also the promise of greater things to come. (CSB)

The remnant comes home, perhaps carried by the nations. (TLSB)

LIFT UP YOUR EYES - nawsaw – To magnify or move to a higher level.

LOOK ABOUT YOU - rawaw – To look in a discerning and intensive way or even stare.

afar. See v. 9; 49:12 and note. (CSB)

First they congregate in groups preparatory for setting out to Zion and its holy hill. Among those that come, some are already discernible that are especially dear to her – “your sons and daughters.” The little ones among her daughters that cannot travel far are being “carried on the arm.” Literally on the hip which was a typical Oriental mode of carrying children. (Leupold)

He teaches how this light is to be promoted. It is not only for Judea, but he says *Lift up your eyes round about*. The whole circuit and all the nations will come to you and walk. It is impossible for all to gather together physically, but the Gospel will be published in the whole earth, and the nations who were the greatest enemies of the Jews and the seed of Abraham will be the best friends. *They all gather together, they come to you. Your sons*. Here he is obviously speaking of the church as being established within the limits of Jerusalem and Judea. He is not suggesting that only the Jews are sons, but also the Gentiles. (Luther)

60:5 BE RADIANT – God will shine through his people. We are to be a witness to all around us.

This will be your comfort when you see such great progress of the Gospel. *You shall see*, “your eyes will get their fill.” *You shall be radiant*, that is, “you will break forth and be joyful.” Here you know that nothing is more joyful for a Christian than to hear that many will be God’s disciples. So Paul says to the Thessalonians, “You are our glory, crown, and joy” (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19 f.). So, on the contrary, Paul says that his supreme and great sadness is apostasy. Thus the prophet here depicts their joy when they see the multitude coming toward them. (Luther)

YOUR HEART WILL THROB – Her “heart” here the center of emotion, is filled with the awesomeness of the experience and “swells with joy.” (Leupold)

wealth on the seas. † Jerusalem will be enriched by the nations (see v. 11; 61:6; 66:12; see also 18:7; 23:18; 45:14 and notes), looking forward to the influx of Gentiles into the church (see note on 2:2–4). See Rev 21:26 (the New Jerusalem); see also Hag 2:7; Zec 14:14 and notes. (CSB)

Neighboring nations would bring their wealth to Jerusalem. The Gentiles will enrich the New Jerusalem, the New Testament Church. – This wealth of commerce which goes largely by sea. (Leupold)

That is, of the earth, the islands, the inhabitants along the sea. He is thinking especially of our sea, the Mediterranean, and the people living on the islands and coastlands. *The wealth of the nations*, that is, the power of the Gentiles, the nation’s strength, the power of money. This is the understanding of *abundance* at this place. Here the prophet described the people living toward the sea, the west. Now he turns toward the east. (Luther)

RICHES OF THE NATIONS – This includes all the things that the Gentile cal precious. They are bringing their best as tribute to Zion. (Leupold)

60:6 *camels will cover your land.* † As caravans bringing goods.

Zion’s attention is drawn to areas that lie to the east of her. That being mostly desert land, caravans have come from there, throngs of them. (Leupold)

Here he listed the names of the nations. *Midian* is near the Red Sea. *Ephah* are the people who were brought by Abraham into Arabia, as Genesis reports. This is what he calls the *multitude of camels*, that is, a vast number like a flood. Not that the camels will come to Jerusalem, but these people will join the church. (Luther)

Midian. Abraham’s son through Keturah (Ge 25:2). The Midianites roamed the deserts of Transjordan. (CSB)

Previous threat to Israel (Jgs 6:1–6), but now these animals employed in warfare are brought under Israel's domain. (TLSB)

These were camel-Bedouins who had originally lived mostly to the east of the Gulf of Aqaba. (Leupold)

Previous threat to Israel (Judges 6:1-6), but now these animals employed in warfare are brought under Israel's domain. (TLSB)

These nations have ancestral ties with Israel (Gn 25:1–4). (TLSB)

Ephah. A son of Midian (Ge 25:4). (CSB)

Sheba. A wealthy land in southern Arabia, perhaps roughly equal to modern Yemen (see Ge 25:3; 1Ki 10:1–2). (CSB)

שֵׁבָא, written with ש, is Arabia. Seba is a walled town. Because the Gospel is richly and widely published in the world, it is certain that many will be converted. All will have the Gospel, even though not all believe. (Luther)

This land was famous for its gold. (Leupold)

gold and incense. The queen of Sheba brought gold and spices to Solomon (1Ki 10:2). Jer 6:20 mentions the incense of Sheba. Cf. Ps 72:10; Mt 2:11. (CSB)

Some apply this to the Magi (Matt. 2:11). I am well satisfied with that application. The proper meaning is that these people revere God and the Gospel with the same zeal and wealth with which they do homage to other kings. Now that the Gospel has arisen, they do homage to the Gospel with every kind of wealth. This happens in our case when we receive the glory of the Lord and for its sake are ready to give up body and life, our money, etc. (Luther)

proclaiming the praise. Cf. the queen's words in 1Ki 10:9. (CSB)

All of these people who have gathered in this large company and they have all come to know the God of Israel and the knowledge of Him has made them glad. (Leupold)

EPISTLE Ephesians 3:1-12

Paul the Preacher to the Gentiles

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—² Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ that is, the mystery made known to me by to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made

revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 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. ⁷ I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

The Early Church, surprisingly, did not universally approve of the mission to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 15). Paul urges that Christ Himself commissioned him to fulfill God's plan to bring the Gentiles the message of salvation through faith apart from works. (TLSB)

3:1 *For this reason.* Because of all that God has done, explained in the preceding several verses. (CSB)

Paul is referring to the central thought developed in chapter 2, namely, the unity in Christ that brings Jews and Gentiles together into one church. He is intending to ask God to enlighten the Ephesians, to bring them to understand ever more fully just how great Christ's love for them actually is. Paul's prayer will end with the request that God enable the Ephesians "to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (V. 18). (PBC)

Paul became a prisoner because he took the Gospel to the Gentiles. Jewish accusers who were opposed to the Gospel and especially any efforts to incorporate the Gentiles were responsible for Paul's arrest. There are repeated references in the history of the early church of hatred between the Jews and the Gentiles (see Acts 22:21-24; 26:12-23). (LL)

prisoner. Apparently Paul was under house arrest at this time (see Ac 28:16, 30). (CSB)

Arrested in AD 58 to protect him from a Jewish mob in the temple (Acts 21:27-36), Paul spent a year and a half in prison in Caesarea (Acts 23:23-26:32) and two years under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30). Paul rejoiced to be put on trial for the sake of the Gospel, hoping to gain legal freedom to preach it to the Gentiles (2 Tim. 2:9-10). He referred to his suffering more than once but qualified it as fulfilling the Lord's purposes for his life and others. (TLSB)

Recall that this letter to the Ephesians was written while Paul was detained in Rome, awaiting trial for his Christian activity. He speaks of himself as imprisoned “for the sake of you Gentile.” That expression requires a bit more explanation, so before he begins his prayer, he digresses to show just how his ministry to Gentiles fits in with God’s eternal plan. (PBC)

He was probably waiting for his audience with Caesar Nero. For Paul, it was a privilege to suffer the inconvenience or even life-threatening crisis for the sake of his relationship with Christ. In this he was one with Christ who had suffered for him, and he knew his suffering would produce benefits for the church. Newspapers in 1993 carried the story of a man in Miami who was suing both his church and his pastor to get back the offerings from the previous year. The man’s pastor had promised benefits and blessings if members would tithe their income for the Lord’s work. The man tithed. The blessings didn’t come. He wanted his money back. How this attitude differs from that of St. Paul. Paul didn’t approach his faith from the perspective of gain, but from the perspective of service and sacrifice. (LL)

of Christ. Paul’s physical imprisonment was because he obeyed Christ in spite of opposition. After this verse Paul breaks his train of thought to explain the “mystery” (v. 4). He resumes his initial thought in v. 14. (CSB)

3:2 Paul interrupts himself to defend his calling. Paul knows what he taught them, but uses a rhetorical technique to encourage their memory (1:13; 4:21). (TLSB)

Surely you have heard. Most of the Ephesians would have heard of Paul’s ministry because of his long stay there earlier. However, if this was a circular letter (see note on 1:1), the other churches may not have known much about it. (CSB)

“Surely” does in no way denote uncertainty. (Buls)

“Heard” clearly shows that Paul knew these Ephesian Christians personally. (Buls)

administration. Paul unfolds God’s administrative plan for the church and for the universe in this letter (see especially 1:3–12). He has been given a significant responsibility in the execution of this plan. (CSB)

ESV has “stewardship.” Referring to a chief servant’s authority to administer household goods. Christ committed the Gospel to the apostles (Luke 12:41-48; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; Titus 1:7). (TLSB)

Stoeckhardt defines it as “Paul’s conduct in this office.” By the way, Stoeckhardt calls verses 2-13 “an expansive description of the office of Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles.” (Buls)

oikonomian – Management of a household; direction; office or stewardship. The plan of salvation (including the eternal plan from eternity through the promises of the OT to the fulfillment in Jesus Christ and the declaration/proclamation of the crucified and risen Christ). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

GRACE – Here it means Paul’s office as Apostle to the Gentiles. It was a gracious gift. It was given and it was for their sake, for their benefit. (Buls)

FOR YOU – The NIV translation of verse 2 adequately reproduces what the original says but makes it easy to miss the emphasis Paul intended. The key point lies in the last two words, “for you.” We might paraphrase the verse, Surely you have heard that it was for your benefit, not mine, that God called me to administer His grace. To be sure, Paul’s faithful preaching of God’s grace to the Gentiles got him into trouble with his fellow Jews and put him on trial in the Roman legal system. In the final analysis, though, the office of administering God’s grace to Gentiles wasn’t something Paul chose for himself. It “was given to me,” he declares. And so was the message. (PBC)

3:3 *mystery*. A truth known only by divine revelation (v. 5; see Ro 16:25; see also notes on Ro 11:25; Col 1:26). Here the word “mystery” has the special meaning of the private, wise plan of God, which in Ephesians relates primarily to the unification of believing Jews and Gentiles in the new body, the church (see v. 6). It may be thought of as a secret that is temporarily hidden, but more than that, it is a plan God is actively working out and revealing stage by stage (cf. 1:9–10; Rev 10:7). (CSB)

Paul would never have figured out his message by himself. Rather, it was a “mystery made known to (him) by revelation.” The term “mystery” is used some 20 times in the NT – most often by Paul and usually in the sense illustrated here. Paul is not speaking of something that is mysterious in the sense of being vague, murky, or hard to understand but rather something that needs to be explained. After it has been explained, it’s perfectly clear, but one would never have stumbled onto it without some outside help. Paul indicates that he received such help from God by revelation. (PBC)

What they did not see in ages past (even though it is mentioned in Isaiah 60 and in the prophet Ezekiel 33:11, “As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.” These words were applied to the Gentiles as well as the Jews) is the togetherness of Jew and Gentile in one body the church. The idea of Jew and Gentile as joint heirs, members of one body, sharing the promise of Christ, was a vision not held until the time of Paul. That was mystery revealed. It was as

radical a vision as people in Alabama or Memphis in the 1950's seeing whites and blacks together in the front of the bus. (LL)

as I have already written briefly. May refer to 1:9–10. (CSB)

Probably referring to the first part of this Letter (1:9-10; 2:11-22). (TLSB)

REVELATION – apokalupsin - A disclosure of what has been hidden or covered. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

Paul received the Gospel from Christ Himself, including the commission to preach it to Gentiles (Gal. 1:12, 16) (TLSB)

3:4 IN READING THIS – Public reading in the Divine Service (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; 1 Tim. 4:13). (TLSB)

Stoeckhardt: In verses 4 Paul is referring again to what he had written in 2:11-22, namely that through Christ the Gentiles has been brought near and had become fellow citizens with the saints and members of the very family of God.” (Buls)

ABLE TO UNDERSTAND – anagivwskovtes - To gain insight into with the mind. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

Bengel says: “This book is very sublime, and yet it is given to all to read...Paul wrote more plainly and sublimely in this epistle, than in any other before.” (Buls)

MYSTERY OF CHRIST – From this train of thought it is evident that the mystery (v. 3) and the mystery of Christ (v. 4) are not merely Christian truth or Christian doctrine in general but is the participation of the Gentiles in Christ's kingdom. In the parallel passage, Col. 1:27, Paul call this mystery, which was first hidden but is now made manifest the “mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you.” (ol. 4:3). (Stoeckhardt)

3:5 *not made known to men in other generations. See note on v. 6.*

Stoeckhardt: “Even the Prophets of the OT had prophesied of the entrance of the Gentiles into the kingdom of the Messiah, but these prophesies had not become generally known to the very people who were concerned, the Gentiles throughout the world. (Buls)

Though Paul received a special vision of Christ (v. 3), the other apostles received no less spiritual revelation and commission through Christ (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). (TLSB)

REVEALS – When God “reveals” his “mysterious secret,” he does not “pull the covers off” but snuggles under the covers with us; incarnation (John 1:14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

holy. Set apart for God’s service. (CSB)

Though all Christians are holy before God through Baptism, the apostles and prophets are set apart for a unique office (Rom. 1:1). (Cf. Eph. 2:20; 4:11). (TLSB)

apostles and prophets. See note on 2:20. Although Paul was the chief recipient, others received this revelation also. (CSB)

Thus Peter and James at the apostolic council (Acts 15), testified that God wanted to gather together for himself a people from the Gentiles. And what God revealed to them the apostles then –for which reasons they are also called – published further and proclaimed to the world. (Stoekhardt)

3:6 MYSTERY – The key to the mystery revealed to Paul lies in the expression “together,” used three times. Actually, in the original Greek the “together” idea is found in the noun. One could reflect that by using English compound words with co-. Paul was given to understand that through faith in Christ Gentiles are co-heirs with believing Jews, co-members of one and the same body, that is, the church, and co-sharers with Israel in the salvation that Christ’s merit has won. This equality between Jews and Gentiles is parallel to what Paul preciously talked about when he stated that Christ’s saving purpose in reconciling the world was “to create in Himself one new man out of two” (2:15). (PBC)

A word of caution is in order so that we don’t misunderstand Paul’s words and jump to the conclusion that Gentiles couldn’t be saved or that God wasn’t interested in them during OT times. Recall that God through the OT prophet Ezekiel said, “As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live” (33:11). These words applied to Gentiles as well as Jews. (PBC)

together ... together ... together. The repetition of this word indicates the unique aspect of the mystery that was not previously known: the equality and mutuality that Gentiles had with Jews in the church, the one body. That Gentiles would turn to the God of Israel and be saved was prophesied in the OT (see Ro 15:9–12); that they would come into an organic unity with believing Jews on an equal footing was unexpected. (CSB)

The apostle heaps up the expressions in order very strongly to call attention to the full and equal sharing of privileges by the Gentiles with the rest of the saints. The Gentile Christian are incorporated into the same body, into the body of

Christ, into the one holy Christian Church, and so also co-share in the promise of future salvation, are with all God's children heirs of eternal life. (Stoekhardt)

heirs. See note on 1:18. (CSB)

SHARERS – sugklaronoma – Inheriting together, fellow heirs, coheirs; joint share holders, equal heirs, equally belonging. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

The promise of Abraham, “In you and in your seeds shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” They did not get this blessing indirectly through the Jew, or by becoming Jews, but directly, as Gentiles; they became fellow-heirs, fellow-members, and fellow partakers “in Christ Jesus.” Enjoying all privileges in him in a state of union and fellowship with him. To this state they are invited and admitted through the gospel. (PC)

PROMISE – The pledge or promises (all of them) given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendents, stressing full equality of Gentile Christians with Jewish Christians; God has no “step-children.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

3:7 BECAME A SERVANT – ESV has “minister.” One entrusted with the office of preaching the Gospel. Paul was called by Christ Himself. (TLSB)

He wasn't one originally. Paul always remained painfully aware that earlier in his career as an ardent Pharisee he had been violently opposed to Christ and a vicious persecutor of Christians. On one occasion, while on his way to Damascus to conduct a raid on Christians in that city, the risen Christ confronted Paul on the road. He literally knocked him to the ground and brusquely rebuked him. (Acts 9:1-5). (PBC)

BY...GOD'S GRACE GIVEN ME – Here Paul sees grace bringing him the power necessary to preach the Gospel. Grace also equips us for ministry. (LL)

That God, in His grace and mercy, makes the unwilling willing, not by mere brute force but by effectual, powerful grace, is indeed a deep mystery. Stoekhardt remarks on this verse: “In verse 7 the specific grace which God has bestowed upon him is this, that through him and his service the Gospel is to be made known among the Gentiles. In speaking of this he calls attention to the fact that in this his service of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles the effectual working of God's power is demonstrated. The transcendent greatness of God's power and might is effective both in those who preach and in those who hear and believe the Gospel. 1:19.” (Buls)

energeian – The operation, action, activity; energy/energize; divine empowerment energizes to evangelize. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

3:8 *less than the least*. Cf. 1Ti 1:15. Paul never ceased to be amazed that one so unworthy as he should have been chosen for so high a task. His modesty was genuine, even though we may disagree with his self-evaluation. (CSB)

Not only of apostles and prophets, but even of all believers – a profound expression of humility, founded not only on his persecuting career, but on his consciousness of sin, of inborn rebellion against God’s Law. (PC)

grace. In this case, a special endowment that brings responsibility for service. (CSB)

The gift proceeding from God’s graciousness. (TLSB)

to preach. Lit. “to gospelize”; parallels “to make plain” (v. 9). (CSB)

Notice how the ministry of the apostles is identified with the ministry of our Lord himself.

The two infinitives (to preach, to make plain) do not refer to separate or different things, but together they explain and define what Paul’s underserved gift was. (PBC)

unsearchable. Far beyond what we can know, but not beyond our appreciation—at least in part (cf. Ro 11:33). (CSB)

Stoeckhardt: “They literally defy search and discovery.” He quotes Hofmann: “There are no footprints leading to them which man may follow in order to find them. The Apostolic message alone reveals them.” (Buls)

RICHES – Stoeckhardt: “The riches of Christ consist in the fullness of salvation of all those spiritual, heavenly blessings gained by Christ’s merits which have been enumerated in the first section of this Letter. (Buls)

anezichniaston – Incomprehensible or inscrutable. No one can ever exhaust the depths of the Gospel in the person and work of Jesus Christ, for it is a treasure – house of grace, vastly beyond all human comprehension. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

Conveying the idea of the things that are most precious being infinitely abundant. Usually precious things are rare; their very rarity increases their price; but here that which is most precious is also boundless – riches of compassion and love, of merit, of sanctifying, comforting, and transforming power, all without limit, and

capable of satisfying every want, craving and yearning of the heart, now and evermore. (PC)

3:9 MAKE PLAIN TO EVERYONE – Paul was presented in verse 8 as a missionary. Now he is presented as the universal theologian who brings out the profoundest implications of the Gospel and enlightens the whole church.

phwtisai - Give light, light up, illuminate, shine light on. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

Paul is the founder and organizer of the Gentile Church. Later missionary activity among the Gentiles is a continuation of the great work of the first unique missionary to the Gentiles, who filled the Orient and the Occident with Gospel of Christ. Just now, as Paul is writing this letter, as he has nearly completed his apostolic career, is this economy really brought to light. (Stoeckhardt)

KEPT HIDDEN IN GOD, WHO CREATED ALL THINGS – It has been in the mind of the creator and inherent in creation since the beginning. Notice how creation and redemption are tied together here. The created order is also God's and part of his plan of salvation.

ajpokekrummevnou – Kept secret. The revelation of God is the answer to life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

3:10 now. In contrast to the “ages past” (v. 9). (CSB)

through the church. The fact that God had done the seemingly impossible—reconciling and organically uniting Jews and Gentiles in the church—makes the church the perfect means of displaying God's wisdom. (CSB)

The very existence of a Church in which Jews and Gentiles are united stands as a testimony to Christ's victory over the devil's divisive schemes. (TLSB)

manifold. Variegated or multifaceted (in the way that many facets of a diamond reflect and enhance its beauty). (CSB)

Many-sided, multi-faceted; displaying God's wisdom before the intelligences of the heavenly order. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

God had separated a people from corrupt mankind, while He permitted the Gentiles to go their own ways. That was Israel. However, not all those who descended from Abraham according to the flesh were true children. But within Abraham's seed there was a holy seed, true Israel. Also in the times of deepest apostasy the Lord retained for Himself a remnant, an election of grace. And in the midst of the Jewish people God had prepared the salvation of the world. When the time was fulfilled, God called Jews and Gentiles into the Fellowship of

Christ. Indeed, the majority of the Jews hardened. But how wonderful! The unbelief, the hardening and rejection of Israel had to serve to bring to faith and save the Gentiles. This divine wisdom, which by means of the reverse effects the reverse. When the Jews rejected the Word of salvation, the apostles then turned to the Gentiles. On the other hand, the faith of the Gentiles incited and incites the Jews to emulation. This is divine wisdom that opposite things and means, as faith and unbelief, have the same effect, resulting in enlarging the congregation of believers. And so on it goes unto the end, until the fullness has been reached, until the number of the elect is fulfilled. (Stoeckhardt)

SHOULD BE MADE KNOWN – gnoqisthan - To reveal. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

rulers and authorities. Christ had ascended over all these (1:20–21). It is a staggering thought that the church on earth is observed, so to speak, by these spiritual powers and that to the degree the church is spiritually united it portrays to them the wisdom of God. This thought may be essential in understanding the meaning of “calling” in 4:1. (CSB)

Stoeckhardt: “The principalities and powers that are mentioned here appear as the witnesses and admirers of the wisdom of God, which is made known through the Church. (Buls)

heavenly realms. See note on 1:3. (CSB)

Stoeckhardt: These heavenly spirits rejoice to see this glorious work of humanity there is built up that holy, perfect temple of God.” We are reminded of Luke 15:7, 10 which informs us that angels rejoice each time a sinner repents. We are reminded of 1 Peter 1:12 which tells us that the angels desire to look into the mysteries of redemption. We are reminded of Heb. 1:14 which tells us that God is constantly sending them to serve us. What fascinates the angels? The Gospel. The world treads on it as nothing. Sometimes even the church does that. We live in a world of sin, confusion, disappointment, lack of justice, opposition, seeming impossibilities. But the Gospel is God’s many-sided wisdom. Lenski remarks: “It weaves a thousand apparently tangled threads into one glorious pattern.” (Buls)

In the Preface of our communion liturgy we say: “Therefore, with angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven, we laud and magnify your glorious name...” (LL)

3:11 ACCORDING TO – Kata means “in keeping with.” How far back does the kata phrase go? All the way back to the beginning of verse 8. (Buls)

eternal purpose. The effective headship of Christ over a united church is in preparation for his ultimate assumption of headship over the universe (1:10). (CSB)

This denotes both election and the mystery of the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. God's eternal purposes are always, always, IN CHRIST JESUS, never apart from Him. (Buls)

The great saving plan of God as praised in 1:3-14. (TLSB)

All periods of history have made their contribution to this eternal purpose and plan of God. Notice how God works in history to bring about redemption and the unity of humanity.

prothesin - A plan or will. Through everything that time and life brings about, God carefully prepared a plan for the complete fulfillment of his eternal will. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

The apostle is ever anxious that we should connect these operations of God with the profundity, deliberation, and awfulness of an eternal decree, and that we should thus contrast them in our minds with many even of the most important works of man which are often determined on his part, by a passing event or other trivial cause. (PC)

3:12 THROUGH FAITH IN HIM – This epistle again stresses the personal relationship with God I Christ that makes all this happen. Our faith is not just “personal,” however, but is part of the design of the universe itself. For this God created us.

WE – Paul includes himself (a Jew) with the Ephesian Gentiles. For both groups the barriers have been taken away in Christ – barriers between one another, but even more important, barriers between the sinner and God. (PBC)

WITH FREEDOM AND CONFIDENCE – We no longer need to feel timid or unsure in the presence of God. God is not ruthless or unpredictable, for Christ has revealed him to us as he really is. Note in the entire section how the church rises triumphantly with Christ into the presence of God. The church is victorious over every force or power that might oppose it. Furthermore, the world is created for spiritual purposes and these purposes are realized in the church glorious.

We Christians now stand in the right relation to God. We have an openness of heart toward God, an approach to God with confidence. Comforted and with all assurance we can approach God as dear children approach their dear father. This relation to God is mediated objectively through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, subjectively through faith in Christ. (Stoeckhardt)

parrasan – Courage, confidence, boldness, fearlessness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

MAY APPROACH – prosagogan – To have access. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

Christians can pray personally to the Father. (TLSB)

CONFIDENCE – pepoithasei – Trust. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

GOSPEL
Matthew 2:1-12

The Visit of the Magi

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.” ³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶”“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.” ⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” ⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east ^e went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

In many ways, all of Matthew 2 is a continuous narrative, with the contrasting figures of the two kings, Herod and Jesus, dominating the entire chapter. However, since the Magi are only in 2:1–12, we are justified in considering the significance of this unit, all the while acknowledging the flow of the entire chapter. With his opening genitive absolute construction (τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος ἐν Βηθλέεμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας, “Now after Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea,” 2:1), Matthew also recalls the events of 1:18–25 and links chapter 2 with chapter 1—and not only verbally. The themes of human ignorance and divine revelation,

of “normal” expectations and hidden realities, flow seamlessly from chapter 1 and are magnified in chapter 2. From the account of Joseph and the naming of Mary’s child we learned that apart from God’s interruption and revelation, human beings will neither comprehend nor believe in God’s ways of working through his Christ, the Son of David and Son of God. That same contrast helps to drive forward the narrative of chapter 2 in even more powerful ways, through the contrast of the two kings as well as the unexpected believers who arrive in Jerusalem. (CC)

2:1 JESUS WAS BORN – τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος ἐν Βηθλέεμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἐν ἡμέραις Ἡρώδου τοῦ βασιλέως—When was Jesus born? Modern scholarship places the death of Herod with a fair amount of confidence in 4 BC, based on Josephus’ account. If there is a direct relationship between the first appearance of the star to the Magi, the time of Jesus’ birth, and the age of Bethlehem’s murdered children, then Jesus will have been born in 6 BC at the earliest, and perhaps in 5 BC. (CC)

Bethlehem in Judea. A village about five miles south of Jerusalem. Matthew says nothing of the events in Nazareth (cf. Lk 1:26–56). Possibly wanting to emphasize Jesus’ Davidic background, he begins with the events that happened in David’s city. It is called “Bethlehem in Judea,” not to distinguish it from the town of the same name about seven miles northwest of Nazareth, but to emphasize that Jesus came from the tribe and territory that produced the line of Davidic kings. That Jews expected the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem and to be from David’s family is clear from John 7:42. (CSB)

C 5 mi S of Jerusalem. Town where David was born and anointed king (1 Sam 16:1-13). (TLSB)

King Herod. Herod the Great (37–4 B.C.), to be distinguished from the other Herods in the Bible (see chart on “House of Herod”). Herod was a non-Jew, an Idumean, who was appointed king of Judea by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C. and gained control in 37. Like most rulers of the day, he was ruthless, murdering his wife, his three sons, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, uncle and many others—not to mention the babies in Bethlehem (v. 16). His reign was also noted for splendor, as seen in the many theaters, amphitheaters, monuments, pagan altars, fortresses and other buildings he erected or refurbished—including the greatest work of all, the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, begun in 20 B.C. and finished 68 years after his death. (CSB)

Named king of Judea by the Roman Senate in 40 BC. Called “the Great” to distinguish him from his sons. He was a ruthless ruler whose paranoia caused him to kill family members and close associates. He likely died c 1 BC (the year of Jesus’ birth was calculated erroneously by later historians). (TLSB)

Matthew's use of ἰδοὺ, "look!" (2:1b and 2:9b), marks out a two-part structure for 2:1–12. An unspecified length of time has passed after the birth of Jesus, when—look!—Magi from the east appear in Jerusalem, inquiring about the location of the King of the Jews who had been born. There is a contrast between the seeking Magi and Herod and those under his direction, who were unaware of the birth and star until the Magi arrived. This is the contrast between knowledge and ignorance, faith and unbelief, truth and hypocrisy. The difference between the two kings in the narrative is equally stark. Herod is already king, for Matthew so names him in 2:1, 3, 9. His rule is typical of worldly despots; he governs by fear, deceit, and murder. (CC)

Carson, *Matthew*, 86, is surely on target when commenting on the fact that "all Jerusalem" was troubled along with Herod (2:3): this was "not because most of the people would have been sorry to see Herod replaced or because they were reluctant to see the coming of King Messiah, but because they well knew that any question like the Magi's would result in more cruelty from the ailing Herod." In contrast, Luz (*Matthew*, 1:135–36) misreads the text when he thinks that Matthew's narrative "is not concerned about historical realities" since Matthew allegedly is portraying Herod and the religious leaders in "beautiful harmony." (CC)

D. A. Carson helpfully summarizes the career of Herod the Great:

Herod the Great, as he is now called, was born in 73 B.C. and was named king of Judea by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C. By 37 B.C. he had crushed, with the help of Roman forces, all opposition to his rule. Son of the Idumean Antipater, he was wealthy, politically gifted, intensely loyal, an excellent administrator, and clever enough to remain in the good graces of successive Roman emperors. His famine relief was superb and his building projects (including the temple, begun 20 B.C.) admired even by his foes. But he loved power, inflicted incredibly heavy taxes on the people, and resented the fact that many Jews considered him a usurper. In his last years, suffering an illness that compounded his paranoia, he turned to cruelty and in fits of rage and jealousy killed close associates, his wife Mariamne (of Jewish descent from the Maccabeans), and at least two of his sons. (CC)

BEHOLD – ESV has this word at this point. The word, repeated in v.9, alerts the reader to something startling. (TLSB) Also in KJV)

Magi. Probably astrologers, perhaps from Persia or southern Arabia, both of which are east of Palestine. (CSB)

Greek term loosely referred to a wide variety of people interested in dreams, astrology, and magic. (TLSB)

MAGI FROM THE EAST – These Gentiles probably came from Persia, Babylon, or Arabia. Their kind of wisdom was not always God-pleasing. (TLSB)

Off the Magi are going when—ἰδοὺ, “look!”—God intervenes (2:9b). The star that the Magi had seen now reappears and guides them to the true King of the Jews. After they greet the King and offer appropriate royal gifts in an act of obeisance, the Magi apparently intend to return and report their experience to Herod. But no! God intervenes once again, and “warned in a dream” (2:12), the Magi depart by another way to their own country. Earlier through a message conveyed in a “dream” (1:20), God did not allow the well-meaning ignorance of Joseph to negate or contradict or even misunderstand the significance of Mary’s child (1:19–23). Just so, God will allow neither the naiveté of the Magi nor the designs of “Herod the king” (2:1) to threaten or thwart his plan to save all people, both Jew and Gentile, through Mary’s child, the true King of the Jews, who fulfills God’s promise that all nations shall be blessed through Abraham’s Seed (see the commentary on “Son of Abraham” in 1:1). As already exemplified by the women in Jesus’ genealogy, God works in unexpected and unknown ways—in Jesus, and in bringing others to the knowledge of Jesus. (CC)

A closer look at 2:1–12 will help to flesh out this overall theme of comparison and contrast. In particular, understanding the Magi in light of how a first-century Jewish reader/hearer would have seen them will show how Matthew’s portrait of the Magi fits into some of the overall themes of the Gospel. All agree that the Magi are *Gentiles*, and so their presence in Matthew 2 is another obvious anticipation in this very “Jewish” Gospel that Israel’s Messiah and true King has come for the blessing of all the nations. But that these Gentiles are *Magi* is also significant. Here we can pause to ask this question: How would a first-century Jewish reader have responded to the announcement in the narrative, “Look! *Magi from the east* appeared in Jerusalem” (2:1)? (CC)

Mark Allan Powell has carefully examined three questions about the Magi: (1) How did the Magi in Matthew 2 come to be regarded as “kings” in the history of interpretation? (2) How did interpreters come to regard the Magi as “wise” in the positive sense of the term? and (3) How would the first-century Jewish “implied reader” of Matthew’s Gospel have regarded magi? Regarding the first question, Powell shows that the Magi were not widely regarded as “kings” until the sixth century. Commentators long have known the relatively late origin of that interpretation, and so few today would hold that Matthew either portrays the Magi as royal figures or understood them as such himself. When Powell addresses the second and third questions, however, he argues provocatively against views widely held by other modern commentators.(CC)

It is commonplace for interpreters to regard the Magi as learned or wise in positive matters. As examples of this widely accepted interpretation, Davies and Allison call them “representatives of the best wisdom of the Gentile world,” “eastern intellectuals,” and “open-minded Gentile wise men.” Luz

describes the Magi as “wise and pious Gentiles who from the beginning seek that which is right, namely, to worship the child Jesus.” Brown states that the Magi in Matthew 2 “represent the best of pagan lore and religious perceptivity which has come to seek Jesus through revelation in nature.” (CC)

Nevertheless, Powell contends that the strain of interpretation that understands the Magi as “wise” in the sense of “learned in matters of significance” is invalid. Those who thus read Mt 2:1–12 have construed the narrative in a way that the evangelist would never have foreseen and that would have been alien to his original readers/hearers. Powell claims that the assumption that the Magi’s own “learning” is a positive thing emerged late in the history of interpretation. He writes:

In the patristic and medieval periods, the magi’s learning was often simply ignored. They were depicted as foreigners, as pious, and—after Constantine—as models of godly rulers. When their learning was addressed, however, it was universally denounced. Their so-called science or art was regarded as false knowledge, even as a false religion. It did not aid them in coming to the Christ but rather was rejected after they came to the Christ. (CC)

Powell is unable to find any reference that “actually extols Matthew’s magi as wise men” before the eighth century. It is only in the Enlightenment and on into the modern period that the Magi came to be generally regarded positively as scholars and seekers after truth, according to Powell. (CC)

Powell searches out what Matthew’s readers would have known by examining the roles and characterizations of μάγοι (“magi”) in Greco-Roman literature, Jewish literature, and the LXX. He concludes that although magi are often the servants of royal figures and kings, they themselves are never kings, and they are often portrayed as relatively powerless in relation to their overlords. More important, in the OT and in Jewish literature, magi are never “wise” in the sense of “learned in matters of significance,” and so the very translation of μάγοι as “wise men” ought to be avoided. The best example of this truth is the one OT narrative wherein “magi” figure: Daniel 2. In the LXX, the Babylonian courtiers who are summoned to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream are described as “the wizards and the *magi* and the sorcerers of the Chaldeans” (οἱ ἑπαιδοὶ καὶ οἱ μάγοι καὶ οἱ φαρμακοὶ τῶν Χαλδαίων, LXX Dan 2:2). However, when the king asks them to reveal both his dream and its interpretation, they declare that they are unable and even protest that no “wise man or *magus* or Chaldean” (σοφὸν καὶ μάγον καὶ Χαλδαῖον, LXX Dan 2:10b) had ever been asked to attempt such a task. These various Babylonian practitioners of occult learning, which would be anathema to a first-century Jewish audience, are lumped together as “Chaldeans” (Dan 2:4, 5, 10a), who refer to themselves as the Babylonian king’s “servants” (Dan 2:7). (CC)

Daniel's familiar account turns on the contrast between the Babylonian king's courtiers and pious and faithful Daniel, to whom the true God gives the ability both to reveal and to interpret the king's dream. The point of the narrative is that *contrast* between the incapable, uncomprehending magi and Daniel's God-given wisdom. The magi are not "wise" in any learning that comports with truth and piety. And this is exactly why Matthew's original readers would have been surprised by their appearance in Mt 2:1, which is probably why Matthew marks their appearance with "look!" (ἰδοὺ, 2:1). Magi did not worship the God of Israel; they were often servants of rulers who oppressed the people of Israel, and they were in league with a supernatural power that opposed the one true God. No one would expect *magi* to come in search of the Child-King whose birth was prophesied in Holy Scripture. What, then, are *they* doing here? (CC)

To underscore how the original readers/hearers of Matthew's Gospel would have considered the Magi to be most "unlikely devotees," Powell also keenly describes the manner in which Matthew's narrative characterizes the Magi in 2:1–12. No information is forthcoming from the evangelist about how or why the visitors from the east concluded from the earlier manifestation of the star that the King of the Jews had been born.

Scholars often draw a connection between the star seen by the Magi and Balaam's prophecy in Num 24:17. This seems a likely connection, especially since the Palestinian Targum, the LXX, and documents at Qumran regard Num 24:17 as messianic (Nolan, *Royal Son of God*, 74). In the early second century AD, the Jewish leader Bar Kokhba ("son of the star") was so named, based on Num 24:17, by those who considered him a messiah (Schürer, *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, 1:543–44). LXX Num 24:17 reads: "I will show him and not now; I am blessing, and he is not drawing near; a star will rise from Jacob [ἀνατελεῖ ἄστρον ἐξ Ἰακωβ], and a man will stand up from Israel and he will break the princes of Moab, and he will forage all the sons of Seth." How the Magi in Matthew 2 became aware of Num 24:17 (or another passage, such as Is 60:3) or were shown its significance—if indeed that is how they came to interpret the star's appearance—receives no explanation and no emphasis in Matthew's account. (CC)

Rather, they arrive in Jerusalem not knowing where the new King is. They must be guided by Scripture to know the correct town: Bethlehem, not Jerusalem, which was Herod's capital and the logical place to find a new king. From Jerusalem, they apparently need the guidance of the star to get to the house where the child and his mother reside. When they arrive at the house where the child and his mother are living, the Magi offer to him the kind of obeisance that would be offered to any other earthly king. They do not, in fact, show that they fully understand the kind of rule *this* King has come to bring. (CC)

The Magi bring *gifts* to the newborn King, and even here Matthew's description reveals that the Magi have not fully understood the significance of the child to whom they are paying homage. The gold, frankincense, and myrrh are the sorts of gifts that one would expect a monarch to receive. But Jesus is not a normal monarch! Although the history of interpretation is marked with attempts to interpret symbolically the gifts of the Magi, the number and variety of those attempts shows that there is not enough data to support such symbolic interpretation. (CC)

The Gospel of Matthew itself provides no support for a symbolic significance to the gifts. "Gold" occurs elsewhere in Matthew only in 10:9; 23:16, 17. "Frankincense" and "myrrh" never recur elsewhere in Matthew. There is a longstanding thread of interpretive tradition (already in Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.9.2) that finds in the gold, frankincense, and myrrh symbolic references to Christ's royalty, deity, and sacrificial death, respectively. See Luz, *Matthew*, 1:138; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:249. Positive support for this view is scarce. Moreover, if Matthew had wanted to associate "myrrh" with Jesus' death, he had opportunity to do so both in Mt 27:34 (cf. the parallel at Mk 15:23 and its use of *σμυρνίζω*) and in Mt 27:57–61, but he did not make the association explicit. Another factor in the history of the church's interpretation of the "gifts of the Magi" that should produce caution is the very plasticity of the symbolic approach. Not only have the gifts been interpreted in Christological fashion, they have often also been assigned a sort of paraenetic value. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, 8.1, asserts that the Magi's gifts showed that they were truly offering their gifts to God, for "it was knowledge and obedience and love that they offered unto Him" (*NPNF*¹ 10:50). According to Simonetti, *Matthew*, 1:28–29, Gregory the Great (*Forty Gospel Homilies*, 10.6) took the gifts to stand for wisdom, prayer, and the mortification of the flesh. See Luz, *Matthew*, 1:138, for an illuminating sample of various interpretations. If a nose turns out to be that waxen, perhaps it ought just to be left alone. (CC)

The best approach is simply to allow them to be "gifts fit for a king" that show the Magi's genuine, yet limited, understanding and faith that God has sent a new king to his people Israel. (CC)

Song 3:6; 4:6, 14, each of which refers to "frankincense" and "myrrh" in connection with Solomon's bride, may support a royal and priestly interpretation of the Magi's gifts; cf. Mitchell, *Song of Songs*, 764–65, 862–68. Those verses in the Song are the only places in the MT where "frankincense" and "myrrh" (מִרְיָא and לְבוֹנָה) occur in close association. In the LXX, λίβανος, "frankincense," and σμύρνα, "myrrh," occur together only in those Song verses and in Sirach 24:15. "Gold" and "frankincense" in Is 60:6 have royal and messianic connotations because Isaiah 60 promises that in the time of eschatological salvation, the light of divine glory will shine in Israel, who will then receive the wealth of the nations, including those gifts, perhaps brought

by the Gentile “kings” who are mentioned in Is 60:3, 11. Thus, on one level, the gifts of the Magi are a sign of their God-given, but still limited, understanding of who this Child-King is. Yet on another level, Matthew may intend for his readers/hearers to catch the allusion to the Song of Songs and to see in this Son of David an antitype for Solomon (Mt 12:42; cf. “Solomon, Wisdom, and Christology” in Mitchell, *Song of Songs*, 34–38). Isaiah 60 too supports the interpretation that the honor that these Gentile Magi proffer to the King of the Jews is an anticipation of those Gentiles who, in light of this King’s completed work and promised return, will become disciples through Baptism in the triune name (Mt 28:19) and will truly honor and worship “the King of the Jews who has been born” (2:2). In Davies and Allison’s phrasing, the Magi are “the firstfruits of the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations and their submission to the one true God” (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:249). (CC)

Finally, as Powell notes, the Magi’s naiveté is manifest in that they are successfully duped by Herod’s evil plan to kill the child until they are warned in a dream not to return to Herod. In a word, Powell concludes, the Magi are portrayed not as wise men, but as fundamentally ignorant. The things they know that are worthwhile have all been revealed to them, and yet their knowledge and understanding are still limited. This narrative characterization of the Magi, coupled with the natural associations that the Gospel’s original readers/hearers would have linked to “magi” by their very nature, allows Powell to lay bare the powerful message that lies at the very center of 2:1–12. When Matthew writes, “Look, *Magi from the east* appeared in Jerusalem and said, ‘Where is the King of the Jews who has been born?’ ” the only conclusion that his readers/hearers may draw is not that “the magi [are] wise men whose learning leads them to Christ but [that they are] ignorant people to whom God reveals the Christ.” (CC)

Mt 2:1–12 thus shows continuity with 1:18–25 and with the entire Gospel. Can pious Joseph be expected to know God’s ways of salvation? No, God must send his angel to Joseph in a dream (1:18–25). Jerusalem with its chief priests and scribes should have expected the birth of the King of the Jews as prophesied in the OT, but those religious leaders are unaware of Jesus’ birth until Magi from the east arrive and announce it to them. Although the Magi were aware that the King has been born, they are unable to find him until they are guided by the Scriptures (2:6) and the star (2:9). Even then, the Magi unknowingly would have enabled Herod to kill the child if they had not been warned in a dream (2:12). When Peter confesses the truth of Jesus’ identity as Christ and Son of God, will he be commended for his wisdom and clarity of insight? No, Jesus pronounces eschatological blessing upon Peter because the heavenly Father *revealed* Jesus’ identity to Peter and enabled him to confess (16:16–17). Jesus’ words in 11:25 express this important theme in Matthew’s Gospel, and in all of Holy Scripture: “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you hid these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to infants.” (CC)

Powell, “The Magi as Wise Men,” 13, comments: “I think the implied readers are expected to respond, ‘God revealed the truth about the Christ to a bunch of pagan fools while those who were wise enough to figure it out for themselves missed it.’ Just like Jesus said.” (CC)

There is unanimity regarding the identity of the Magi or their actual vocation, although there is some speculation that they were astrologers. Nor does Scripture identify the number of Magi who came to Jesus. The OT Book of Daniel makes reference to Magi (2:48). There it states that King Nebuchadnezzar placed Daniel in charge of all of the “wise men” of Babylonia. There is general agreement among biblical scholars that the Magi were Gentiles, not Jews. That makes the focus on this topic that Christ is the Savior of all nations. It was, and is, God’s desire to reveal the birth of Christ to non-Jews as well as to Jews. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

Jerusalem. Since they were looking for the “king of the Jews” (v. 2), they naturally came to the Jewish capital city (see map No. 8 at the end of the Study Bible). (CSB)

2:2 *king of the Jews.* Indicates the Magi were Gentiles. Matthew shows that people of all nations acknowledged Jesus as “king of the Jews” and came to worship him as Lord. (CSB)

It is surprising that these Gentile Magi would be looking for a Jewish king. Jesus comes for all nations. (TLSB)

ὁ τεχθεὶς βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων—I have taken the aorist passive participle τεχθεὶς (from τίκτω) as being in the attributive position with an adjectival function (“the King of the Jews who has been born”) rather than as a substantive followed by “King of the Jews” in apposition (“the one who has been born, the King of the Jews”). To be sure, Matthew’s style much more often (by a ratio of approximately ten to one) places a participle in directly adjectival position by repeating the article and placing both article and participle after the noun, as, for example, in 6:4: ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ. But if the participle τεχθεὶς here in 2:2 is a substantive, the absence of the article with βασιλεὺς is puzzling; the article with “Jews” (τῶν Ἰουδαίων) would normally lead one to expect “King” to be arthrous. For adjectival participles in a similar construction in Matthew, see 3:7; 17:27; 25:34; 27:52. Herod, for his part, certainly understands the Magi’s words to refer to “*the* King of the Jews,” a direct rival to his power, for there can be only one king. (CC)

By contrast, the “King of the Jews who has been born” (2:2) is unknown, weak, in need of protection, even though his coming was prophesied in the OT. The true King will be found in lowly Bethlehem, where David himself arose, and not in Jerusalem—the capital, where the religious leaders who have led Israel’s lost sheep astray and the false King Herod are found. After questioning the Magi,

Herod succeeds in concealing from them his murderous intentions and sends them to find the precise location of the new Child-King. On the surface of the narrative, the powerful Herod seems to be in charge. (CC)

There was an assertion contained in their question. Their knowledge was definite as to His having been born. It was a fact beyond question or discussion. A Child has been born that is King of the Jews; His kingship is even now established beyond a doubt. The evidence which the Magi adduce for their belief is sensational. They had seen a star in its rising, just as soon as the phenomenon became visible; not any star, not a meteor provided for the occasion, not a comet of peculiar brilliance, not an extraordinary conjunction of planets, but His star, a star which was set in the firmament, or which flashed forth at just this time with unusual brightness. The appearance and, according to verse 9, also the guidance of this star was to them a definite sign, an unmistakable token of the fulfillment of a prophecy, tradition, or revelation which was known to them. It may have been that the prophecy of Balaam, Num. 24, 17, had been explained by their teachers as referring to an actual, physical star, or it may be, as the medieval legend, which is embodied in the Old Saxon poem of *The Heliand*, has it, that Daniel transmitted to the learned men of the East a tradition concerning this particular star. At any rate, they had come to worship Him whose coming the star indicated, to give Him divine homage and adoration by a gesture or ceremony of abject submission, placing themselves and all their possessions at His disposal. (Kretzmann)

star. Probably not an ordinary star, planet or comet, though some scholars have identified it with the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. (CSB)

The Magi may have seen a natural astronomical phenomenon, but more likely the appearance of the star was a miraculous event (cf. 9). They may have linked the star with a Jewish king through acquaintance with OT prophecy. (TLSB)

The Magi knowing OT prophecy isn't as far-fetched as it may sound. The Assyrians and the Babylonians (Eastern Lands) captured and carried off the brightest and the best Israelites to their own country. The Jews who went there carried with them scriptural knowledge and practiced their faith in this new land. It is very likely that they shared this with the Assyrian and Babylonian people. In this way the Assyrians and Babylonians would have learned about the promised Savior. (CC)

εἶδομεν γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα—A significant discussion exists around the nature of the star. Was it a “natural” phenomenon or something that should be described as “miraculous”? The former cannot be ruled out of court in advance, as Alford argues with some vigor. Allison shows how unlikely it is that a first-century reader of Matthew would have regarded the “star” as a natural phenomenon. One feature that makes it difficult to suppose that we should explain the star in terms of normal astronomy is its erratic, yet precise, movement. The star apparently

appeared to the Magi some time before they arrived in Jerusalem (perhaps as much as two years earlier; see 2:16); then after they arrived, it led them by moving in some way until it stood over the exact place where the child was (2:9b)! Matthew's combination in 2:9 of "look!" (ἰδοῦ) with the imperfect indicative προῆγεν, "began to go before/lead the way," suggests that the star reappeared and began to move when the Magi required its further guidance. A natural phenomenon such as the convergence of planets or a comet could continue for days or weeks, but probably not for as long as two years, and it seems unlikely that such a natural occurrence in the heavens could lead the Magi to a specific house (2:9, 11). It seems likely that Matthew regarded the star of the Magi as a miraculous event, and hence so should we. (CC)

Another question is whether anyone else besides the Magi saw the star. The text does not declare it a private revelation (as were the dreams in 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22; 27:19). On the other hand, Matthew nowhere says that other people witnessed the star, either in its earlier appearing (before the Magi arrived in Jerusalem) or later, when the star led the Magi from Jerusalem to Jesus. The reaction of Herod and the people of Jerusalem in 2:3 indicates that they were unaware of the star, or at least had not perceived its significance. (CC)

FROM THE EAST – ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ—While ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν in 2:1 with the anarthrous plural of the noun meant "from the east" (also 8:11; 24:27), the singular form of the noun here and the presence of the article both indicate that this phrase (repeated in 2:9) means "in its rising." The prepositional phrase describes *when* the Magi saw the star, not *where*. The noun ἀνατολή, "rising," may recall Num 24:17, which was translated by the LXX with a cognate verb: "a star will rise from Jacob [ἀνατελεῖ ἄστρον ἐξ Ἰακωβ]." The noun ἀνατολή may also reflect the noun ἠῶ, "rising," in "kings [will come] to the brightness of your rising" (Is 60:3), especially since Isaiah 60 (a traditional Epiphany text) has many other points of contact with Mt 2:1–12. (CC)

Greek term for "east" and "rising" is the same. (TLSB)

TO WORSHIP – προσκυνῆσαι—Historically and narratively, what sort of reverence did the Magi intend to pay to the newborn King? There was a fine line between royalty and deity in the ancient world. When they arrived at the house where the child was, they "fell down and showed reverence to him" (2:11). As the commentary will argue more fully, the awareness of the Magi themselves (both as historical persons and as characters in the narrative) falls short of full knowledge of the significance of the child. Accordingly, the translation stops short of "worship." Larry Hurtado comments regarding προσκυνέω that

the specific connotation of the prostration or other gestures depended entirely on what kind of honor the person offering the reverence intended to attribute to the figure receiving the gesture. ... So we really cannot take

every example of bowing and obeisance as “worship” in the “hard” sense of reverencing a figure as a deity. (CC)

In spite of this reserved understanding of προσκυνέω in the mouth and minds of the Magi, it is surely the case that the readers/hearers of Matthew’s narrative will see the honor that the Magi offer to the child as a foreshadowing of their own worship of Jesus, offered in light of his completed work that the Gospel itself will narrate. (CC)

Though the Greek word may also describe the reverence one would show a king, it commonly describes divine worship in the NT. (TLSB)

2:3 WAS DISTURBED AND ALL JERUSALEM WITH HIM – Herod feared that his rule might be challenged. The people dreaded Herod’s rage and his cruel reaction to this report (v. 16). As an Idumean (Edomite), Herod continued the relationship of rivalry with God’s chosen people. (TLSB)

Ironically, Herod, a cruel, mean-spirited king was the instrument of God to direct the Wise Men to Bethlehem. This is still again ample evidence that God is in charge. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

Edomites were descendants of Esau. They refused passage of Israel through their country when Israel was traveling through the wilderness to Canaan. Their country was located at the SE border of Palestine. They were continual enemies of Israel.

To learn that a king was born to the Jews must have been alarming for a person who knew that he was hated of everyone, and who was troubled in his guilty conscience. (Ylvisaker)

2:4 *chief priests*. Sadducees (see note on 3:7) who were in charge of worship at the temple in Jerusalem. (CSB)

Current and former high priests. (TLSB)

He had not authority to assemble the Sanhedrin, and in this instance one third of the Sanhedrin was absent. It was theological assembly, met to render a theological decision. The high priests are not the leaders of the twenty-four orders in the priesthood, but the acting high priest and those who occupied the office prior to him. (Ylvisaker)

teachers of the law. The Jewish scholars of the day, professionally trained in the development, teaching and application of OT law. Their authority was strictly human and traditional. (CSB)

Students of God’s Word who interpreted and taught the Scriptures. (TLSB)

Another irony is that Gentiles told Jews about the birth of the Messiah. The Jewish people had awaited their Messiah for centuries, yet God chose to announce the Messiah’s birth through the lips of Gentiles. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

WHERE CHRIST WAS TO BE BORN – Herod’s question indicated his awareness of OT promises of a Messiah. (TLSB)

2:5 HAS WRITTEN – γέγραπται—The perfect stem (of γράφω) expresses ongoing result. In this Gospel, in which the fulfillment of Scripture is so strong a theme, ((a) E.g., Mt 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17) the word γέγραπται will be translated uniformly as “it stands written.” ((b) Also Mt 4:4, 6, 7, 10; 11:10; 21:13; 26:24, 31) (CC)

2:6 This prophecy from Micah had been given seven centuries earlier. (CSB)

YOU BETHLEHEM – Micah spoke this prophecy more than 700 years earlier, at a time when Assyria threatened Judah. The birth of Christ fulfilled the promise of a ruler from Bethlehem. (TLSB)

The καὶ σὺ Βηθλέεμ, γῆ Ἰούδα ...—The text form of the OT citation is of some significance. It provides us with the first clear example of two phenomena that we will meet again in Matthew’s use of the OT, namely, (1) a composite OT citation and (2) Matthew’s own “adjustments” to the text of the OT. Both these phenomena are visible in figure 4. (CC)

Figure 4

The Old Testament Quotation in Matthew 2:6

MT Micah 5:1	LXX Micah 5:1	Matthew 2:6
וְאַתָּה בֵּית־לְחֶם אֶפְרָתָה	καὶ σὺ Βηθλεεμ οἶκος τοῦ εφραθα	καὶ σὺ Βηθλέεμ, γῆ Ἰούδα
And you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,	And you, Bethlehem, house of Ephrathah,	And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
צָעִיר לְהַיּוֹת בְּאַלְפֵי יְהוּדָה	ὀλιγοστὸς εἶ τοῦ εἶναι ἐν χιλιάσιν Ἰουδα	οὐδαμῶς ἐλαχίστη εἶ ἐν τοῖς ἡγεμόσιν Ἰούδα
little to be among Judah’s thousands	very small are you to be among Judah’s thousands—	by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah,
מִמָּהֵר לִי יֵצֵא לְחַיִּים מוֹשֵׁל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל	ἐκ σοῦ μοι ἐξελεύσεται τοῦ εἶναι εἰς ἄρχοντα ἐν τῷ	ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ ἐξελεύσεται ἡγούμενος,

MT Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible
LXX Septuagint

from you for me he will go out to be Ruler in Israel,	Ισραηλ from you for me he will go out to be for a Ruler in Israel,	for from you will come forth a Ruler
וּמִצְאוֹתָיו מִקֶּדֶם מִיְמֵי עוֹלָם:	καὶ αἱ ἔξοδοι αὐτοῦ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἐξ ἡμερῶν αἰῶνος.	
and his goings-out are from old, from days of eternity.	and his goings-out are from the beginning, from the days of eternity.	
MT Micah 5:4)	LXX Micah 5:3	
וְעָמַד וַיִּרְעֶה בְּעֹז יְהוָה	καὶ στήσεται καὶ ὄψεται καὶ ποιμανεῖ τὸ ποίμνιον αὐτοῦ ἐν ἰσχύι κυρίου.	
And he will stand and shepherd in the strength of Yahweh.	And he will stand and see and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord.	
MT 2 Sam 5:2	LXX 2 Sam 5:2	
אַתָּה תִּרְעֶה אֶת-עַמִּי אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל	σὺ ποιμανεῖς τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραηλ.	ὅστις ποιμανεῖ τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραήλ.
You will shepherd my people, Israel.	You will shepherd my people, Israel.	who indeed will shepherd my people, Israel.

As for the first phenomenon, the first three lines of Matthew’s citation are from the first three poetic lines of Micah 5:2). The fourth line of Micah’s prophecy, however, continues (to quote LXX Micah 5:1), “and his goings-out are from the beginning, from the days of eternity” (αἱ ἔξοδοι αὐτοῦ ἀπ’ ἐξ ἡμερῶν αἰῶνος). In place of that fourth line, Matthew’s fourth line is “who indeed will shepherd my people Israel” (ὅστις ποιμανεῖ τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραήλ, Mt 2:6). While Micah 5:4) predicts that the Ruler will “shepherd” (ποιμανεῖ in LXX Micah 5:3, as in Mt 2:6), Matthew’s fourth line is closer to 2 Sam 5:2, the words of Israel to David at Hebron: “And the Lord said to you, ‘You will shepherd my people Israel’ ” (καὶ εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς σέ σὺ ποιμανεῖς τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραηλ). By bringing together two OT Scripture passages (a common Jewish exegetical practice attested in the Qumran scrolls, ca. 250 BC–AD 50), the second of which was spoken to David himself, Matthew’s report of the religious leaders’ reply to Herod strengthens what is already present in Micah 5:1, namely, that the King to come from Bethlehem will be a descendant of David. (CC)

In the second place, the form of the text from Micah 5:1 that Matthew has given us varies from both the MT and the LXX in obvious ways. The comparisons are evident from the literal English translations in figure 4. (CC)

It is evident even from the English translations that the MT and the LXX are extremely close to one another; the LXX is a literal translation of the MT. In the first three lines, Matthew's citation most significantly differs from both the MT and the LXX by its addition in the second line of the adverb οὐδαμῶς, "by no means," and by the insertion in the third line of the explanatory γάρ, "for," to explain *why* Bethlehem is by no means least among the rulers of Judah. Of course, as noted above, the greatest divergence is in the fourth line, which is not from Micah 5:1 at all; the third-person form of the verb (ποιμανεῖ, "he will shepherd") is from Micah 5:3, but in other respects that line is drawn from 2 Sam 5:2. (CC)

What shall we make of Matthew's addition "by no means"? It is true that, strictly speaking, the evangelist cites the words of Jerusalem's chief priests and scribes as *they* quote from the OT. But there seems to be no reason to think that Matthew wanted his readers/hearers to think that the religious leaders' citation was flawed. In 2:1, Matthew himself writes, "Now after Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea ...," and the scribes respond to Herod's question regarding the birth of the Christ with, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it stands written through the prophet ..." So we may conclude that Matthew himself endorses the text-form of Micah 5:1 that he also reports in Mt 2:6. And we shall see, as the commentary addresses the many OT citations in this Gospel, at times the evangelist exercises a certain freedom to offer OT citations in ways that do not correspond exactly to any extant version of the text of the OT, insofar as textual criticism allows us to know what Hebrew and Greek versions of the OT text might have been available to the evangelist. (CC)

How shall this "freedom" be described? The specifics of this example here in 2:6 afford the opportunity to describe the two most important ways in which Matthew exercises his freedom in citing the OT. In the first place, he is free not to cite the OT text with absolute precision when an "equivalent" translation will do—without changing the meaning involved in any appreciable way. (CC)

Thus *The Inspiration of Scripture*, (a report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, March 1975), 11, affirms:

The predication of inerrancy to the Bible does not imply that when the New Testament reproduces and applies Old Testament statements this must always occur by means of verbatim quotations, or that there must be verbal correspondence between parallel accounts of the same event wherever they are found either in the Old or the New Testament.

Each writer in errantly imparted God's truth as the Holy Spirit moved him to do so in his own way, from his own perspective, and for his own purposes.

For instance, the MT reads “and you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,” the LXX has “and you, Bethlehem, house of Ephrathah,” and Matthew has “and you, Bethlehem, land of Judah.” There were at least two towns in Israel named Bethlehem. “Ephrathah” (MT Micah 5:1) identifies this one as the Bethlehem just south of Jerusalem in Judah, and Matthew conveys this same identification by replacing the more obscure “Ephrathah” with “land of Judah.” (CC)

In the second place, the evangelist Matthew and other NT writers are free to paraphrase the wording of an OT citation in order to bring more clearly into view a theology that both adorns the message of their own NT writing and is consistent with the message of the OT passage. (CC)

France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, 173–74, explains that Matthew is at times adapting the [OT] text to allow the reader to see more clearly how it has found its fulfillment in Jesus. Thus in [Mt] 2:6 where Micah described Bethlehem as “little” among the clans of Judah [Micah 5:1 (ET 5:2)], Matthew has “by no means the least”; *it was, of course, Bethlehem’s future greatness in contrast with its present “littleness” which was the point of Micah’s description*, but Matthew, in view of the prophecy’s fulfillment already in Jesus, can indicate in his version that Bethlehem is no longer so “little.” (emphasis added) (CC)

Thus Matthew has added “by no means” and “for” to introduce an explicit contrast: Bethlehem is *in no way* least, *for* Israel’s Ruler-Shepherd will come forth from Bethlehem. But here Matthew has not violated the sense of the OT text, for this contrast is already implicit in Micah 5:1 in the wording of both the MT and the LXX. Bethlehem is declared to be little among the clans of Judah indeed. Nevertheless, precisely from Bethlehem will go forth Israel’s Shepherd-King. Matthew’s additions to Micah have made explicit a feature that was implicit in the OT text of Micah and that is consistent with its message. (CC)

In sum, caution is needed before one concludes that Matthew’s way of citing an OT text has introduced an intentional variation or change in its theological significance that is not in harmony with the intent of the OT passage. See also the discussion of Matthew’s rendering of $\eta\lambda\eta\gamma$ by $\pi\alpha\rho\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ in the textual note on that word in 1:23. (CC)

WILL BE A SHEPHERD – Wording based on the Lord’s commissioning of David as king of Israel. (TLSB)

ὅστις ποιμανεῖ—The pronoun ὅστις may, at times, express either a more general sense of “whoever” or a qualitative sense of “such a one, one who, to be sure” (BDAG1 and 2, respectively). The qualitative sense may very well be in view here (BDAG, 2 a), so it is rendered, “*who indeed* will shepherd ...” (CC)

Their opinion was given without hesitation; it reflected the current opinion and agreed with Talmudic tradition. In their Scriptural proof they do not quote the Old Testament passage literally, but combine the words of the prophet, Micah 5, 2, with 2 Sam. 5, 2. Incidentally, their answer was shaped by some interpretation due to rabbinical teaching. "Art not thou the least?" the text inquires. Bethlehem may be little in size and influence, especially as compared with its metropolitan neighbor, but it is by no means the least in dignity and distinction. It may have been considered small and insignificant among the thousands of Judah, the cities that could boast a population of a thousand or more families, but it still had the best-founded claim for excellence among the princes of Judah. (Kretzmann)

Out of the despised village One should come forth, should regard it as His native town, who would combine the qualities of a Ruler with those of a tender, loving Friend and watchful Guardian. He whose birth was to distinguish Bethlehem-Judah, would be a Prince and Leader, who would make the shepherd's sleepless devotion for those entrusted to him His life's object. (Kretzmann)

2:7 FOUND OUT FROM THEM THE EXACT TIME THE STAR APPEARED – It should be noted that the Gentiles told the Jews about the birth of Jesus even though the Jews had waited centuries for this. It is important to be constantly in God's Word so we don't miss what should be obvious to us. (CC)

Herod calculated that the child was born when the Magi first observed the star. (TLSB)

τὸν χρόνον τοῦ φαινομένου ἀστέρος—Literally, this is "the time of the appearing star." Wallace calls it "the shining star." The attributive adjectival participle is present stem. Since the star is not shining at this moment in the narrative ("We saw his star," 2:2), I have given an inceptive translation "*began to appear*" for the present stem participle. (CC)

John 1:10-11 "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him."

2:8 REPORT TO ME...MAY GO AND WORSHIP HIM – He who practices evil shuns the light. He is a hypocrite, pure and simple. (Ylvisaker)

Herod sought to deceive the Magi, hoping they would report back to him what they found, that he might finalize his plan to kill the infant king. (TLSB)

2:9 THEY WENT THEIR WAY – They left Jerusalem, apparently all alone and with only general directions to guide them. Herod wanted no talebearers from among those that patterned after him. (Kretzmann)

STAR THEY HAD SEEN...WENT AHEAD OF THEM – ὁ ἀστήρ, ὃν εἶδον ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ, προῆγεν αὐτούς—The aorist indicative εἶδον must be rendered by an English pluperfect, “the star, which they *had* seen,” to make clear that it precedes in time the main verb, προῆγεν, “began to lead the way,” an imperfect indicative that signals a new event. Since the Magi needed to ask concerning the birthplace of the King of the Jews, the star may have stopped guiding them when they arrived in Jerusalem. It is also possible that previously the star did not lead them at all; when its rising signaled the birth of the King, they went to inquire in Jerusalem because that was the capital. In any event, now the star guides them to the house with the holy family (2:9, 11). (CC)

The star the Magi had seen in their homeland now guided them from Jerusalem to the very house where Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were living (v. 11). God was obviously leading these Gentiles in their quest for the King of the Jews. (TLSB)

2:10 THEY WERE OVERJOYED – Apparently they were disturbed and uncertain until the star reappeared and reaffirmed them in their pilgrimage. (Concordia Journal – November 1984)

The ESV has “they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. Matthew piles one expression of joy on another to emphasize the Magi’s feelings. (TLSB)

2:11 *house*. Contrary to tradition, the Magi did not visit Jesus at the manger on the night of his birth as did the shepherds. They came some months later and visited him as a “child” in his “house.” (CSB)

the child with his mother Mary. Every time the child Jesus and his mother are mentioned together, he is mentioned first (vv. 11, 13–14, 20–21). (CSB)

WORSHIPED HIM – Unclear whether the Magi worshiped Jesus as true God or revered Him only as an earthly king. “Worship” implies they realized that Jesus was more than just a human king. (TLSB)

gold ... incense ... myrrh. The three gifts perhaps gave rise to the legend that there were three “wise men.” But the Bible does not indicate the number of the Magi, and they were almost certainly not kings. (CSB)

The Magi’s gifts to Jesus were expensive but not uncommon presents for a king. (TLSB)

Gold suggests royalty. Incense was used in connection with worship. Its aromatic smoke symbolized the God-pleasing prayers of the people ascending to the throne of God. (PBC)

One could not approach a royal personage without bringing gifts. These treasures bore evidence of the love in their heart for the Savior. Gold was a gift to

Him as a king, incense as God, myrrh to suggest His suffering and death.
(Ylvisaker)

myrrh. See note on Ge 37:25. (CSB)

Myrrh symbolizes Jesus suffering and death. (PBC)

2:12 NOT TO GO BACK TO HEROD – Once again God miraculously intervened. The Magi accepted His direction. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

This was to allow time for the Holy Family to escape to Egypt, God kept Herod in the dark about where Jesus was. (TLSB)