

“We Have Seen His Star”

*“Now when Jesus
was born in
Bethlehem of
Judaea in the days
of Herod the king,
behold, there came
wise men from the
east to Jerusalem,
Saying, Where is he
that is born King
of the Jews? for we
have seen his star
in the east, and
are come to
worship him.”
—Matthew 2:1,2*

AS WE LOOK TO THE heavens at this time of the year when the Christian world celebrates the birth of the Savior, what comes to mind? Observing the stars on a clear night is a wonderful way to reflect upon the beauty of God’s creation, and of his great power. Perhaps we ponder as David did, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man,

that thou art mindful of him? ... O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!”—Ps. 8:3,4,9

At the proper time in the great work of creation, the Bible record states, “God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven; ... and it was so.” (Gen. 1:14,15) Stars have always been important

to every culture. They have been used in religious practices and for assistance in navigation and orientation. The sheer grandeur of the stars may be found in one definition, which we here quote: "A self-luminous body visible in the sky whose shape is usually a sphere and whose size may vary. A star may be as small as the earth or as large as 650 times greater in diameter than the Sun." Truly the verse, "One star differeth from another star in glory" applies here, although we have come to understand that there is also a spiritual meaning to these words. (I Cor. 15:41) When we realize from constant new discoveries the seeming boundless domain of galaxies and stars, we are awestruck and feel our own insignificance.

LIGHT BRINGS HOPE

The Sun is our most important star, bringing us warmth, light, and life. Life as we know it would not be able to exist without the Sun. It is a fitting comparison to the Son of God, who also is responsible for light and life coming to the world. Since the penalty of sin and death was pronounced, all have been born in sin and "shapen in iniquity." (Gen. 2:17; 3:19; Ps. 51:5) Thus we see that without the Sun, representing God's beloved only begotten Son, all would be lost. Mankind would be condemned to death, and have no hope of life in the future. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Eccles. 11:7; Hab. 2:14) Looking at the promises of God gives us hope and joy that everything is working out according to

his wonderful divine arrangement. As a result, “every knee” shall bow and “every tongue” confess to the glory of God in due time.—Phil. 2:10,11

“WHAT MANNER OF CHILD?”

The question was posed concerning the promised birth of John the Baptist, “What manner of child shall this be!” (Luke 1:66) When John began his ministry as the forerunner of Jesus, the scripture further states, “The people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ.” The question would be answered by John, when he said, “One mightier than I cometh.” —Luke 3:15,16

This fact had been proclaimed earlier in the promise to Mary by the angel Gabriel, that she would “bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.” (Luke 1:31) Upon his birth, an angel said to the shepherds of the field, “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:11) Thus, according to the flesh, our Lord Jesus was born through his mother, Mary, and therefore was the son, or direct descendant, of Israel’s King David. (Gal. 4:4; Luke 3:23-31, *Amplified Bible*) It is of importance to note that Israel’s Messiah and the Savior of the world would be born through the kingly line of the Jews.

A STAR IN THE EAST

Many in the Gentile world were also in expectation of a coming Messiah, as demonstrated by the visit of the wise men, or “Magi,” who came from the east. (Matt. 2:1) This designation originally referred to a class of priests among the Medes and Persians, who counseled their kings and who

practiced astrology. Ancient writers make frequent references to them, and the term was later applied to all eastern philosophers.

The Prophet Daniel associated with some of these non-Jewish wise men. He was once a prince in Persia, and he was well known to the disciples of Eastern religious philosophers such as Zoroaster. (Dan. 2:48; 5:11,12) Daniel's prophecies were made known to these Gentile wise men, as probably were the calculations by which he pointed to the time of the birth of the Messiah.—Dan. 9:24-27

A further belief was that this promised child would be born in Judea, gain dominion over the whole world, and establish a golden age upon the earth. (Mic. 5:2; Isa. 9:6,7) The miraculous star in the east which some of the Gentile wise men had been taught to look for, had finally made its appearance, and would guide them to the wonderful light of the world. "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel."—Num. 24:17

The wise men had now come to Jerusalem, having traveled a far distance to observe firsthand what they thought was to be the culmination of their beliefs. They explained, when they arrived, that they had come to see "he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." (Matt. 2:2) When King Herod heard this, he was troubled and gathered together the chief priests and scribes of Israel, demanding that they tell him where Christ was to be born. They quoted the words of the prophet, "Thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, ... out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my

people Israel.” Herod then called the wise men and asked when the star had appeared to them, and said, “Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word,” under the guise of wanting to “worship him also.” —vss. 3-8; Mic. 5:2

When departing for Bethlehem, the wise men again saw the star and rejoiced, because it would lead them to the place “where the young child was.” Upon reaching the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary and “fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matt. 2:9-11) Gold here may be a fitting representation of obedience and consecration; frankincense an illustration of praise, devotion, and gratitude; and myrrh an exemplification of submission and a willingness to do service and to suffer for righteousness. These gifts also have special significance to us, and point out how we should present our hearts, our “treasure,” to the Lord. —Luke 12:34

The wise men showed their reverence to the mighty Jehovah of Israel, their faith in the divinely inspired prophecies, their zeal as Truth seekers, and their humility to inquire of the God of another nation. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, and praise be to him, the true source “of every good gift and every perfect gift.” (James 1:17) We have the additional assurance of the glorious Truth associated with this star in the east, for as the Apostle Peter later stated, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; ... until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”—II Pet. 1:19

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

We have now seen the humble beginning and earliest manifestation of this divinely appointed light. Jesus is indeed the light of the world, and the “Sun of righteousness.” (Mal. 4:2) “In him was life; and the life was the light of men. ... That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” (John 1:4,9) Light here is used figuratively signifying hope, instruction, and knowledge. Throughout the Scriptures light is used to represent God, his Truth, servants, and their messages. To have fellowship with God, one must first gain a knowledge of him. No one can commune with the Creator without becoming acquainted in some measure with his Truth. With this comes an enlightened mind through the Holy Spirit that leads to an understanding of his plans and purposes. For those in harmony and fellowship with him, his plans and purposes become theirs.

When the clouds and darkness of error of this “present evil world” pass away, and the clear light of Truth shines brightly, “the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it.” (Gal. 1:4; Isa. 40:5) Jesus came not only to redeem man’s life, but also to enlighten him, and to restore as many as are willing to accept sonship, whether as heavenly sons or earthly sons.—I John 3:1,2; Rev. 21:3-7

Darkness represents error, superstition, and sin. The people that walk in darkness now are to see the great light one day when all of mankind will have eyes to see and ears to hear. At the present time, “gross darkness” covers the people, because Satan, “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.” (Isa. 9:2; 60:1-3; Matt. 4:16;

II Cor. 4:4) The exception to this is a very small group, the “church of the firstborn,” who as our Lord declared, are “not of the world.” (Heb. 12:23; John 17:16) The whole world is in the land “of the shadow of death,” and all of mankind “groaneth and travaileth in pain together,” waiting “for the manifestation of the sons of God.” (Jer. 2:6; Rom. 8:22,19) The world needs this great light of peace and joy, and we are assured that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it did shine in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, will in God’s due time, be revealed. The glorified Jesus tells us, “I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.” (Rev. 22:16) Indeed, he will shine forth for the blessing of mankind, to bring order out of the present chaos by dispelling the darkness and causing the knowledge of the glory of God to fill the whole earth.—Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14

BEING LIGHT BEARERS

The true light now shines in the hearts of the faithful footstep followers of Jesus. These have their paths illuminated by the Heavenly Father through his dear Son. We have an assurance of this: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (Ps. 119:105) Concerning God’s leadings of his people, we read, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see.” (Matt. 13:16) This is a reference to having eyes of faith and understanding. Is this light of God’s Truth now shining in our heart? If it is there, it should shine out upon those with whom we come in contact during the daily experiences of life. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father

which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:16) This light that comes to us from the Heavenly Father is not directly seen, but is more of a reflective type. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ... walk in the light, as he is in the light.”—I John 1:5,7

The true church is invited to become associated with Christ as light bearers. If faithful in permitting their light to shine now, they will be joined with him to shine forth as the “Sun of righteousness” in the Messianic kingdom. The Apostle Paul admonishes all such, “Now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” (Eph. 5:8) This refers to a transfer from darkness to light. It is a gradual process which involves the mind and which leads finally to perfection in the first resurrection. (Rev. 20:6) It includes a transformation of character on the part of the believer: “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Rom. 12:2) By this process, we can lift up the light of Truth so that “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (II Cor. 5:17) How thankful we should be that we are able to walk in the light of understanding and in harmony with God’s plans and purposes. This new way of life, though “narrow” and difficult, leads to everlasting life for the “called, and chosen, and faithful.”—Matt. 7:14; Rev. 17:14

PROMISED GLORY

The nearest star to planet Earth and hence, the most important one to mankind, is the Sun. The Scriptures tell us that the church as a whole shall “shine forth as the sun.” (Matt. 13:43) As already

noted, our Lord Jesus is the “Sun of Righteousness,” and his bride will be with him when righteousness is established in the earth, shining forth and sharing in his glory. Daniel prophesied, “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” (Dan. 12:3) Jesus’ worthiness of such a high position was manifest in his resurrection and exaltation as “Christ the firstfruits,” by the Father’s power. (I Cor. 15:20,23) He was the first to experience a resurrection in the full sense, to perfection and everlasting life. We also have the promise of a similar resurrection to life through Christ and a reward in heaven.—John 6:40; 11:25; Col. 3:23,24; Luke 6:23

Since Jesus was the direct creation of God, it is fitting that he has the character likeness of his Father, being “full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) In proportion as we receive the Spirit of the Lord, we gradually become a copy of God’s dear Son, and a copy of the Father, and have the promise that we shall awake in his “likeness.” (Ps. 17:15) We are to seek to do only the will of the Heavenly Father, to set our affections on heavenly things and cast away our desires for earthly things. (Col. 3:1-5) This was the attitude of Jesus, and Apostle Paul tells us, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 2:5) This is why the Master told his followers to “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” (Matt. 6:20) A treasure is something that we take special pleasure in and is based on our most cherished thoughts, plans, and hopes. How much more precious should the treasure of a future heavenly reward be to those who are “called according to his purpose.”—Rom. 8:28

THE GREAT HEAVENLY KING

No treasure will be of more importance to the world of mankind than the promise made to them concerning the process by which the blessing and release of all people from the curse of sin and death will be accomplished. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."—Isa. 9:6,7

The world will rejoice at the inauguration of Christ's kingdom. We read, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased its joy." (Isa. 9:3, *Revised Standard Version*) This "nation" is the world of mankind under the new administration of the millennial kingdom. At that time, the kingdoms of this present world order will have passed away, having been replaced by what the Apostle Peter describes as "a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (II Pet. 3:10,13) The people shall say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."—Isa. 2:3

These promises began to be set in motion with the birth of Jesus as the babe born in Bethlehem. He is then presented as God's Son, given on our behalf. His sacrifice began at Jordan and culminated at Calvary. Because of his obedience unto death, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven,

and things in earth, and things under the earth.” (Phil. 2:5,7-10) In God’s loving arrangement, “every knee” will include all those who sleep in death, and who will be raised from the dead and given an opportunity for a restored perfect life on earth.

“The government shall be upon his shoulder,” Isaiah prophesied. This is figurative of the authority, glory, and honor that shall be upon Christ Jesus. It is given to him from the Father through his great law of love. A change in dispensation will be ushered in through the Father’s promised “times of restitution of all things.” (Acts 3:20,21) Christ will receive the honor, glory, and dominion that was exclusively promised to him. He shall then fulfill all of the things predicted by God through his holy prophets concerning the restoration of mankind back to human perfection.

When Christ assumes the control of earth’s affairs his character of love and justice will be fully evident. This assures us that his reign will be a time of blessing, peace and joy to all who love righteousness and truth. His name and titles spoken of by Isaiah, representing the gracious things of which he is, will then be brought to the attention of all mankind. He will be “Wonderful,” beyond the power of human comprehension. He will be the “Counsellor,” whose instructions in righteousness will be satisfactory and respected by all among mankind who seek a return to divine favor and a full restoration of what was lost.
—Luke 19:10

He shall be called, “The mighty God” or mighty one, and on him shall rest all of the power and authority of God his Father. He is called the “everlasting Father”—a father because he will be the

life-giver to all who will accept the just and righteous terms of the New Covenant, which was sealed by his own precious blood.—Jer. 31:31-34

Finally, Christ shall be known as the “Prince of Peace.” Although his empire will begin by a smiting of the nations with a symbolic “rod of iron,” everything will be done in the interest of bringing peace, security and blessings to all of mankind. His entire reign will further insure the complete establishment of everlasting peace to all. His government, Isaiah states, will increase and be so successful that it will extend over all nations and families of the earth.—Ps. 2:6-9; Rev. 2:26-28; Isa. 9:7

According to God’s word through Isaiah, this kingdom will be established upon the throne of David. As David sat upon the throne of God’s kingdom, the greater than David, the Messiah, will reign since he has been given the right to do so because of his faithfulness. He will be the representative of the Father for all eternity and the heir of all of the gracious promises of God’s Word. “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this,” Isaiah concludes. This is truly a wonderful expression of God’s love, for it was love that motivated the Father to give his only begotten Son. It will bring great joy to the Father to restore man to his original condition of perfection which he enjoyed in Eden.—John 3:16,17; Gen. 1:27-31

During the period of creation, God made a “greater light to rule the day,” and a “lesser light to rule the night.” (Gen. 1:16) The “lesser light” well represents the arrangement of the old Law Covenant which God made with Israel through their priests, kings and prophets. This was only temporary, occurring

during earth's present nighttime of sin, but pointed forward to a much better day. The "greater light" points forward to Christ and his church, who will dispel all darkness in the morning of the grand Millennial Day.

At the present time, only those who have accepted Christ, who truly believe on him and who have entered into a full consecration to God to follow in his footsteps, can understand the full import of the wise men's words, "we have seen his star." Let us, then, desire to continue pressing "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14) May the light of divine truth illuminate our way and lead us in the path of righteousness, until one day, if faithful to him, we shall behold "the glory of the LORD."—Isa. 40:5 ■