

Jan 4 The EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

There is a lot of fancy stuff this week. Take time to digest it.

EPIPHANY means “revealing”. -Phany (like phenomenon or phantom) and Epi- which has many meanings like fit, or suitable, apparent, **observable**. Here it means “**for all to see**”.

Think: epi-dermis is the outside of our skin, what others clearly see.

The epi-center of the earthquake is where anyone clearly sees and feels the fault in the earth. Today marks the “revealing” of XT, not just to Jewish shepherds, but to “foreigners”. So this Epiphany celebrates that ALL GENTES, *Gentiles*, ALL NATIONS, clearly see the CHRIST.

Isaiah mentions caravans coming from far and wide.

They bring Gold, for a King, Frankincense for a God. {Myrrh for Burial—is from the Gospel!}
[This is why in the OLD Country, the Magi/Kings/Wisemen, not Santa, brought ‘gifts’ to the kids!]

The Psalm says the same ideas, repeating Isaiah. The idea of ‘Kings’ comes from the Psalm.

In his letter to the People of Ephesus, largest city of Asia Minor (in today’s Turkey, but now just a ruin) Paul says, what Isaiah has been saying over and over: IN CHRIST JESUS (that is, in the MESSIAH who is JESUS) EVERYONE is equally God’s Child. Paul, a rabbi, explains the theological meaning of the Gospel Story of the Magi.

GOSPEL Now what about the Magi/Wisemen/Kings?

So who are MAGI? They were ASTROLOGERS who studied the stars. We get the words: Magic, and Magician from Magi. Astrologers studied the “astera”. NOT just shining bodies of gas called “stars” [in Latin STELLA] but any heavenly object. Sun, Moon, Planets, comets, asteroids, are all called ASTERA, in Greek **ἀστέρα**. Today we call them **Astronomers**. At times they tried to predict the future and acted like ASTROlogers.

We get their names: Caspar, mosaic in Ravenna
Melchior and Balthasar Italy 560
from only about 560!

The Babylonians (and Zoroastrian Persians) had divided the heavens into the 12 Houses of the Horoscope. The Magi, Zoroastrian Priests, knew math and science to predict celestial events like comets and eclipses, to tell what date it was (remember you can’t buy a calendar in any store!) and to say when it was time to hold a FESTIVAL honoring the local God or King. (No Hallmark channel either!).



For them one House of the Zodiac was called the House of the Hebrews. Any special ‘signs’ in the House of the Hebrews these Zoroastrian Priests believed related to the Jews. SCIENCE knows that the ‘conjunction’ of Jupiter, Mars and Saturn and Moon occurs regularly. [‘conjunction’ means that the planets line up—as WE see them—and appear as one GIANT STAR.] We know this GREAT conjunction of planets takes place every 800 years.

Jewish Midrashic tradition taught that the Messiah was to be born in the First Century BC or early in the First Century AD. This explains why Messianic anticipation was at such a feverish pitch when Jesus of Nazareth arrived on the scene. Jesus was probably born in 7 BC during a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn that took place, appropriately enough, in Pisces, the sign of the Fish. The Great Conjunction of 7 BC was a triple conjunction, extending over a period of about

six months. It was also a very tight conjunction, so that Jupiter and Saturn on three occasions seemed to merge into a single, exceedingly bright star, which we know as the “Star of Bethlehem”. The Star did not *Stand over the place*. The star did not *move till it stood!*. That is a popular and poetic way of saying, since the *astera* was in the House of the Hebrews, as the sky was divided, it indicated that a new KING was born for the Hebrews. Saturn especially referred to the Hebrews!

Don’t get bogged down in EXACTLY which phenomenon was the “real” star! Who knows? The BIG POINT Matthew is making is: OK, the Jews had the Scripture to know God—or ABOUT God. But God also reveals Himself in His CREATION, in the wonderful Work of His Hands! God reveals Himself: 1 in the WORDS of Scripture and 2 in His WORLD. And God gave us all a BRAIN to us to use to find HIM. These Magi did not have SS, like the Jews, but they did have The World, God’s Other BOOK of REVELATION, and a brain. Get it? And they used their brain to DISCOVER God through HIS *WORLD* [if not His *Word!*].

2nd Problem

We know that Herod died in 4 BC, so XT had to have been born in 5-6 BC! How could that BE!?!? How could Xt be born before He was born!?!? Ans: He was born when he was born, but we can’t know exactly how long ago it was! Every city and nation called the year by a different name. Example: This is the 3rd year of Trump, in the UK it is the 79th year of Q Elizabeth II, in Russia the 17th (or 21st) of Putin, see Putin is not clear. You see how hard it was for Dionysus Exiguus ! This Dionysus Exiguus, a monk from Croatia, around 520, decided to count back to see how many years ago XT had been born. He didn’t have computers, so he miscalculated. He was off by 4-6 years. Even if we use the appearance of the Star of Bethlehem, we can’t be exact because the Planets don’t move quickly. They slowly move to form a conjunction, then slowly move apart.

Note that the Magi, like Joseph followed the warning in a dream and did not report to Herod. This is a sign of their honest search for the TRUTH.

The Gold for King; Frankincense for GOD; MYRRH for burying the dead are SYMBOLS of the MEANING of XT.

Matt’s Gospel Story of the Magi is not a ‘scientific’ analysis of the “Star”. It is a theological explanation that FOR ALL WHO WERE OPEN TO IT, there are signs pointing—even PAGANS, even Zoroastrian Priests—to XT. THAT is Matt’s point.

I have attached a separate page with info on the astronomical evidence for the “Star”. Jesuit Bro. Guy Consolmagno, head of the Vatican Observatory has a PhD in Astronomy. He likes the theory of an American astronomer Michael Molnar, Star of Bethlehem: The Legacy of the Magi (Rutgers University Press, 2000). You can find his video on line. Google it if you want.

The key thing to avoid is the trap Fundamentalists fall into—LITERALISM. Do not read SS as a police report! Or a Science experiment. It is a SACRED STORY told to teach a **truth**. It is based on FACTS. It is NOT just ‘all made up’. So these ASTERA, The Star of Bethlehem, are the basis of the Story which shows that even PAGANS, who use astrology, can find the Messiah-Christ if they use their brains and SEE God revealing Himself in and through HIS WORLD.

If you want more info, this first site explains the STAR from the view of astrology. I have just summarized some of the ideas:

http://apokalypso.com/App2_Great-Conjunction.htm

The Great Conjunction - Apokalypso

Midrashic tradition of the Jews also taught that the Messiah was to be born at the beginning of the 8th Great Month — which was calculated to fall late in the First Century BC or early in the First Century AD. This explains why Messianic anticipation was at such a feverish pitch when Jesus of

Nazareth arrived on the scene. **Jesus was actually born in 7 BC during a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn** that took place, appropriately enough, in Pisces, the sign of the Fish. The Great Conjunction of 7 BC was a triple conjunction, extending over a period of about six months. It was also a very tight conjunction, so that Jupiter and Saturn on three occasions seemed to merge into a single, exceedingly bright star, which we know as the “Star of Bethlehem”. *In Astrology SATURN pertains particularly to the JEWS!*

<http://uofgts.com/Magi.html>

The article explains how plotting the successive conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn by the ancients enabled them to ‘know’ the “astronomical time”. This was elaborated by BY JOHANNES KEPLER. This major shift occurs every 800 years. The last in 1604 was observed by Kepler! Counting back this puts the one for Xt at 6 BC.

{ That, they argue, is what prehistoric, preliterate man was trying to tell us as they preserve knowledge of the event, by using scientific language, MATH and mythology. }

In other words, MYTH was for primitive men SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE! How they preserved their MATH! So MYTH does not mean false! It is an attempt to express a truth that can't be proven scientifically.

[example: The Aztecs in Mexico before the Spanish arrived had developed two sophisticated calendars. One ‘calendar’ was for setting Religious Days and one for AGRICULTURE, planting.]

From 1420. Can you see ALL the different PEOPLES?



Joseph sitting

We come back again to Bethlehem, to the Church of the Nativity, the Manger (Jerome said, when they put the silver star to mark the place of the manger, that he preferred the plain wooden manger to the SILVER star.)

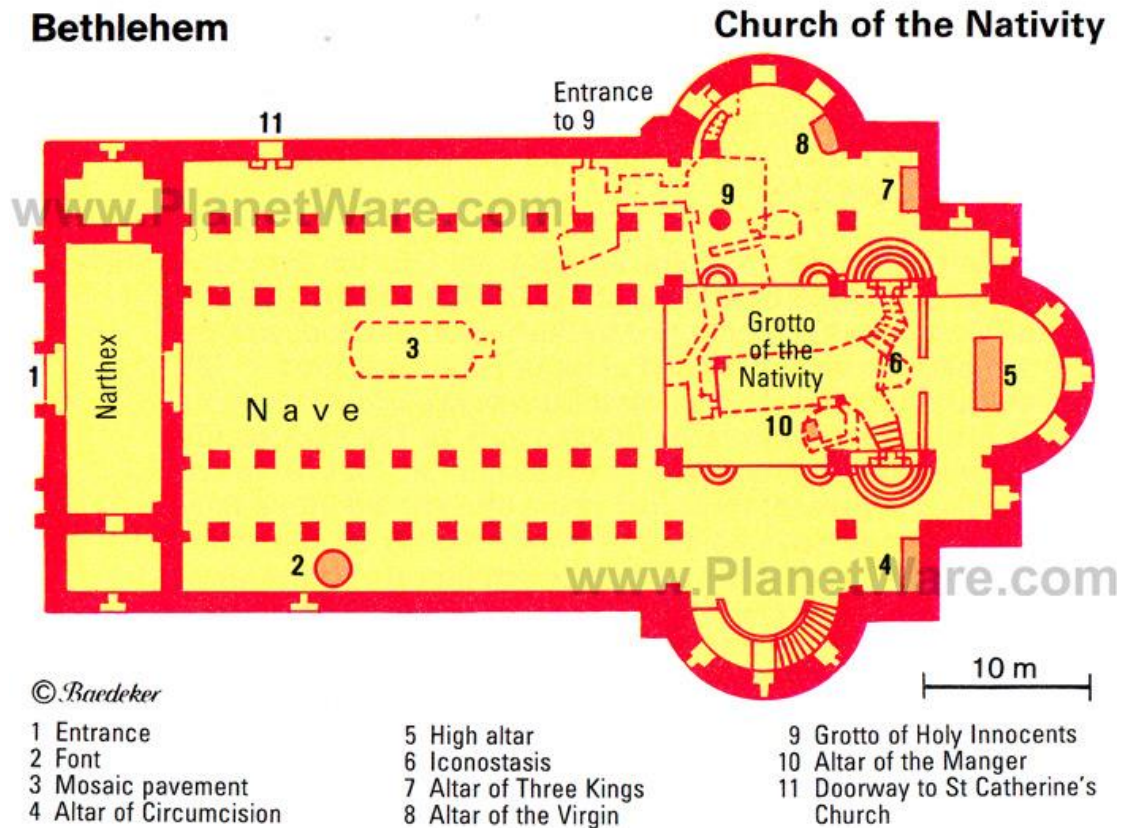


Going
down
beneath
the
Church
to
the
Manger
STAR

steps were half-moon
and STEEP



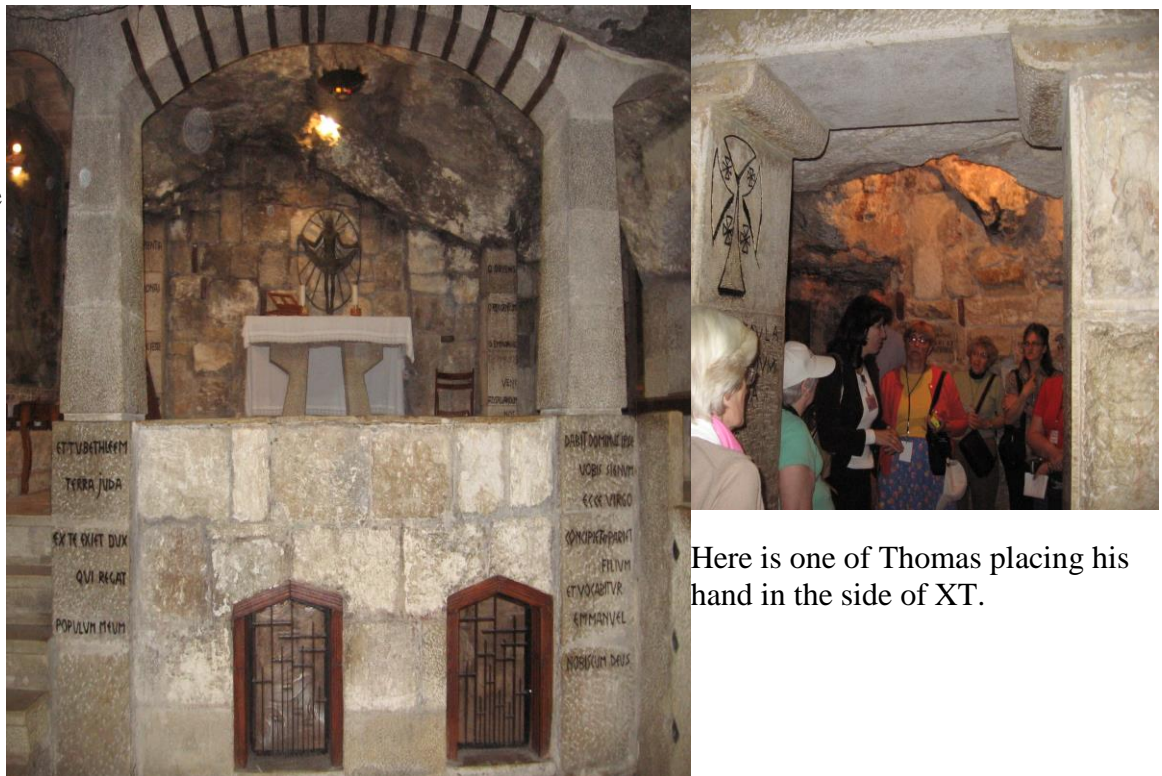
This diagram shows how the Church of the Nativity is built over the cave-house



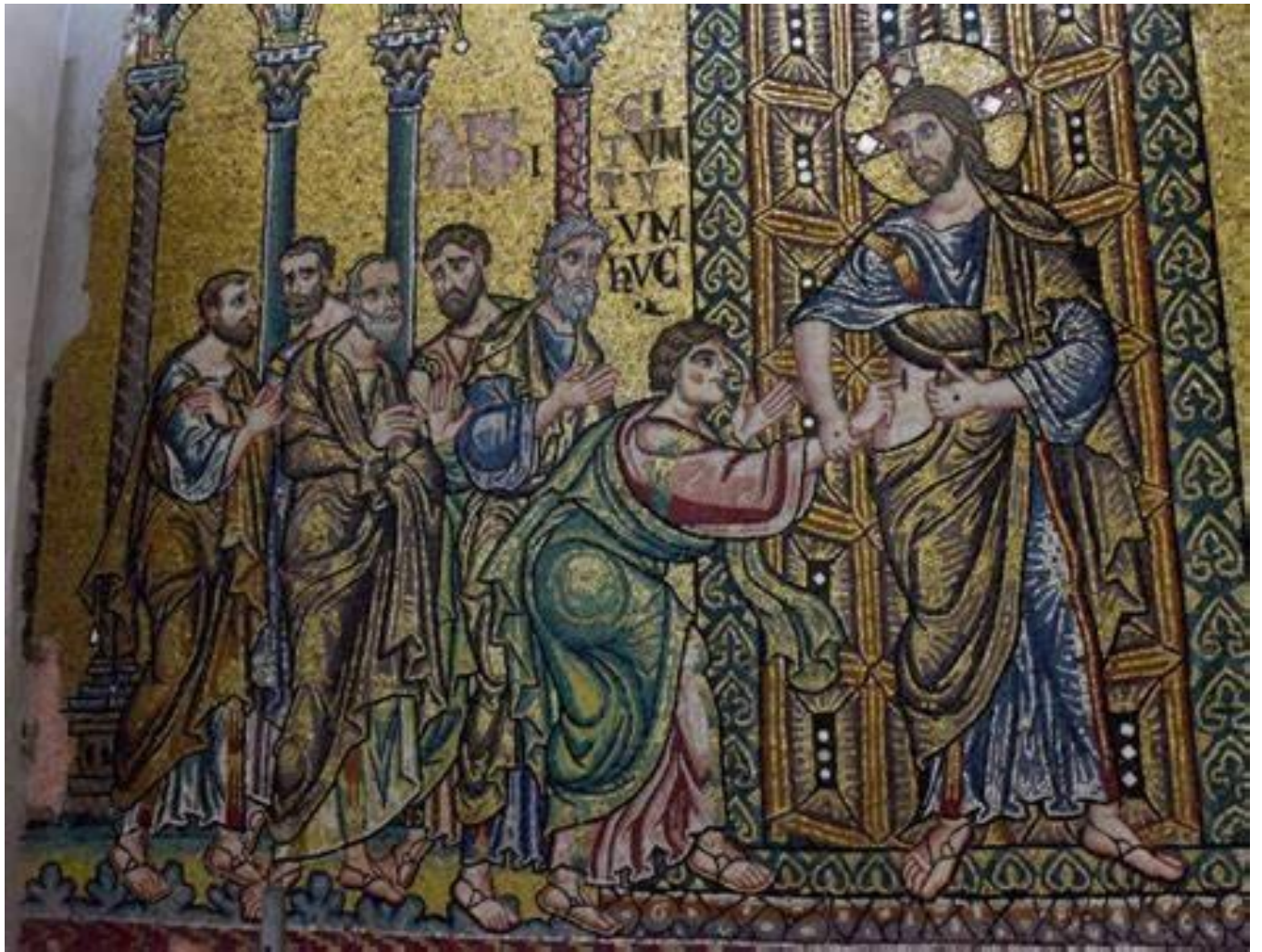
When the Persians conquered Israel in 614, they burned all the churches **except** the Church of the Nativity. **WHY?** When they entered it, they saw the mosaic of the Wise Men! *Wow!* They said, *these are OUR GUYS!* They recognized the Zoroastrian Magi!!! So it is the **OLDEST** church in Israel. I was in it. But the Mosaic of the Magi had long ago disappeared.

This is the **HOUSE**-cave the Magi entered “Grotto of Nativity” beneath the Church

Unfortunately the one of the Magi is not still there. But this gives an idea. [I did not take these pics.]



Here is one of Thomas placing his hand in the side of XT.



Some ancient mosaics
all done c. 450 AD [c. = circa = around]
from the Church of the Nativity.

This Angel had been plastered over
now visible and restored.

Close up of Palm Sunday [workers restoring]
Note confused look on Peter's face. No disciples understood what XT was going to do!





They had not started the restoration when I was there in 2001
Overview of the wall



note the first mosaic as it is in the whole wall, which they are working to restore.

