

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* John 3:16

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost +

What a remarkable statement. It is remarkable for what it says and for what it does not say. What it says is the basis of our Christian Faith and our hope in eternal life.

What God has not said is to place any limitations on the nature of that One, Holy, Perfect and Acceptable Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. The nature of this Sacrifice is such that it is an effective remedy for our sins and for the sins of every human being who has lived or will live. It is for the sin of the world.

God does not place limits or choose groups for whom this Offering will be accepted or note who is excluded. For it is of the nature of God that He wishes all His children to believe and have eternal life. And who are His Children – Ah that is the question that we have answered to day.

On this the Feast of the Epiphany we have answered the question of who is part of the Family of God and who is not. Today we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany. Note I said the Epiphany not an epiphany.

The Greek word *epiphaneia* means an appearing. In English we define epiphany as a comprehension or perception of reality by means of a sudden intuitive realization

So what is, THE EPIPHANY?

Before we can answer that question we need to understand how the people of the Ancient Near East understood themselves. Each of the various groups believed that they were people and everyone else was not of the same value, perhaps not even people. Thus it was acceptable to cheat, steal from or even kill those animals who were masquerading as people.

Further, when it came to religious belief, each group was convinced that their god was the true god and everyone should be worshipping that god.

It would appear that not much has changed in the Middle East in the 2012 years since the coming of the Christ.

Within this context we see the Hebrew People convinced that they are God's People and heirs to the promise of God, and the Promised Land.

Another part of God's Promise was that one day he would gather His People and redeem them to save them and set them free from the torment of other people and those who oppressed them.

This is the understanding that the Hebrew People held concerning the coming of the Messiah, who would be a mighty warrior and King as was David.

It is easy to understand why they were confused by Jesus, His birth, His ministry and even His death. They were confused, because they did not understand what Messiah was to be.

One of the sources of this confusion was the prophesy proclaimed, but generally ignored by the Hebrews. These prophesy were that the Messiah was to gather all people to God's Holy Mountain. And all people would become God's People. Looking back with 2012 years of the experience this lack of understanding is hard for us to comprehend. But consider that there are still Jews who do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

Part of that confusion for the Hebrew People is what we celebrate today. Out of the east, that is out of the gentile country, come the wise men. They come to seek a child who they have come to believe is to become a great king. They have learned what was announced to Mary by an Angel and Joseph in a dream and promised to Abraham. They have learned of a gift from God that the Jews would have understood was meant only for them

Just as it was important for Luke last week to have his gentile readers understand the nature of circumcision, it is important for Matthew to make sure his Jewish readers understand that the Manifestation of the Messiah is announced not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles.

For in this passage we learn that what was spoke by the Prophets, the gathering from all the nations, God's People. And that heredity is not as important as faith and that the only important geography is the space in our heart we open so that God can come and dwell with us.

The is THE EPIPHANY. God has come to His People to save them and set them free. And that God's People are all who will believe in Him and walk in His ways.

Amen