

“The gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.” That is how St. Paul describes the revelation of the promise of God. It is this revelation which is at the heart of the Feast of Epiphany. What is revealed is a *reality*, previously hidden, and now made known to all peoples; and this revelation has ancient roots with significant consequences.

A couple of millennia before the apostle Paul, an old man in the dessert, who with his wife, was childless, was invited to look up into the night sky.



“Look at the stars in the sky,” a voice said to him; and there were many. “Can you count them?” Well of course not. It was one of those clear nights when in the vast expanse of the desert sky there were thousands upon thousands of stars. Bright ones, twinkling ones, faint ones. A shimmering swath of little lights, only visible at night, but always there, shining, staring down at Abraham daring him to try to count them.

“Your descendants will be more numerous than the stars in the sky.” When Abraham took the courage to mention this to his wife, the whole thing seemed so ridiculous that Sarah laughed it off as one of Abraham’s delusional dreams. He was like that: a dreamer.

But like his grandson, Jacob, and great grandson, Joseph; and like Mary of Nazareth and the Magi from the foreign lands; and like Peter of Galilee and John of Patmos, dreams are not only a window into the unconscious, a working out of our past, but they are also a rare glimpse into the divine world which is largely invisible to us. Like looking for stars in the sky during the day, they are impossible to see until we stop and rest for a while. Rest for a night; or rest once a week for a day. Sabbath it is called. Then you can begin to see a whole other world beyond our daily preoccupations and domestic chores of survival. It is as the Nicene Creed says, a world of all that is, seen and unseen.

Abraham’s dream pointed to a day, when this mystery would now be revealed, when the promise made to Abraham would be expanded so a childless couple’s lineage would become more numerous than the stars in the sky. The

unthinkable has happened. The Magi from the foreign lands have been brought in; you and I have been brought in. We who were on the outside have now been made fellow heirs, members of the body; and the stars that Abraham was looking at in the desert sky that night were us.

So when the Magi, who had studied the stars, followed this great star which appeared in the east and knew it was pointing to the one who would be the vehicle to expand this promise, of course they would be overwhelmed with joy when the star stopped over the house in Bethlehem where they saw the child and his mother. This was the one born King of the Jews who would fulfill the ancient promise.

For many Christians in the world, when we celebrate Epiphany, they celebrate Christmas. And the stories they read are: the Magi following the Star, Jesus' baptism, and the sign of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana. These three stories, and others that we will hear in the coming weeks, all reveal something of the glory of God reaching out to the furthest edges to bring more in, reaching out to the depths of the sea to catch so many fish that the nets break,

providing so much more abundance that water jars used for purification are bursting over the brim with the best wine the wedding guests have ever tasted in Cana, and even reaching down into the depths of hell itself to release the spirits in prison. It is as St. Paul describes, an invitation to comprehend the height, depth, length and breadth of the love of God. Its magnitude is enormous.

Who knew that we were some of those twinkling stars that Abraham was looking at that night. Who knew that one of those stars would point some gentile astrologers to the anointed one who would ultimately fulfill this ancient promise.

“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

When you were baptized we were given a candle with the words, “Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” As you seek to follow this Light, live in this Light, and reflect this Light may God of Abraham and Sarah be glorified and may your heart be filled with joy.