“***From the East***” by S. Finlan, at The First Church, Dec. 24, 2019

**Matthew 2:1–2** Wise men, magi, from the east came to Jerusalem, 2asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.”

The wise men from the East may be Persian priests, since that’s where the term magi comes from, but it was used broadly in those days to designate *any* wise man from the East. Somehow, back in their homes in Mesopotamia, they learned that a son of promise was to be born to the Jews, and they came to pay him homage. *How* did they learn? It had to be some kind of revelation from God, whether directly to their hearts or through some other method.

There were others who received special knowledge about this child. There were Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John. There were Joseph and Mary, Jesus’ parents. These were visited by an angel. Later, there would be the two saintly singers who hung around the temple, the elderly Simeon, and the prophetess, Anna (Luke 2:36), who would recognize the baby Jesus as the promised one. Simeon waxes poetic and says “my eyes have seen your salvation” (2:30). How could he know this? Luke says “the Holy Spirit rested on him” (2:25). That’s revelation! Our magi received a revelation, too.

So, it was a small number of people who received these revelations from God or from an angel, but it was enough. Apparently God needed some devout people, both Jewish and Gentile, to anticipate the Son of promise with high expectation, and then to welcome the child. And that happens when the magi finally make it to Bethlehem and see the baby Jesus: “they knelt down and paid him homage” (2:11). These Persians or Chaldeans were as certain of his saving significance as were the Jewish people who received the message. “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1), although they *did* see a glimpse of what they hoped for.

We, too, are certain that Jesus is the savior of the human race, not just of one group or one nation or one class. The *principle* of Jesus as World Savior is a necessary part of authentic Christian teaching, and it is seen here right at the beginning, even though only a small number of people are made aware of it at first. By the end, Jesus will say “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). All nations! Let the certainty of faith fill you with hope and love this Christmas. And may you *share* your hope and love!