

The Advent Guide 2015

*Bringing the light of God's heavens to
your home*



A Devotional by Rev. Paul M. Doriani

The Meaning of Advent

“Advent” means “coming.” In the early church, the practice developed of using four weeks (beginning with the fourth Sunday before Christmas) to prepare for Jesus’ coming.

The Advent season was used not to prepare for Jesus’ first coming at Christmas. Instead, it was used to become ready for his return, his “second advent”, his “second coming.” As surely as he came at Bethlehem, he will return.

This Advent booklet is for the purpose of bringing you the greatest of all of the joys of the Advent and Christmas season — the joy of coming closer to God, and learning to enjoy his love and presence in our lives.

Suggestions for Effectively Using This Booklet

1. Use it to begin the day.
2. Use it for family devotions.
3. Use it at work, perhaps from your computer.
4. Ask the Lord to help you use it. Believe that God will bless you as you grow closer to him.
5. Trying the questions helps you to put God’s teachings into action.
6. Writing answers helps you retain the learning.
7. Don’t worry about missed days. Just move on.

The Themes of the Booklet

This booklet has five themes and six candles. They represent different aspects of preparing for the return of Jesus. The colors differ from traditional advent candle colors. The candles are as follows.

1. **Green** represents growth in our life in Jesus.
2. **Gold** (yellow) reminds us that in Jesus the glory of God comes to us.
3. **White** represents the purity that we need to welcome Jesus.
4. **Red** reminds us that Jesus came the first time to give his life so that we can now be ready to meet him when he returns.
5. **Blue** (dark blue or black) represents the importance of telling others about Jesus. The shepherds, under the dark night sky came to see Jesus, then told everyone about him.
6. **Purple** reminds us that we prepare for the king.

The Prayers That Accompany the Themes

The Green Candle Prayer

As we light this green candle, we praise you, our dear Lord and God. We thank you that like the evergreens, whose color is bright even in winter, you have given us everlasting life. It was so good of you to give us this eternal life through the life of your Son, the eternal Son of God.

At this time of year we especially remember that Jesus was born into this world to become one

of us forever. We pray that you will make us like green and fruitful trees. Help us to take root and grow in Jesus our Savior. We remember how Jesus studied the Scriptures and that he set aside time to be with you, Heavenly Father. We thank you for Jesus' example and ask you to help us follow it.

The Gold Candle Prayer

Our dear Lord, as we light this gold candle, we thank you that you have given us your light and glory. We come to you through Jesus, the Light of the World. We rejoice that he is the Son of God, come to us as a real person. We thank you that through Jesus you have sent us your Spirit, as you promised. Help us set aside time for you. By your Word and Spirit, give us the eyes of faith to see your love and glory. Be with us through Jesus, our Immanuel, in whom we pray. Amen.

The White Candle Prayer

Dear Father in Heaven, as we light this white candle we thank you for the godly people that you have given us as examples. We thank you for the Bible account of how Mary kept all that you did fresh in her thoughts, remembering the powerful work of your Spirit. May we treasure your words in the Bible. Help us to live grateful lives. Help us also to fill our minds with the memories of the ways that you have worked in our lives. We pray this through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

The Red Candle Prayer

Our dear Lord God, as we light this red candle we gladly praise you. We know that only through Jesus' life, given for us, can we become pure. May this red candle remind us of Jesus' sacrifice. We remember that in the

Bible, your Spirit took people like us, and made them grow to become more like Jesus. Because he rose again, we believe that we also can have a new life. We praise you that these things are true. May they be true in our lives, we pray through Jesus. Amen.



The Dark Blue Candle Prayer

Our dear Lord God, as we light this blue candle, we thank you, our Triune God, that you have done something as wonderful as coming to visit us through your Son, Jesus. We thank you that you stay with us through your Spirit. We recall the shepherds making their way under the dark night sky to see Jesus at Bethlehem. We picture them speaking to the people in the village before returning to their flocks. Help us to talk joyfully from the heart with others about you, and the Savior for whom we are preparing. We bring this prayer to you through the king whom we joyfully worship, Jesus our Lord, Amen.



The Purple Candle Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, as we light this purple candle, we remind ourselves of how the royal Magi, Simeon, and others spent their lives watching and waiting with anticipation. They were waiting for the coming of the true, royal King of Kings and Lord of Lords. They waited for his first coming. Help us as we learn to wait joyfully for his return. We pray this in the name of our returning King, Jesus the Lord. Amen.



[Along with dedicating this book to the purpose of drawing closer to our covenant God whom we know in Jesus Christ, I have to say that it never would have happened or continued without my wife, Linda, and our children: Aaron, Rachel, Charis, Michael, and Candace. It was Linda's gift for making Christmas spiritually significant that first inspired me and it was the goal of bringing our family closer around Christ that led me to compose the first Advent Devotional Guide just before Thanksgiving, 1986.]



The Annunciation; 1608-09; Oil on canvas; 285 x 205 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy; Michael Angelo Merigi da Caravaggio



Sunday, November 29

Saturday October 6, 2007 was a day for which I had been eagerly awaiting—and simultaneously dreading even to the point of real nightmares. Several yards of concrete were coming to our home in the Black Hills of South Dakota. I would hand the driver my bags of tan coloring. He would mix it in and begin pouring.



Once screeded and leveled I would set up the suspension system that I was creating. This, if it worked, would allow me to move myself around directly above the curing slab, sprinkling on the fine, powdered gray release agent

that would allow me to push the big stamps down onto the soft concrete and pull them up, leaving stone pattern imprints and, if all went well, no concrete sticking to them to ruin the stone imprints. And if somehow it all went rightly, the result would be a stone pattern in the same reddish tans and slate gray tones found in the mica schist rocks of the big stones that I'd laid up on our house and driveway retaining walls.

Over and over my mind ricocheted between visions of an exquisitely colored faux stone driveway and a lumpy disaster that I would be jackhammering out for weeks.

Increasingly the arrival of the concrete truck on the morning of October 6 loomed like a day of judgment. And in reality it was. From an earlier, smaller — but successful — colored, stamped concrete effort, I knew that what it was all about, knowing the goals and the realities of the concrete, was preparation for sequencing, tools, stamps, and materials in a state of readiness, stamping skills practiced, and a working suspension system.

For two months I would come home from the church between 8 and 9 pm and then turn on and set up the outdoor lights and halogen lamps and spend several hours assiduously focused on one form or

another of preparation. The concrete truck will come, and when it does you'd better be ready.

Weather forecast: sunny with temperatures in the mid-50's. At 8:05 am on the 6th, the truck was on the way when suddenly the clouds began stacking high in the big Black Hills sky and snow began falling.

Check the weather again. Oh, no! Revised forecast—snow showers and turning colder in the higher elevations. But while swirling winds kept introducing snowflakes, they seemed more interested in scouting than settling—only beginning to accumulate after we were done. And in reality the colder temperatures retarded the concrete set time, giving me an expanded stamping time window—helpful when we were already pushing limits. The preparations performed to perfection and by the time we blanketed and tucked in that poor curing slab of shivering, antiqued, colored, stone-stamped concrete, we had that wonderful satisfaction seeing a result that exceeded expectations. God was good.

As I did the follow-up work and with December approaching, I began to reflect on how this was something of a metaphor for not just Advent season but the *reality* of the Advent and Second Advent of Jesus Christ.

It's the promise of something more wonderfully good than we can imagine. And first the promise, then the reality of incarnation is in fact what all of Scripture is about. But because of the horrific reality



MICHELANGELO Buonarroti, Last Judgment 1537-41, Fresco, 1370 x 1220 cm, Cappella Sistina, Vatican

of the promise of the great grace of incarnation cannot come without the reality of judgment on sin. The words from Malachi 3:2 that we know so well from Handel's *Messiah* capture so well the reality of the judgment that the Advent of Incarnation brings: "But who may abide the day of his coming? For he is like a refiner's fire...."

The stunning grace of the New Testament message of our Lord himself is that although God the Son has become incarnate and come, and "in him all of the fullness of the deity dwells bodily" (Colossians 2:9), out of God's great love and grace, judgment is delayed. In Luke 4:18-19, as Jesus is preaching in Nazareth and reading from Isaiah 62:1-2, he deliberately stops mid-verse, just before the words "and the day of vengeance of our God." It's not that God's vengeance won't come. In Revelation 6:15-17, describing what will happen at Jesus' second Advent, we read "Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and the rocks, 'fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?'"

Judgment *will* come, but in love and grace it is delayed—with the urgent invitation to repent and in covenant faithfulness prepare for him and his coming. This is the real and only meaning of Advent. In grace, God has redeemed me and called me to live a life of urgent preparation. We don't live for pleasure. We turn on the outdoor lights and go out to squeeze in more hours of preparation because we know that he is coming.

And because he knows us by name and loves us and has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, along the way he will send us the unexpected snow at just the right time. It may chill our hands and face, but we'll look back and say, "Wow! I needed that expanded working window!"

Caravaggio's painting of Gabriel's annunciation to Mary (previous page), along with his arresting chiaroscuro that puts the light of the heavens only on Gabriel, who is almost threateningly hovering above Mary, depicts a most somber and sober-minded Mary. Contrary to our romanticized distortions, there is ample Bible text to support this aspect of Mary's experience. Humanly speaking a horrific tangle of deeply threatening obstacles awaits Mary. And while Luke's text gives us ample clues that this

young woman had deep Scripture understanding and faith, she would not have always been sublimely at peace. She was a real person and we too often forget the struggles that she faced in faith.

But I believe Caravaggio is also missing the triumph of hope and faith. And why not? This painting was from late in his too-short life, when he was being consumed by alcohol, brawling, and other dissipations. The hope was gone even as the horror of judgment remained. This is not Advent.

Michelangelo's "Last Judgment" fresco (previous pages), along with being an unparalleled artistic achievement, depicts with overwhelming power the realities of Jesus' second Advent. The power of his right hand is resurrecting to life the saints, while the power of his left hand is sending the unredeemed to eternal damnation. Without at all detracting from the greatness of the work, I believe that the same small deficiencies that led Michelangelo to depict scenes from hell more in line with Dante than Scripture also contribute to missing the element that the second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ is the covenantal blessed hope of believers.

When we turn to the next to last pages, we find a true Advent understanding. Flawed as his life sometimes was, the continuing triumph of grace in Rembrandt's life seemed to enable him often to capture on canvas the deep spiritual truths of captivating Bible texts. The scene is so humble! Mary and Joseph have given up so much and have so little! The shepherds, after basking for a while in the light of Christ at the manger, will soon go out to become the first witnesses to the gospel. But there is that inescapable sense of "This is what I want. I wish that I was there."

Advent is a sober time. The coming of Christ is our great hope and desire. It is also inherently a judgment. But God's covenant grace in Christ means that precisely because we *do* yearn for the second advent of Christ, we will be diligent in preparing our whole lives for his coming and we will have a commitment to seek to prepare other people and all of life for that coming. This is Advent.

For this first day of Advent, light the gold candle and pray its prayer. Read the great Advent promise of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Read Isaiah 63:1-9. Remember that because of the incarnation it is so true that in all of our afflictions he is with us. Note the profound judgment of verses 1-6. Then read Revelation 19:11-16 and note its parallel. And note that we now follow and are in and with our Lord.

The Gold Candle Theme



Monday, November 30

Light the gold candle and pray its prayer.

Read Matthew 1:18-25 - Jesus is God with us
[Note: The name "Immanuel" literally means in Hebrew, "God with us" and the name "Jesus" is actually the same as the Hebrew name "Joshua", which literally means "Savior"]

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: How has God been with me today, and how would I like him to be with me during this Advent season?

Tuesday, December 1

Light the gold candle and pray its prayer.

Read Luke 2:36-40 - Anna wanted to be near God.
[Note: Until the coming of Jesus, the temple was where the people of God went to be near God.]

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: Being near the presence of God

had required changes and sacrifices in Anna's life.
What will I change and sacrifice for that?

Wednesday, December 2

Light the gold candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Psalm 27 - David's great desire was to dwell with God.

[Note: In the Old Testament, God's visible presence, his "beauty" or "glory" sometimes appeared in the temple. God's presence is now forever with us through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In verse 13, David, by the Holy Spirit, is confident of a future resurrection.]

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: How has God given me confidence? If I know by faith that I have forever to live, how can that give me freedom to live the way that I really believe I need to live today?



Thursday, December 3

Light the gold candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Luke 10:38-42 - Being with Jesus was Mary's priority.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: How has God rewarded the times when I have given him priority? How do I need to give him priority now?



Friday, December 4

Light the gold candle and pray its prayer.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 - The Apostle Paul had a longing for the day of the final resurrection because he knew that then he would always be closer to Jesus.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: What do I look for on the day that Jesus returns?

The White Candle Theme

Saturday, December 5

Light the white candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Luke 2:1-20 - Mary remembered all about how God was at work in the birth of her son, who was the Son of God, the savior for her and for the world. According to early church tradition Luke, who says that he carefully researched his gospel, obtained his information about the Christmas story from Mary.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: It is wonderful when we can see the Holy Spirit working in us, and in other members of God's family. Noticing these things and sharing them with others helps us to grow in faith and in being ready for the return of Jesus. So what will I remember from today of the work of God's Spirit in me or others? What do I want to remember of his work in me and others in the past?



Sunday, December 6

Light the white candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Luke 1:26-38 - Mary remembered God's promises about how his power and glory would be with her, and how that would be the beginning of bringing his blessing to others.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: How have I sensed God's presence today, and how has it been a blessing to others? If I remembered more of God's promises, how would that help me, and others?

Monday, December 7

Light the white candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Luke 1:39-56 - Elizabeth and Mary were both special in God's plan. They were also friends. Mary remembered the excitement of the days when they discovered together how God's goodness and power were at work.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: When have I discovered together with a friend that God was at work in amazing ways? What was it like? Who can I talk with about that now?



Tuesday, December 8

Light the white candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Luke 1:57-80 - Mary remembered how the Holy Spirit spoke wonderful promises through Zechariah, the husband of her own relative and friend, Elizabeth.

Light the white candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: What can I remember of God working through my friends? Where may God have worked through my friends today? How does this prepare me to one day meet Jesus, together with my friends who know and love him?

Wednesday, December 9

Light the white candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Psalm 63 - David remembers (verse 6) the goodness of God. He remembers God's presence. He remembers his own joyful response to it.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: What can I remember about God's good presence with me today? How does that better prepare me to meet him when he returns? At what other times have I sensed God's close presence? What can I learn from those times?



The Red Candle Theme

Thursday, December 10



Light the red candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Luke 1:5-18 - Zechariah and Elizabeth were godly people. The son who was promised to them was one who would preach a message that would call people back to godliness.

[Note: The descriptions of Zechariah and Elizabeth do not just speak of people who were earning their way to eternal life by being "good". What they followed included the offering of sacrifices. Those sacrifices showed that they knew that they had sin, and that the sin had to be paid for before God so that there could be true forgiveness.]



Light the green candle and pray its prayer.



For meditation: What could I have done today to more carefully follow the grace (undeserved love) that God has given to me? How can I honor God's love and grace tomorrow?

Friday, December 11



Light the red candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Matthew 3:1-12 - John the Baptist was God's chosen person for challenging the people to turn from their sin in order to prepare for the coming of the Son of God.



Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: From today, from the past days, what is there for which I should tell God "I am sorry"?, so that I can be better prepared to meet him when he comes?

Saturday, December 12

Light the red candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Philippians 2:1-18 - God works in you to

make you able to grow towards being like Jesus. He is preparing you for the time when he returns.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: In order to save us, Jesus humbled himself to make himself our servant. And he did it without complaining! When have I willingly put myself in the service of someone else - perhaps someone undeserving - and then been joyful and uncomplaining about it? How can I practice this in the near future, and prepare for Jesus coming?

Sunday, December 13

Light the red candle and pray its prayer.

Read: 1 Peter 1:13-2:3 - Now that you have “tasted that the Lord is good (2:3)”, God calls upon you to grow in being holy, to become more like him.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: If Jesus came today, and my life was open before him, what parts of my life would I feel good about? What parts would I worry about? What do I want God’s help in changing?

Monday, December 14

Light the red candle and pray its prayer.

Read: John 1:29-34 and Revelation 5:1-14 (to see the present glory of the Risen Lamb of God) - The Son of God was born in Bethlehem. He is the Lamb of God who came to give his life for the sins of God’s people, and then give them the glory of his new resurrection life at the throne of God.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: How do I join my voice with all of the songs of praise which go to the Lamb of God? What do I want to add to that song?

The Blue Candle Theme

Tuesday, December 15

Light the blue candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Luke 2:8-20 - The shepherds were so joyful at the message and song of the angels, and at seeing the Infant Redeemer, the incarnate Son of God, that they amazed everyone around Bethlehem by speaking to them about him right in the middle of the night.



Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: In what ways has God's presence with me today given me a joy in Jesus that I would like to share with everyone.



Wednesday, December 16



Light the blue candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Luke 2:21-35 - Simeon treasured the promises that the Lord had given him about seeing his Savior come. Because he did he was led to the Savior. Then in obedient joy he spoke about the Savior to those around him.



Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: What promises of God in the Bible can I remember? How do I have joy over those promises? How should I ask God to increase my joy so that I will want to share it?



Thursday, December 17

Light the blue candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Luke 1:5-22 and 57-66 - God does not want his people to speak words of doubt or unbelief about him, but rather words of faith. When Zechariah had seen enough, and believed enough to be able to speak words of faith, he was again enabled to speak. Not only did he speak, his inspired words led others to praise God.



Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: What words of unbelief have I spoken recently? Which ones do I need to correct? What words of praise and faith can I speak?



Friday, December 18

Light the blue candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Isaiah 12:1-6 - The day that Isaiah speaks of is the day when and after Jesus has first come to earth. Having Jesus should fill us with the joy of salvation so that we share it with all of the world.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: With whom do I desire to share

my joy over having Jesus? What people do I know of who are doing mission work to spread the good news of Jesus throughout the world? How can I be praying for them and supporting them?



Saturday, December 19

Light the blue candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Luke 1:67-80, 1 Corinthians :19-23 - Zechariah spoke words of praise about the coming of the Savior. All of life is now about witness.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: What are the different ways in which I can share my joy over having Jesus and knowing that he is returning? In what creative and subtle ways can I share that joy so that I am building and developing relationships?

The Purple Candle Theme

Sunday, December 20

Light the purple candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Hebrews 1:1-14 — God’s ultimate and definitive revelation of himself is in God the incarnate Son, who is worshipped by angels and has an eternal throne. The word in verse three translated “exact representation (of God’s being)” is, in Greek, χαρακτηρ – “character” referring to an actual imprint. Jesus is the imprint of God.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: In what ways is Jesus the imprint that reveals God to me? How have those imprints com to mark my life? How amazing that the exalted king of heaven would take on himself a human body and soul to give us the imprint of God an therefore salvation. What is my response of praise?

Monday, December 21

Light the purple candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Matthew 2:1-12 - The magi were men of learning, from Persia. The ones who came to see Jesus had devoted time to studying about the coming of the King of God’s people, and above all they wanted to worship him.



Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: What time am I committed to setting aside so that I can better prepare myself for the return of the Great King of God's people?

Tuesday, December 22

Light the purple candle and pray its prayer.

Read: John 1:1-14 and Galatians 4:4-7 - These two Bible texts give us a wonderful interpretation of what it means for us that God became one of us.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: If the King of Heaven humbled himself to become one of us, how can I humble myself for his sake to serve those around me?

Wednesday, December 23

Light the purple candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Isaiah 59:20 - 60:3 (five verses) with Isaiah 61:1-11 and Matthew 1:18-25. Chapters 56-59 of Isaiah exhibit growing longing for God to

personally come and intervene to bring good and salvation. There is in that sense a longing for the incarnation, for Immanuel: God with us, for Jesus.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: What are the ways in which I have been delighting in Jesus as the God who is my light, my delight, and the God who is with me?

Thursday, Christmas Eve Day, Christmas Eve

Light the purple candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Isaiah 9:2-7, 11:1-9 and Luke 2:1-20. Isaiah prophesied over 700 years before Jesus came. What an amazing foretelling! He is the Prince of Peace in Isaiah 9:7. In Luke 2:14 the angels proclaim peace to those on whom his favor rests. The Greek word for the group of angels is a word that describes an army. Arriving armies can proclaim peace to those under their protection. Christ, born on earth will be the king going out to conquer with the armies of heaven. In Christ, the armies of heaven proclaim peace to us.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.



For meditation: How can I grow in seeing myself in the army of Jesus and under the protection of his angelic armies? In what ways can I grow in finding his peace within my heart?

Friday, Christmas Day

Light the purple candle and pray its prayer.

Read: Revelation 22:7-21 - Our great hope is the second Advent (coming) of the Lord Jesus. He came to us humbly, born to Mary and Joseph in the Bethlehem manger. He will return in glory for those who have received him into their hearts, and made him their own Lord and king.

Light the green candle and pray its prayer.

For meditation: How am I preparing for the return of the King? Have I trusted him that his life and death have paid for my sin, and secure me a place with him forever on the new creation?



Come Lord Jesus. Live in my heart. I believe that you came here for me, lived for me, died upon a cross for me— for my sins, and so I ask you to forgive me. I believe that you rose on Easter for me and will return for me. Forgive me and receive me for Jesus' sake. By your Spirit's strength and grace enable me to trust this and live for you. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.



The Adoration of the Shepherds

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, 1646
National Gallery, London, from the Web Gallery of Art
Created by Emil Kren and Daniel Marx

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The true light that gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. The Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:5, 9, and 14

Chiaroscuro in painting refers to the use of contrast between light and darkness. No one did it better than Rembrandt. Others (Caravaggio, for example) exhibit more dramatic contrast between bright light and deep darkness. But Rembrandt perfected a subtle layering of light out of darkness that does not just illustrate the story; it *is* the story.



We find ourselves wondering, “where is that light coming from?” The light is so inviting and natural that we don’t notice that it is hard to find a source. It seems to just be shining out of the darkness. In this painting he lets us see the source—somewhat.



It is the Christ Child. Not glaring, radiating beams of light; just the reality that the closer one is to him, the more light is upon them. From them it reflects outward—to the shepherds, then the floor, walls and rafters. The light is shining out into the darkness and lighting the people who are closest to him.

May this be our reality. Christ’s light, shining into the darkness, illuminates our lives. Then we in turn reflect the light of Jesus out to others and to the whole world in which we live.

May God bless us in letting Christ’s light shine through us at all times—Pastor Paul Doriani

Magi from the East came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen his star in its rising and have come to worship him. Matthew 2:1b-2

It was no ordinary star. It could not have been anything in the physical, celestial heavens. It “rose” when Jesus was born. After the Magi had inquired of Herod (being a witness) it then led them right to the place where Jesus was. It was likely a fulfillment of the prophetic promise of Daniel 12:3. Daniel was one of the Magi—one of the greatest of them. They would have kept his writings and been watching for this great promise at the end of his book. Nonetheless, the celestial heavens powerfully contain and witness to the glory of God.



Image: Taken Under the “Wing” of the Small Magellanic Cloud HUBBLESITE
STScIPRC2013-17 (Public Domain)

This is a young star-forming region in the Small Magellanic Cloud, a dwarf galaxy in the orbit of our Milky Way. The “wing” region, photographed here, contains young stars and young stellar objects, some only a few thousand years old. They may have been forming at the time of Jesus’ birth. The Magi were astronomers and much more. They were students of all fields of knowledge. Many served as the equivalent of cabinet officers and cabinet staff for the kings of Babylonia, Persia, and then the Parthian Empire, the place from which they came to visit Jesus.