

DETAILS



Epiphany *The Season of Glory*

November 14, 2023 | \$20, 176 pages, casebound | 978-1-5140-0038-0

One of the six books offered in the Fullness of Time series. Each book within the series, edited by theologian Esau McCaulley, offers Christians of all traditions a renewed appreciation for key events throughout the Christian calendar.

The Fifth Book Within the Fullness of Time Series

As more and more churches mark several different seasons throughout the church year in their preaching and teaching, the Fullness of Time series provides resources that help readers live fully into both the theology and spiritual practices of each significant date on the Christian calendar. Six books in total offer reflections on how the church is forming all of us into the likeness of Christ throughout each season.

- Released Winter 2023: *Lent* written by Esau McCaulley, priest, scholar, and author of *Reading While Black*
- Released Spring 2023: *Pentecost* written by Emilio Alvarez, founding pastor and Rector of The Gathering Place
- Releasing Fall 2023: *Advent* written by Tish Harrison Warren, Anglican priest and award-winning author
- Releasing Fall 2023: *Christmas* written by Emily McGowin, associate lecturer of Theology at Wheaton College
- Releasing Fall 2023: *Epiphany* written by Fleming Rutledge, Episcopal priest and author of many books
- Releasing Winter 2024: *Easter* written by Wesley Hill, associate professor of biblical studies at Trinity School for Ministry

Series Editor Esau McCaulley says of this work, "These books are written from the perspective of those who have lived through the seasons many times, and we'll use personal stories and experiences to explain different aspects of the season that are meaningful to us. In what follows, do not look for the comments of historians pointing out minutia. Instead, look for fellow believers and evangelists using the tool of the church year to preach the gospel and to point Christians toward discipleship and spiritual formation. We pray that these books will be useful to individuals, families, and churches seeking a deeper walk with Jesus."

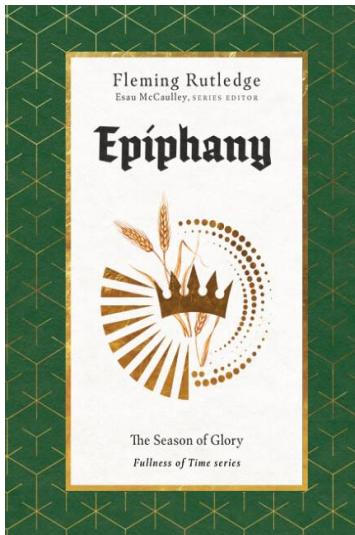


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EXCERPT



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Christmas celebrates Christ's birth; Epiphany manifests his glory. Many of us associate Epiphany with the visit of the Magi but don't know much more about it. In this Fullness of Time volume, priest and theologian Fleming Rutledge expounds the primary biblical texts and narrative arc of the season, inviting us to discover God's glory anew.

The Glory of Jesus' Ministry

We need to read the Bible more carefully, listening for the way that the witnesses to Jesus seek to convey his glory in their accounts of his ministry, death, and resurrection. The season of Epiphany is designed to display just that.

Of first importance (though often ignored) is the fact that in each of the three Synoptic Gospels, Jesus' public ministry begins with his confrontations with the demonic powers. In the earliest Gospel, the very first public action of Jesus is an exorcism (Mark 1:23-27). This is enormously significant. The incarnate Son of God did not arrive in peaceful neutral territory, but in a world under occupation. If Jesus' identity is to be fully displayed, then his power and authority over the demonic dimension have to be established. There is no New Testament without the rampaging adversary of God, the would-be destroyer of all of God's purposes. In the New Testament, this adversary is called by various names: the devil, Satan, Beelzebub, the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit at work in the sons of disobedience.

Paul has his own way of identifying this demonic realm: he calls it the reign of Sin and Death, which holds humankind and all creation in bondage; without this scenario, Paul's message loses its radical edge (see for instance Romans 6 and 7, which cannot be understood without the looming presence of Sin and Death understood as great powers). Next to God himself, the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31) is more powerful than any other entity in heaven or on earth. In Christ, however, God brings judgment upon the world and will finally destroy this usurper.

The Epiphany season is preparing us for the seasons that follow. Without the distillation of Jesus' authority, majesty, power, and divine identity that we see in these six to eight weeks, the move from Christmas to Lent and Holy Week loses its grounding in the incarnate divine purpose.

The subsequent actions and teachings of Jesus should be understood in this light: the gradual revelation of his being. Without these epiphanies, no matter how admirable or how worthy of emulation Jesus may be, he becomes indistinguishable from other prominent religious leaders such as the Dalai Lama. It is in knowing Jesus as the Son, transcendently unique in his relationship to God the Father, that we come truly to follow him as participants in his victory over Sin and Death.

The calling of Jesus' disciples is a case in point, and it is one of the leading motifs in the Epiphany lectionary (cycles A and B). It is common to hear sermons about Jesus' "invitation" to the fishermen on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. We are urged to respond to his "invitation" to become his disciples. This is to miss the point. As Jesus walks along the beach and sees the men with their boats, he utters not an invitation, but a command: "Follow me."



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Fleming Rutledge is an Episcopal priest and a bestselling author. She was in full-time parish ministry for twenty-one years, fourteen of them at Grace Church in New York City. Her other books include *Advent: The Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ* and *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (winner of *Christianity Today's* 2017 Book of the Year Award).

Mark, typically, dramatizes this as an offer they can't refuse: "Immediately they left their nets and followed him" (Mark 1:18). Likewise Matthew: "[Jesus] saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he rose and followed him" (Matthew 9:9).

Just like that. In Caravaggio's masterpiece *The Calling of Saint Matthew*, Jesus enters the room where the tax collectors are counting money, and we see him commanding, "Follow me." As he says this, he points to Matthew. Matthew gestures, "Who, me?" Jesus' feet are already turned back toward the door; there is no possibility of Matthew refusing. On another occasion Jesus seems to offer an invitation to a rich young man who "went away sorrowful" (Matthew 19:22). Apparently, Jesus can choose either to invite or more forcefully to command according to his own mysterious purposes, for he says afterward, "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

An epiphany in the New Testament is a revelation of Jesus' identity and power. He is able both to command and to elicit an immediate response. This is not just personal charisma. At the baptism we have heard the voice of God identifying his Son. We are meant to be awestruck by these indications of Jesus' majesty. That is what the season of Epiphany is designed to display.

—Adapted from "The Ministry"

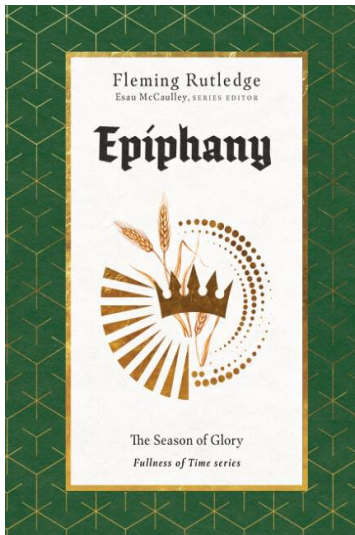


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Q & A



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A Strong Antidote to Weak Christology

When is Epiphany?

Fleming Rutledge: The season of Epiphany always begins on January 6 (the Feast of the Epiphany) and extends until Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. Ash Wednesday's date is determined by the date of Easter, so Epiphany is much shorter in some years than in others.

What is special about the season of Epiphany?

Fleming: Serious attention paid to the themes of the season following the Feast of the Epiphany, in particular, can be a strong antidote to a weak Christology. To be sure, all of the church calendar is formed around Jesus, but there is a sense in which Epiphany is the most specifically christological season. The lectionary readings for Epiphany are chosen and arranged in an order designed to glorify him. When the season is preached and taught with this in mind, there can be no doubt—for those who have ears to hear—as to who Jesus is and what he has been born to accomplish. There are particular events from Christ's life that have been part of Epiphany for two millennia—events that specifically elevate him as Savior and Lord.

What is the purpose of the church calendar?

Fleming: Above all, the church year leads us to Jesus Christ. The progression of seasons, when all is said and done, is designed so that the members of Christ's body may participate even now in his eternal life by rejoicing in his living presence, following him in our various vocations, enacting his teachings in our ministries, knowing him as our Savior, and above all glorifying him as Lord.

What would you say to those discovering the church calendar for the first time?

Fleming: This current phenomenon is most welcome. It is part of a renewal of interest in the patristic and medieval periods generally, and in the many treasures to be found in some of the traditions that were discarded after the Reformation. Yet, entering into and receiving the riches of the liturgical cycle requires humility and patience. Above all, a willingness to "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the biblical foundations of the seasons is essential, and that cannot be done in a few weeks, or by glancing over a few notes in a weekly bulletin. Full immersion is necessary, and that can happen only with embodied commitment over periods of years—two or three years to begin with, and a lifetime to absorb and make one's own.

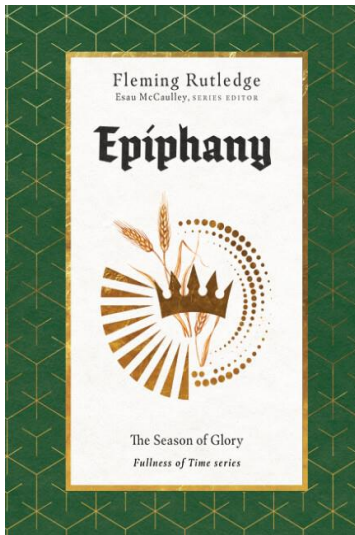


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What's important to remember about the glory of God in this season?

Fleming: The glory of Christ was paradoxically made known in his crucifixion. The connection between the glory of God shown forth in Christ and the crucifixion of Jesus should never be severed. When the fourth evangelist writes that “we have seen his glory” (John 1:14 NIV), it is not a free-floating attribute; it pertains to him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

How do you hope this book serves your readers?

Fleming: This small book about the Feast of the Epiphany and its following season will have served its purpose if it encourages Christians to think more about the centrality of vibrant worship—the ascribing of ultimate worth, power, majesty, and glory to Jesus Christ—and in so doing, to be taken up into “the glories of his righteousness, and wonders of his love.” The calling of church leaders to design worship for *doxology* is a sacred and solemn one. As for its place in this series, if these pages can be of any small help in the major project of reorienting the people of God to live according to the seasonal rhythms of the story of redemption, that will indeed be a cause for thanksgiving.



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