

DIVINE INTERVENTION | *Divine Revelation*

CHRISTMAS ORIGINS:

- Christmas is NOT a pagan holiday
- Christmas did not come from Saturnalia or Sol Invictus
 - The dates have always been off for Saturnalia
 - There's better evidence that Sol Invictus was a pagan emperor's response to Christians celebrating Christmas
- December 25th was recognized/believed to be the birth of Jesus early on.
 - Hippolytus of Rome wrote in his commentary on Daniel 202-204 BC that Jesus was born on December 25th
 - The Philocalian Calendar (Roman calendar from 354 AD) recognized Dec 25th as the birth of Christ
- No early church writing states they picked this date to replace pagan celebrations.
 - The early church was big on polemics against paganism.
 - This would've been noteworthy enough to record if they did.
- Rather, the date was chosen because that is what they believed.
 - There were some early Jews and early Christians who believed that great prophets of biblical stature died on the days they were conceived.
 - They calculated the Jesus was crucified on March 25th... therefore conceived on March 25th... and 9 months later born on December 25th.
 - Several early church fathers confirm this belief.
- The point is NOT is that factually correct, but that it was an entirely Christian thought and celebration... NOT PAGAN.
- FURTHER:
 - The belief that Christmas was of pagan origins is rooted in the enlightenment period and thinking.
 - This era isn't all bad (in fact much good), but in this period was birthed the higher criticism movement which became very anti-bible.
 - Denied divine inspiration
 - Didn't believe in anything miraculous or supernatural
 - Believe the bible is just a man-made book that grew over time
 - Denied all the traditional dates and authorship

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- (I can't stand these guys)
- In other words, the same crowd that eventually came to tell you NOT to believe your Bible and pull out all the miraculous, is the same crowd telling you Christmas is pagan.

DIVINE INTERVENTION SERMON SERIES:

In our "Divine Intervention" series, we've been re-enchanting our worldview by taking special notice of the miraculous and supernatural elements woven throughout the Christmas narratives, reminding us that the Bible is a story of God's active, intervening presence in our world—a God who hasn't changed and still speaks, still works wonders, and still calls us to faith in and for the impossible.

- In the first sermon, we explored the Incarnation, where the virgin Mary conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit, revealing Him as both fully divine and fully human, the sinless Savior who fulfills ancient prophecies, embodies God's grace, and personally steps into humanity's redemption to make salvation available to all.
- Last week, we saw divine guidance at work in Joseph's story, as God interrupted his human plans through angelic visitations and dreams, directing him to protect the his family from Herod's threats, providing for their flight to Egypt, and faithfully leading them season by season to fulfill His purposes, even amid hardship and uncertainty—proving that where God calls, He equips, protects, and gets us exactly where He wants us to be.
- Today, let's build on these principles as we look into the story of the Magi and the theme of God's Divine Revelation.
 - And quite honestly, it follows the theme of Divine Guidance quite closely, but ends with revelation of Himself—he led them to himself!
 - It's worth stating this: the greatest way God can guide and direct you... is to lead you to Him!
 - For it is impossible to come to Him, unless he draws you (leads you).
 - But as we begin, what do I mean by divine revelation?
 - Revelation means the revealing (unveiling).
 - So for our purposes... Divine Revelation is the revealing of God's nature, character, word and plan to humanity.
 - Specifically, God's self-revelation to us.
 - Consider: How did God reveal himself to the magi?

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Matthew 2:1-12 ESV

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶ "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.' " ⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

1: GOD USED A STAR TO SIGNAL CHRIST'S BIRTH TO THE MAGI

A: HOW DID THE MAGI COME TO UNDERSTAND THE STAR AS THE SIGN FOR THE BIRTH OF A JEWISH KING?

- **WHO WERE THE MAGI?**

- The magi were members of Babylonian and later Persian class of people who served as teachers, priests, astrologers, magicians, enchanters.
- Magi- is our root word for magic
- Simply, they were the pagan 'wise men' serving as royal counselors

- **HOW WOULD THEY KNOW THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STAR—CONNECT IT TO THE CHRIST?**

- The Bible gives a good hint:

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Daniel 2:48 ESV

⁴⁸ Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel 5:11-12 ESV

¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, ¹² because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”

- As chief of the magi, Daniel would have likely instructed them in the knowledge of God and the scriptures.

Numbers 24:17 ESV

¹⁷ I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.

• **FURTHER:**

- The Magi belonged to a world that watched the heavens for meaning and preserved ancient wisdom. They were scholars trained to observe the skies and to interpret events within a larger story of history and kingship. Living in the East, where Jewish exiles such as Daniel had once served among the wise men, they would have been familiar with Israel’s hope for an anointed ruler and with the ancient promise of a star rising from Jacob.
- This hope did not exist in isolation. Jewish and Roman writers alike tell us that, in the first century, there was a widespread expectation that a ruler destined to change the course of history would arise from Judea, and that history itself was moving toward renewal. When the Magi saw an extraordinary sign in the heavens, they interpreted it through this shared world of expectation and set out for Jerusalem, seeking the one born “King of the Jews.”

B: BUT HOW COULD GOD USE SOMETHING THAT FEELS LIKE PAGAN ASTROLOGY?

- **It’s important to note and differentiate something right off the bat:**

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- FIRST: God created the stars and the heavens and can use them to indicate the times and seasons.

Genesis 1:14 ESV

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years,

- SECOND: God never endorses the pagan astrological beliefs and practices of divining the future, or the belief that stars determine one's fate.
 - Astrology looks upward to find meaning and destiny.
 - God used the stars to point the magi to already revealed truth: the scriptures—>Jesus
- The amazing thing here is that God used something familiar to catch their attention and point them to scripture.
 - They were watching the heavens in a season of anticipation
 - God showed up where they were (without validating pagan astrology).

C: THIS STAR WAS SOMETHING SUPERNATURAL

- We'll see this in v9 when the star reappears and leads them to the place where Jesus was.
- Its worth noting:
 - The star rising announced the birth of Jesus
 - The star **doesn't** lead them to Jerusalem
 - The star **does** reappear to direct them to the place where Jesus was
 - No ordinary star can do that
- This had to have been some sort of miraculous star that God used to direct their steps.

2: THE STAR LED THEM TO SCRIPTURAL TRUTH

A: AS NOTED, THEY WOULD'VE MADE THE CONNECTION TO [NUMBERS 24:17](#)

- The passage by this time became a clear reference to Messianic expectation
- It was well known beyond the Jews (and notably was spoken by Balaam).

B: THEY WENT TO JERUSALEM TO FURTHER SEEK HIM OUT

- They presumed he would be there.

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- “where is he who was born king of the Jews?”
- No wonder Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled at their presence and question!
- There (in Jerusalem), Herod called together the scribes (Pharisees) and chief priests (Sadducees) in order to consult the scriptures.
- They collectively report and quote from [Micah 5:2](#) and potentially [2 Samuel 5:2](#).

C: HEROD SENT THEM TO BETHLEHEM

- He gives them the report from the priests and scribes
- He sends them (deceitfully) to search for the child

NOTICE:

- God used:
 - A star (miraculous, but something familiar to them)
 - Their own assumptions and understanding (he must be in Jerusalem)
 - Knowledgeable scholars and leaders who for some reason don't believe or care enough to act on the word themselves.
 - A wicked king whose motives were conspiratorial.
- When God wants to guide us AND reveal himself to us... He won't be limited by our rules and expectations.
 - Maybe you're here (or watching) because you've been on a journey trying to find God.
 - Keep seeking him.
 - It doesn't matter that the route feels crazy or that God used disingenuous people along the way
 - What matters is that He leads you to truth: the scriptures and ultimately himself!
 - Maybe you've got loved ones who are far from God
 - God can use anything and anyone to get their attention and get them started on the journey!
 - Be praying!

3: THE STAR LED THEM TO JESUS

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A: THE LORD MADE THE STAR REAPPEAR AND LEAD THEM TO THE PLACE WHERE JESUS WAS.

- This is miraculous by any account or explanation.
 - God started with a sign, directed them with reason, gave understanding through the Scriptures and then actively intervened so they would be led to the right house.
 - God is the author and finisher of their faith.
 - Miraculous intervention to begin and end the journey.
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4: LAST DETAILS

A: HEROD, THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS, AND ALL JERUSALEM WERE CONFRONTED WITH THE WISE MEN'S INTERRUPTION AND QUESTION.

- The magi had the skies above them interrupted—they decided to seek out Jesus.
- Herod when surprised with the news felt threatened and attempted to murder the child.
- The religious leaders KNEW THE ANSWER – the messiah would be in Bethlehem and became indifferent to the news and presence of the wise men.
 - Their pride, fear, jealousy, and/or unbelief kept them from traveling the 5 miles to investigate for themselves.
 - Some people can't handle the truth if it comes through an unexpected messenger.
 - Some people can't handle the truth if it threatens their mirage of control.
 - Others are so concerned with their status and the opinions of those they esteem that they won't follow up on what they believe.
 - AND THEY ALL MISSED HIM.
 - It was to the heathen gentiles that God revealed himself.
 - [Luke 2](#): It was the poor and lowly shepherds that the angels broke open the heavens and delivered the good news to.
 - Now the shepherds... they, like the wise men had the faith and courage to seek out what God had signaled to them.

B: THE MAGI CAME PREPARED TO WORSHIP

- When they saw the star, their rejoiced with great joy

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- When they found Jesus,
 - they fell down and worshiped him
 - they opened their treasures to him.

RESPONSE:

So who are you?

- Do you have the eyes to see when God tries to get your attention?
- Do you turn to the scriptures for the revelation of truth and the answers?
- When God reveals himself, are you overcome with joy or doubt, courage or complacency, faith or fear?
- When God challenges your presuppositions, do you keep following him or falter?

Wise men still seek, find, and worship Jesus.