

I) V1-12 INTRO: Now after Jesus was born in *Bethlehem* of Judea in the days of Herod the

II) We are living in a very challenging season and for many, it has been extremely hard

This time, last year, Marie and I were going through a bout with COVID
Many have gone through it, and many others have had bouts with various illnesses

III) The fact that we are going through such pressure has reminded me of what Jesus said

Jn 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world *you will have tribulation*; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

IV) Tribulation: Affliction, anguish, distress, pressure

V) In the world you will suffer anguish and distress but take joy, I have overcome the world

VI) How can we take joy? How can this be possible?

1 Jn 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--*our faith*.

VII) John said that our victory that overcomes the world is connected to our faith

VIII) He is not speaking of the faith that inspires heroic actions or wonderful victories

He is speaking of our faith in Jesus which is strengthened and supported by Him

IX) It is a faith that is rooted in who Jesus is and what He does on our behalf
It is Jesus that gives us victory against every enemy that opposes us

X) As we gather to celebrate His birth, even in these days, we can have joy
Not because of our circumstances, but in many ways in spite of our circumstances

In the deepest portion of our souls we can receive strength because *God is with us*

XI) We celebrate His birth, not because we are certain of its date
We celebrate His birth because God entered in to the world to save us

XII) What we sometimes forget is that God often speaks loudest when we are having trouble

C. S. Lewis once wrote: God *whispers* to us in our pleasures, *speaks* in our conscience, but *shouts* in our pain; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

Perhaps despite all we are going through, God may be making Himself heard

XIII) In these difficult times we can come to believe that God has forgotten us
Ps 13:1 How long O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?

I) Many are feeling what King David felt when he wrote these words
God, have you forgotten me? Will You never again help me? Are you abandoning me?

II) Because of this we need to remember that the birth Jesus was *intended to bring great joy*

IT IS JOYFUL: Because God openly revealed how deeply He loves us

IT IS JOYFUL: Because as we celebrate His birth we are reminded that He is with us

III) God the Father revealed the depth of His love by sending Jesus to seek and save the lost

When the lost are found, they can even be surprised by the joy they experience

IV) Luke records that the birth of Jesus was intended to produce great joy

Lu 2:10 (The angel said) I bring you good tidings of *great joy* which will be to all people

V) *Great joy* is produced because the one who is in bondage to sin can be set free

The sorrow that sin produced is removed when they are saved, being replaced by joy

Ps. 32:2 Blessed (happy) is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him

VI) **KEY:** The Christmas season is above all things *a time to receive forgiveness* and joy

VII) **CHRISTMAS:** Is the remembering that God invaded human history *to provide salvation*

It is the celebration of the Incarnation: Immanuel, God is with us

VIII) Bible scholars have stated that there are over 300 bible prophecies fulfilled by Jesus

This included prophecies that Jesus would crush the head of the serpent, Satan

The prophets said that Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah, would be from the line of David, would be born to a virgin, would be born in Bethlehem, and would escape to Egypt

IX) These all were fulfilled in Jesus

X) We have a beautiful prophecy about Messiah found in the Book of Isaiah Is 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born, unto us *a son is given:* and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called *Wonderful Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.* Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

XI) Unto us A Child is born, unto us a Son is given

A Child is *born*, is speaking of the Incarnation:

A Son is given: Could be a foreshadowing of Jesus' sacrificial death

The *government* will be upon His shoulder because He is the Lord and Ruler

I) The Messiah, the One who will rule, is described by four Names

II) Wonderful Counselor: In contrast to the wisdom of this age, and its false teachers

Col 2:3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

III) He is the Mighty God: A title of God Himself (Is 10:21)

Jer 32:18 You show lovingkindness to thousands, and repay the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them--the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts.

IV) Everlasting Father: Messiah shall be a Father to His people eternally
Pictured in the story of the Prodigal son

V) Prince of Peace: He will rule and perpetuate peace among all the peoples of the world

Ac 10:36 You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the *good news of peace* through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

VI) V7 Of the increase of His government and peace *there will be no end*
Messiah is the final king, not a king among other kings
Ps 72:11 All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him.

VII) FIRST: By Isaiah, we see that a *Son is given* which would have the cross in view

Jn 3:16 For God so loved the world that *He gave His Son*

VIII) DURING THIS SEASON: We celebrate the giving of the gift of God's own Son

BY GOD GIVING US JESUS: He clearly demonstrated to us what love is

IX) SECOND: Prophetically see a crown: the government will be on His shoulder

Jesus was born to rule as Messiah

X) V1 Now *after* Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod Matthew states that Jesus was born in Bethlehem (The House of Bread)

XI) Jesus is the Bread that came down from heaven to give life to the world
Jn 6:41 I am *the bread* which came down from heaven
From the House of Bread came the Bread of Life

XII) V1 *After* Jesus was born...behold, *wise men* from the East came to Jerusalem

The words *Wise men* can also be translated *Magi*

I) The Magi first appear in 700 BC as a *priestly class* in the nation of Media:

It is possible that they, like Abraham, came from Ur of the Chaldees (So. Babylon, in modern Iraq)

**Were skilled in astronomy, agriculture, science, mathematics, and history
As they practiced astrology, sorcery, and the interpretation of dreams**

II) They were the most respected members of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires

III) Daniel the prophet influenced these wise men

Dan 2:48 *Daniel* was made chief of the governors over *all* the *wise men* of Babylon

NO DOUBT: Daniel informed them concerning the God of Israel, and the Messiah

IV) It is probable that Daniel acquainted them with a prophecy made by Balaam

Balaam was a false prophet from that area but he gave a true prophecy about Messiah

Num 24:17 I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. *A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.*

V) These Magi may have been waiting for a sign of this coming ruler

**As students of astronomy, the sign of a star would be highly significant
In conjunction with an unusual star in the Heavens, they made their journey to Israel**

VI) THE STAR: Was a light that they followed that traveled south and stood over a house

This leads some bible expositors to say it was the Shekinah glory of God

This glory was seen in ancient Israel as the pillar of fire leading the Jews (Neh 9:12)

VII) QUOTE: Because the Shekinah glory was a light that could move and could point to the presence of God, it is possible that the star mentioned in Matthew 2 was not an astronomical object but actually the appearance, after a few hundred years' absence of the Shekinah glory of God.

VIII) THEIR JOURNEY: Covered a period of time but they arrived in Jerusalem

IX) V2 Where is he Who has been *born* King of the Jews For we have seen His star in the

X) It is evident this star they saw did not lead them all the way to Bethlehem They had to inquire where the King was: They came to a Palace to find the King
OBVIOUSLY: The sign was for the Wise Men alone, not everybody

XI) Notice the Response of *the Wise Men*: These men had come to *worship* the King
Though they had a pagan background they responded to the light they had and came

Lu 2:32 (Jesus is) A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel

I) V6-8 Says when they hear what Scripture says, they immediately leave to find Jesus
Those who are seeking to worship Him will obey what His word says
Scripture said He would be in Bethlehem, and they followed its directions

II) V3 Records *Herod's response*
THE WISE MEN: Responded with humility, but he responded with *Hostility*

III) V3 He was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him because they were in danger
Herod was power hungry: In his reign, he murdered the high priest, killed his wife, killed her mother, and killed two of his own sons to retain power

IV) FACT: Christ is to be crowned King over our lives
SADLY: Some respond to His claim over them with *hostility and rejection*
Ro 8:6-8 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God

V) TO THIS DAY: There is still a clear hostility towards Jesus and His message

VI) V4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the

people together he

The Priests (Levites) who oversaw the duties of the Priesthood
The Scribes were the theologians who interpreted the Law and traditions of the elders

VII) The response of the scribes was the most dangerous one of all

Their rejection of Jesus influenced *the eternity* of all looked to them for guidance

Mt 23:13 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

VIII) V4 Herod wanted to know where this child was: where could he find Him?

IX) V5-6 So they said to him In Bethlehem of Judea for thus it is written by the prophet

For them, the question of where Messiah would be born was settled by prophecy

They knew this particular passage and immediately quoted it

X) V7-8 Then Herod when he had secretly called the wise men determined from them what

Herod knew his rule was threatened so he wanted to know just how threatened it was

XI) V8 He hears that it is in Bethlehem, around six miles from Jerusalem
He wanted to know exactly where Messiah was being kept

I) V9 When they heard the king they departed and behold the star which they had seen

Once again, the star leads them, and they locate Jesus

II) V10-11 When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy
Their quest was completed, and they were finally able to come and worship the king

III) Mary and Joseph are not in a stable, but are now living in a house
The small city must have been filled with excitement as the Magi arrived

IV) The magi enter the house, and immediately fell down before Jesus and

worshiped Him

Worshiped: to fall on the knees and touch the ground with the forehead in reverence

Jn 5:23 all should honor the Son *just as they honor the Father*. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

V) V11 And when they had opened their treasures they presented gifts to Him

True worship *is often expressed by giving to Him*, as an expression of the heart

A heart that is filled with worship for God will always have a way of expressing itself

VI) NOTICE: They presented their gifts *to Him*, not to Joseph or Mary

Offerings are always to be made *to God*

Gold: A gift for a King

Frankincense: A gift for a Priest

Myrrh: Used for burials: A gift for the Savior

VII) When Joseph was told that Mary would have a Son, the angel said

Mt 1:21 you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins

VIII) QUOTE: If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator; If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist; If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist; If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer; But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.

IX) The men who have come to be known as the “wise men” are the first people in the New Testament who are said to have *worshiped Jesus*.

X) Wise men still worship Him

'21 CHRISTMAS EVE 12/24/21
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