

Behold God's Orchestration

Matthew 1-2

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Introduction

Can anyone really change?

I mean really change—not just modify behavior for a season or adopt a new habit for a month, but actually become a different person at the core?

We all know the story of Ebenezer Scrooge. Charles Dickens gave us this miserable old miser who hoarded his gold, despised Christmas, worked his clerk half to death for pennies, and snarled "Bah! Humbug!" at anyone who dared suggest joy or generosity. If you'd asked his neighbors on Christmas Eve whether Scrooge could change, they would have laughed bitterly. That man? Change? He's been clenched tight as a fist for forty years. He's too set in his ways, too hardened by his choices, too far gone.

But then something happens. In one impossible night, Scrooge encounters three spirits who show him scenes from his past, present, and future. And here's the crucial thing: Scrooge doesn't change by turning inward, by mustering willpower, by trying harder to be better. He changes by beholding. He sees—really sees—the consequences of his selfishness, the emptiness of his isolation, the joy he's been missing, the grave that awaits him. And in beholding these visions, something inside him breaks open. The next morning, he's a different man—laughing, weeping, giving, celebrating. The transformation is so complete that people think he's gone mad.

The question Dickens won't let us escape is this: What if the most hardened hearts can change? What if it happens not through gritting our teeth and trying harder, but through beholding something—or Someone—bigger than ourselves?

This morning, we're looking at another story about unlikely people who were changed by beholding.

Before we meet the characters in this story, let me introduce you to the one telling it—**Matthew** himself. He was a Jewish tax collector, which in first-century Judea meant

he was a collaborator with Rome, a traitor to his own people, a man who grew rich by extorting his fellow Jews. Tax collectors were lumped together with "sinners" in polite conversation and excluded from religious life. Yet Jesus called him, and Matthew left everything to follow. Now this former outcast writes as an insider, an eyewitness to Jesus' ministry, carefully documenting how the Jewish Messiah fulfilled every prophecy. Matthew is a man who knows what it's like to be an unlikely choice for God's purposes—which may be why he tells this story of other unlikely people with such obvious delight.

Now let me introduce you to the rest of the unlikely cast of characters in this drama.

First, there's **Herod the Great**—and yes, history calls him "great," though the title drips with irony. He's the king installed by Rome, a half-Jew, half-Idumean who clawed his way to power through cunning and cruelty. He's a magnificent builder—the Jerusalem temple is his masterpiece—but he's also a magnificent monster. Paranoid and ruthless, he's already murdered his favorite wife and two of his own sons to protect his throne. The Roman Emperor Augustus once quipped that it was safer to be Herod's pig than his son. At this moment in the story, he's aging, ill, and more suspicious than ever. Power is his god, and he'll sacrifice anything—or anyone—to keep it.

Then we have the **chief priests and scribes**, they represent the religious establishment in Jerusalem. The chief priests are the temple aristocracy—the high priest and his family, former high priests, heads of the twenty-four priestly divisions. The priests are Sadducees, mostly collaborating with Rome to maintain their position. The scribes are the scholars, the lawyers, the Bible experts who've devoted their lives to studying Torah. Most of them are Pharisees, meticulous in their interpretation of Scripture. Together, they know the prophecies backward and forward. They can quote chapter and verse about where the Messiah will be born.

Then come the **Magi**—wise men from somewhere in the East, perhaps Persia or Babylon. They're not kings, despite our Christmas carol "We Three Kings", but something stranger: scholar-priests who study the stars, interpreters of dreams, practitioners of what we'd call astrology. They're pagans, outsiders, Gentiles with no covenant relationship with Israel's God. They occupy a world of celestial charts and ancient prophecies, mixing science and superstition in ways that would make them both astronomers and occultists. Matthew doesn't even tell us how many there were—tradition says three because of the three gifts, but there may have been a dozen or more. What matters is this: they're the last people you'd expect to be seeking the Jewish Messiah.

And finally, tucked away in that Bethlehem house, there's the characters with whom we are most familiar, **Joseph and Mary**—young, poor, displaced. Joseph is a carpenter from Nazareth, a righteous man who nearly divorced Mary quietly when she turned up pregnant before their wedding. But an angel visited him in a dream, and he obeyed, taking Mary as his wife and the child as his own son, giving Jesus his legal claim to David's throne. Mary is the virgin whose yes to God changed everything. They're peasants caught up in prophecy, ordinary people carrying the extraordinary weight of God's salvation plan. Matthew tells their story from Joseph's perspective—his dreams, his obedience, his protecting this vulnerable family. They don't understand everything that's happening, but they're faithful to what they've been given.

Now let's watch how these characters collide. Chapter 2 begins,

[Read Matthew 2:1-2]

"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, 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.'"

Imagine yourself as one of these Magi—night after night, your eyes fixed on the heavens like a sailor scanning the horizon for land. The stars are your scrolls, the constellations are your ancient texts. Then one night, something breaks through the predictable rhythm of the cosmos. A celestial announcement blazes across the sky.

What would compel you to leave everything? You don't even fully understand what you're pursuing. You can't articulate why this star matters more than all the others you've studied. But you're like a treasure hunter who's found the first clue on an ancient map, you can't *not* go. These men beheld something in the heavens that set their hearts ablaze, even though they couldn't explain it. It was as if this star was God's cosmic breadcrumb, and they followed it with the faith of children and the determination of kings, groping toward a truth they couldn't yet name.

For months they traveled—eight hundred miles across deserts, through mountain passes where bandits lurked. Their journey was one big living question mark stretched across the ancient world: *"Where is he?"* As one commentator notes, "I find their faith,

their insight, their wholehearted search and adoring worship, utterly amazing. It is one of the many surprises in the Gospel.” They possessed more questions than answers, more longing than certainty, yet still they came. The apostle Paul would later write, “And [God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth . . . that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him” (Acts 17:26–27).

[Summary of verses 3-8]

Then they arrived in Jerusalem, with their innocent question—“*Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?*”—and you know what? Their question detonated like a bomb in Herod’s paranoid court. The old tyrant trembled; the whole city shuddered with him, knowing what Herod did when he felt threatened. This time He immediately summoned his religious experts—the chief priests and scribes—who quickly sorted through their scrolls and answered from Micah’s prophecy: Bethlehem, of course. Five miles south. That is where he would be born.

Meanwhile, Herod smiled his predator’s smile and sent the Magi on their way with fake words about wanting to worship this newborn king himself. The old fox was already plotting murder. Joseph and Mary, unaware in their Bethlehem house, were caring for an infant who had a target on his back from his first breath.

[Read Matthew 2:9-11]

“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. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 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.”

Picture that moment when the star—silent since they first saw it rise in the East—suddenly moves again, like a shepherd resuming his walk. It glides ahead of them, deliberate as a guide leading pilgrims home. When it stops, hovering over one ordinary house among many, their joy explodes like dawn breaking over a dark world:

"exceedingly with great joy." Matthew can barely contain their ecstasy in human language. The star has led them true.

And what do they behold when they enter? Not marble columns but mud-brick walls. Not a golden throne but a mother's lap. Not palace guards but a carpenter named Joseph standing watch. Not a crown but a baby's face, cradled by Mary, this young peasant girl who pondered everything in her heart. Everything in their training as wise men should have disappointed them. This can't be what we traveled so far to find.

Yet something happens in that humble room—something beyond their astronomy and ancient texts, something they still don't fully comprehend but cannot deny. In that infant's eyes, these pagan stargazers beheld what Jerusalem's scholars had missed—they saw deity wrapped in infant skin, eternity cradled in time, the King of the cosmos content in his mother's arms. While Herod clutched his throne in terror and the scribes clutched their scrolls in apathy, these Gentile seekers found what Israel had been waiting for.

They didn't need to understand it all. They didn't have categories for God becoming flesh. Full understanding wasn't required—only recognition. They fell prostrate. Like priests before the holy of holies, they worshiped. Holding nothing back, they opened their treasure chests and poured out gold, frankincense, and myrrh—gifts for a King, for God, for one born to die. They worshiped better than they knew.

Do you see what just happened in this ancient story? From the first sighting of the star to the final act of worship, from confused seeking to absolute surrender, from pagans in the East to peasants in Bethlehem, while King Herod trembled and the scholars shrugged, we witness something breathtaking:

We behold the endless wonders of how God orchestrated salvation.

And in our remaining time, that's precisely what we're going to do together. We're going to behold these wonders. Because the question that rises from this text is simply this:

What endless wonders does Matthew want us to behold?

1:

The first wonder we behold is the wonder of God's HISTORICAL Orchestration.

Let me ask you to do something with me. Zoom out. Way out. Pull back from that Bethlehem house, back from that moment when the Magi bowed before the baby. Keep pulling back through time—past Herod's paranoid reign, before the Babylonian exile, before King David's golden age, past Moses and the exodus, all the way back to a man named Abraham standing under a canopy of stars while God made him an impossible promise.

This is where Matthew begins telling his Christmas story. In chapter 1, verses 1-17, Matthew begins with a genealogy. I know—nobody gets excited about genealogies. But this isn't just a list of hard-to-pronounce names. This is a time-lapse video of God's patient work across two thousand years. Matthew opens his Gospel with these words: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

Do you see what he's doing? He's connecting Jesus to two massive promises: the promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his offspring, and the promise to David that his throne would be established forever. Then Matthew traces the line through forty-two generations, carefully arranged in three groups of fourteen—from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonian exile, from the exile to Christ.

From the beginning of his gospel, Matthew wants us **to behold the wonder of God's historical orchestration.**

But here's what's most surprising: this genealogy doesn't just include the heroes. Look at verse 3—Tamar, who seduced her father-in-law. Verse 5—Rahab the prostitute from Jericho, and Ruth the Moabite, an outsider explicitly forbidden from entering God's assembly. Verse 6—"the wife of Uriah," Bathsheba, whose union with David began in adultery and led to murder. Four women, all either Gentiles or scandal-marked, woven into the messianic line to Jesus.

God was orchestrating salvation through broken people, through shameful moments, through foreigners and failures. And so we behold the wonder of God's patient planning through centuries. For two thousand years—through forty-two generations of faithfulness and faithlessness, through kingdom glory and exile shame, through remembered names and forgotten lives—God was working his patient plan. Every birth, every death, every choice, every consequence was a thread in the tapestry he was weaving.

The star that led the Magi didn't appear randomly. It was the culmination of centuries of orchestration. Those pagan seekers were finding the answer to promises made before their ancestors were born.

So let me ask us: Do we behold this wonder today? When your life feels stuck, when God seems slow, when prayers go unanswered and years roll by—remember the genealogy. God worked for two millennia to bring Jesus at exactly the right moment. Paul calls it "the fullness of time." Not a moment too early, not a moment too late. God's timing isn't tardiness; it's patient precision.

Let us behold the wonder of God's historical orchestration. But that's not all we behold in Matthew's Christmas story.

2:

The second wonder we behold is the Wonder of God's PROPHETIC Orchestration.

Now zoom in a bit. Let's focus on the details. **Matthew 1:18–21** 18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

And then in the next verse we notice that Matthew's Gospel is saturated with one phrase that appears over and over: "to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet." Five times in these first two chapters alone, Matthew stops his narrative to point out that what's happening was predicted centuries earlier.

1. Look at verses 22–23. After explaining the virgin birth, Matthew writes: **"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.'"** That's Isaiah 7:14, written seven hundred years earlier.
2. Jump to Matthew 2:5–6. When Herod's experts answer where the Christ would be born, they quote Micah 5:2: **"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." Written seven centuries before Jesus, Micah pinpointed the exact town—not Jerusalem the capital, not Nazareth where Mary and Joseph lived, but little Bethlehem.

3. Then in 2:15. After the family flees to Egypt and returns, Matthew writes: "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'" That's Hosea 11:1.
4. Then verse 17-18 quotes Jeremiah 31:15 about Rachel weeping for her children, fulfilled in Herod's massacre.
5. Verse 23 says Jesus being called a Nazarene fulfills what was spoken by the prophets.

Do we see the pattern? God announced his plan through the prophets, then executed it with surgical precision. When those Magi followed that star, they weren't stumbling onto plan B. They were walking into a script written before the foundation of the world. The star, the journey, the dreams, the gifts—every detail had been telegraphed through Scripture. And so let me invite us to . . .

We behold the wonder of God's precise fulfillment of Scripture.

You see, here's what makes this truly wondrous: the prophecies, when they were first spoken, they weren't obvious.

- A virgin birth? That defied nature.
- The Messiah from Bethlehem but called a Nazarene? That seemed contradictory.
- Called out of Egypt like Israel in the exodus? That was a strange parallel.

God's prophetic plan was so intricate that only when you saw Jesus could you see how it all fit together. So,

Let us behold the wonder of God's precise fulfillment of Scripture.

And so when we read our Old Testament, we must remember that yes, there is much we can learn about God and about life, but those aren't just ancient stories—they're signposts pointing to Jesus. When we read about the Passover lamb, we're reading about Jesus. When we read about the bronze serpent lifted up in the wilderness, we're reading about Jesus. When we read about David, Solomon, or the suffering servant—we're reading about Jesus. The whole Scripture testifies to him.

The mathematical probability of one person fulfilling even eight of the messianic prophecies by chance is astronomical—one in one hundred quadrillion. 100,000,000,000,000,000. The fulfilled prophecies aren't just interesting—they're evidence. God announced what he would do, then did exactly that. Let us behold this wonder and say with confidence: this isn't legend or myth. This is God keeping his word across centuries.

And so, let us behold God's precise fulfillment of Scripture by trusting God's word completely. If God fulfilled prophecy with this precision about Jesus' first coming, we can trust his promises about Jesus' second coming. If he kept his word about His salvation plan, he'll keep his word about your life and eternity. In fact, every promise in Scripture is a prophecy waiting for God's perfect timing.

And so, let us behold the Wonder of God's PROPHETIC Orchestration. But that's not all we behold in Matthew's Christmas story.

3:

The third wonder we behold is the wonder of God's SUPERNATURAL Orchestration.

Now zoom in closer still. Focus on the mechanics of how Jesus entered our world. Because what happened in Bethlehem wasn't just history—it was, like Pastor Schock told us last week, it was invasion. The supernatural broke into the natural. The infinite condensed into the finite. God became flesh.

Matthew 1:18 states it plainly: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit." Verse 20: "That which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." This wasn't biological reproduction as usual. The conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary was the Holy Spirit—the same Spirit who hovered over the waters at creation—now hovering over Mary's womb, creating life where there was no human father.

We'll see more why this matters next week. But today, we're just focusing on the supernatural orchestration: God's supernatural orchestration happened not only in the virgin conception, but five times in chapters 1 and 2, God speaks supernaturally through dreams.

1. To Joseph in 1:20, telling him to take Mary as his wife.
2. To the Magi in 2:12, warning them not to return to Herod.

3. To Joseph in 2:13, commanding the flight to Egypt.
4. To Joseph in 2:19, calling them back from Egypt.
5. To Joseph in 2:22, directing them to Nazareth.

At every critical junction, when danger threatened or confusion reigned, God spoke. The supernatural guided the natural. Heaven directed earth. And so, today we . . .

We behold the wonder of God's personal intervention. Leading up to that first Christmas.

The star the Magi followed—whether the conjunction of planets or supernatural phenomenon—the star was itself God's orchestration. Creation announcing the Creator. The heavens declaring not just God's glory in general, but God's specific work in a specific baby at a specific time.

How do we behold this wonder today? We worship Jesus not just as teacher but as God. When we sing "O Come Let Us Adore Him," we're joining the Magi in recognizing deity in human form. Our worship isn't just respect for a good man—it's awe at the incarnation. God didn't just send help; he came to us himself.

And not only do we worship Jesus, but we find hope in God's continued supernatural work. The God who spoke through dreams to Joseph still speaks today—through his Word, through his Spirit, through his people. The God who protected the infant Jesus through supernatural intervention is still protecting his church. We don't worship a dead hero; we follow a living Lord who is still orchestrating, still guiding, still intervening.

There is one more wonder to behold.

4:

The fourth wonder we behold is the wonder of God's UNIVERSAL Orchestration.

Finally, zoom all the way back into where we started: that Bethlehem house, that baby, those Magi on their knees. Because here's the scandal that Matthew wants us to see—the first worshipers of Jesus weren't Jews. They were Gentiles. They were pagan astrologers. They were religious and ethnic outsiders.

Look at Matthew 2:1-2 again: "**wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 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.'**" God orchestrated the star to draw these Gentiles. These

wise men didn't come up with this idea on their own. They were prompted and led by the Spirit of the Lord. God placed hunger in pagan hearts. God gave them access to Jewish prophecies. God led them on a months-long journey so they could be present at the beginning of the gospel story.

Now look at the contrast Matthew sets up. Chapter 2, Verse 3: **"When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."** The Jews were troubled by the news of their Messiah. Verses 4-6 tell us that the chief priests and scribes knew exactly where Christ would be born—they quoted Micah 5:2 without hesitation. These scholars knew their Scriptures but never bothered to make the five-mile journey. They could quote prophecy but felt no compulsion to witness its fulfillment. "The Jewish leaders may have quoted these words from the prophet," one scholar observes, "but did they go to greet him? Did they lift a sandal? Not at all. They knew it all, but they did nothing." Knowledge without love. Truth without transformation. Orthodoxy without worship.

But notice the irony; verse 11 tells us who actually went to Bethlehem: **, "going into the house, [the magi from the East] saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him."**

The religious experts stayed home. The pagans worshiped. The insiders remained apathetic. The outsiders traveled hundreds of miles. Those who had the Scriptures ignored them. Those who only had a star followed it. And so Matthew wants us to . .

We behold the wonder of God's redemptive love for all peoples.

Let us behold this wonder: God orchestrated salvation for all peoples, not just the chosen nation of Israel. Remember the genealogy? Those four women—Gentiles and scandal-marked—they pointed to this moment when non-Jews would be the first worshippers of Jesus. Remember God's promise to Abraham back in Genesis 12:3? **"In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."** The Magi were the first fruits of that promise. These Persian seekers were a down-payment on the Great Commission Jesus would later give: **"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."**

And notice what they brought: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

- Gold for a king—acknowledging his royalty.
- Frankincense for a priest—recognizing his deity, for frankincense was used in temple worship.

- Myrrh for burial—somehow understanding, even if dimly, that this baby was born to die.

These Gentiles, who didn't have the full revelation of Scripture, who couldn't quote Isaiah 53 about the suffering servant, who'd never heard of the Passover lamb—they somehow saw what the scribes missed. The little they did know led them to worship. In other words, they worshipped with their theology, their treasure (opening their chests), and their time (months of travel).

God orchestrated the gospel to reach beyond ethnic boundaries, beyond religious pedigrees, beyond the "likely" candidates. Matthew's Christmas story is telling us that if Persian astrologers could find Jesus, anyone can. That if pagans could worship the one true God, anyone can. If outsiders could be included, anyone can be.

The Jews had to learn that this gospel wasn't for people only like them—it's for everyone. The person we think is too far gone, too pagan, too unlikely—that's exactly the kind of person God drew to Jesus first. Let us not write anyone off. Don't assume anyone is unreachable. For God orchestrated a star for Persian Magi; he can orchestrate circumstances to draw your coworker, your neighbor, your family member.

Which means that some of us might need to check our own hearts for the scribes' disease. Do we know our Bibles but lack passion for Jesus? Can we quote truth but have no desire to meet the Messiah face to face? Let this point be clear: Bible knowledge is not the disease. The Bible is not the problem. The scribes' disease is to have knowledge of the Word of God but lack the desire to know the God of the Word. The scribes' disease is to know about the truth but miss the Way, the Truth and the Life. The disease is to let knowledge puff up, and forget that love builds up. The Magi had dim light and bright devotion. The scribes had bright light and dim devotion. Church . . .

Let us behold the wonder of Jesus, through whom God has redemptive love for all peoples. And let us then, like the Magi, become part of the wonder as God orchestrates salvation through our witness, our lives, and our worship.

CONCLUSION

So let me return to where we started: Can anyone really change?

On Christmas morning, Ebenezer Scrooge woke up a different man. The transformation was so complete, so total, that Dickens writes: "He became as good a friend, as good a

master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew." The miser became generous. The isolated became connected. The snarling cynic became a laughing child. And it all happened because he beheld—he saw truth about himself and his world that he couldn't unsee.

But here's the difference between Scrooge's story and ours: Scrooge beheld visions crafted by Dickens's imagination. We behold reality crafted by God's orchestration.

The Magi weren't changed by ghosts or dreams or imagination. They were changed by beholding; beholding the actual King of the cosmos cradled in human arms.

The scribes and chief priests, on the other hand, had all the right information. They knew their Bibles backward and forward. They could quote Micah 5:2 about Bethlehem without missing a beat. But they didn't behold. They knew, but they didn't see. They had orthodoxy without wonder, information without devotion, Scripture without worship. And so they stayed exactly who they were—five miles from the Messiah but a universe away in their hearts. Five miles, that's from here to KSU.

The Magi had almost nothing by comparison. No Scriptures. No covenant. No heritage of promise. Just a star and an inexplicable hunger. But they beheld. They saw something in the heavens that set their hearts ablaze. They followed that light for months across deserts and mountains. And when they finally found what they were seeking—or rather, when he found them—they fell down and worshiped.

That's the difference. That's always the difference. Not between those who know and those who don't. But between those who behold and those who refuse to see.

"The religious experts couldn't be bothered to walk from here to KSU. What's your 'five miles'? What small step toward Jesus are you refusing to take? What is your "five-mile gap"—the distance between what you know about Jesus and what you're willing to do about it. Is it five minutes of prayer? Five dollars toward generosity? Five words of witness to a neighbor?

So can you change? Can the person you've been, become who God intends you to be? Can your Scrooge-like heart—clenched around your time, your money, your comfort, your control—can it open? Can the coldness thaw? Can the miser become a giver? Can the isolated become connected? Can the apathetic become a worshiper?

The answer is Yes. A thousand times, yes. But not by trying harder. Not by white-knuckling through another New Year's resolution. Not by mustering enough willpower to fake it for a few weeks.

You change by beholding.

1. Behold the God who orchestrated two thousand years of history to bring you salvation at exactly the right moment—not a day too early, not a day too late. Your life isn't random. Your story isn't meaningless. The God who wove Gentiles and scandal into Jesus' genealogy can weave your failures and my mess ups into his redemptive plan.
2. Behold the God who keeps his promises with precision—who fulfilled every prophecy about Jesus' first coming and will fulfill every promise about his second coming. If he was faithful then, he'll be faithful now. His word doesn't fail. His plans don't falter. What he says, he does.
3. Behold the God who didn't stay distant but came to us himself—who became flesh, who entered our world, who knows what it's like to be human because he was human. You're not alone. You're not abandoned. Immanuel—God with us—is still with us, by his Spirit, every ordinary Monday, every cold December night, every moment when you think change is impossible.
4. Behold the God whose gospel reaches beyond boundaries—who drew Persian Magi then and draws unlikely people still. If he can save them, he can save anyone. If he can save you, he can save that person you think is too far gone. No one is unreachable. No heart is too hard. The God who orchestrated a star for pagans is still orchestrating circumstances to draw people to Jesus.

And when you behold these wonders—really see them, let them wash over you, stare deep until you can't look away—something happens. Like Scrooge waking up on Christmas morning. Like the Magi falling prostrate in Bethlehem. You can't stay the same.

Because when we behold the endless wonders of how God orchestrated salvation, we can never be the same.

Let us pray:

Father in heaven, we praise you for the endless wonders of your orchestrated salvation—history, prophecy, incarnation, grace. Help us truly behold your glory this

Christmas season. Open our eyes, soften our hearts, transform us from misers into worshipers, from hoarders into joyful givers. Change us by the wonder of Jesus. Amen.

Benediction.

And now, go forth as those who behold.

With unveiled faces, look upon the glory of the Lord revealed in the manger, the cross, and the empty tomb. As you behold him, may the Spirit transform you from one degree of glory to another.

Go now in the wonder of his unreckless love. Go in the power of his indwelling Spirit. Go in the joy of those who have seen the King.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.