

## *Have a Blessed Christmas- 2024*

More than two thousand years ago the angels declared, "Peace on earth. Good will to all Men (mankind)." There was joy in the heavens. There was joy in all of creation for this was the moment that was foretold. The "peace" that the angel declared was not simply a peace that meant tranquility and the end of wars upon this earth. It was a "peace" that meant that there was now going to be made available a peace with God - reconciliation and restoration - that will now be available through this little baby that was born in Bethlehem. There, the shepherds went, found and worshiped this new born "King." The glory of the Lord filled the heavens.

Many miles away in the east, there were certain men; we call them "magi," or "wise men," that saw this bright "star" in the heavens. We read in the scriptures that they took a two year journey to find this "King of kings" that they believed was heralded by the great "star" in the sky. They came to Herod, in Jerusalem, and asked Him about this King. They were told to go to Bethlehem, for the prophets foretold that in Bethlehem is where this "King" would come out of. The "star" again appeared to them. They again followed the "star" and came to a home in Bethlehem, which was not even a day's journey from Jerusalem. There, they found and worshiped the "King" they were seeking for.

We all know this very true account given to us in the scriptures. I have always had a few questions that would come to my mind whenever I read these accounts. The first question was why did the angel proclaim to these "lowly" shepherds this profound and wonderful event to these shepherds first. The answer is found in the scriptures. These shepherds were not simply just shepherds. These shepherds were from the tribe of Levi, meaning that they were literally "priests" of God and they were **Jewish**.

Their original job before they were shepherds was to carry the ark of the covenant and all the other articles that were found in the Tabernacle when ever the Isrealites were on the move. After the Temple was built the articles never moved. Therefore, they were out of a job. They were then assigned to take care of the sheep and lambs that would be used for sacrifices in the Temple. This was to be done in Bethlehem. They were to pick out the "spotless lamb" for the Passover.

When Jesus was born, the angel went and declared to these Levitical shepherds that their job was completed. The spotless "Lamb of God" had now come and He was lying in the manger where all the new born lambs, that would be used for sacrifices were paced when they were born. Yes Jesus was this "new born King" and they were allowed to see the conclusion of their family's job function – they saw the true spotless Lamb of God."

The other question I have is this, "Why were these men who came from the east, the only ones that saw this "star." There are many theologians that have tried to describe what the "star" may have been. Some say it was the "shekinah" glory. Some say it was an angel directing their path as they journeyed. Some say it actually was some supernatural phenomena in the night skies with stars, planets and comets. Whatever it was, my question remains the same. Why did no one else see it?

I believe it was because somewhere in the hearts of these men that came from Persia, who were by the way, **Gentiles**, there was a stirring. They were men who, not only desired truth, but they were men who were seeking and "looking" for the truth. After all, they were called "wise men" and true wise men desire to know the truth even if it doesn't agree with what they think. They were seeking and searching in the Jewish scriptures where they must have come upon the writings of Daniel which prophesied of this "King" that would come and "save" mankind.

A star was given to them to follow and to find this "King." They sought after the true King that this "star" gave witness to. Their heart was set at seeking after the truth and find this true "King of kings." Most, at that time, desired a king to come and set them free from the Romans. They desired but they were not seeking after a King. When someone truly desires to know the truth and is truly seeking after the true "King of kings," God will always lead them to Him - even if it takes a "star" (in whatever form it may be).

Here we see that God sent salvation to the Jew first, to His chosen people, to those who would truly believe in the promise of salvation from the Living God. God also loved the Gentiles and, again, God gave them a sign to seek after and find this New born King who would bring salvation, not just to the Jewish people, but also to the world.

There is a Christmas saying, "Wise men still seek Him." The "magi" ("wise" because they were seeking after truth) were led by the "star" (whatever it may have been) initially to Jerusalem, to people that should have been able to see the "star" if they were truly seeking after the true "Light of the World," The shepherds, who were Levites and knew the scriptures that foretold the coming of Messiah, were told to go and see the coming of the Savior and Lord.

They both believed in the work that God the Father had done. Salvation came to the Jew first but then it was open to the Gentiles. Jesus came for everyone. He was the fulfillment of God's promise to this entire world.

In this season in which we celebrate the birth of our King Jesus, the true "Light of the world," it is our prayer, that we who have received Jesus as our Savior and Lord, may never be "oblivious" to the signs of the second coming of the true "Light of the World" nor to what God is doing in this hour. Those of you who may not have yet accepted Jesus into your heart, we pray that you seek after the only Truth. For if you seek, you will find it and the Truth, Jesus, will make you free.

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." – John 3:16*

May you experience His true "peace" - an intimate relationship with "Abba, Father," the Son, Jesus, the "Lover of our soul," and the fullness of that relationship through a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.

From our Family to yours – Have a very "Blessed Christmas."  
God Bless you, Ray and Trish