

## *The Spirit Of Christmas*

### *Part Three*

The most misunderstood story regarding the birth of Jesus is the visit by the wise men. Most nativity scenes show the wise men along with the shepherds worshipping baby Jesus. I think I was in college before I learned the wise men were not present for the birth of Jesus. I was stunned when I was told that their visit to Bethlehem was nearly two years after the birth of Jesus.

I was also surprised to learn most scholars believe that the wise men were not kings. I did a musical in high school that said they were kings. Adam Clark said they were Magi which could mean philosophers or astrologers.

I was also surprised to learn most scholars believe the wise men were either related to Abraham or that they had adopted the Jewish faith as their own. Daniel had spread the Jewish faith to Persia and we know there were those who lived in the east that were related to Abraham.

I was also surprised to learn most scholars believe the wise men were familiar with a prophecy about the coming of a Jewish Messiah and a star. Numbers 24:17 contains a prophecy about a star and the arrival of a descendant of Jacob.

**Num 24:17**

**17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.**

**KJV**

With the anticipation of the arrival of a Jewish King due to the prophecy in Daniel, the prophecy in Numbers related to a star, and the sudden appearance of this change in the heavens, their faith to make this journey was not such a mystery to me.

I have made major decisions for my life based on a lot less signs.

God sends signs into our life just like he did for these wise men. We can choose to believe these signs are from God and follow them. Or we can ignore the signs that God sends into our life and follow some other plan. Parents give children signs that children ignore. There are high way signs that people choose to ignore. There are signs of illness that people choose to ignore.

God sends us signs. We can ignore them or we can believe them and follow them. The wise men chose to believe the signs and it determined their destiny. It will also determine yours.

What if the wise men ignored the signs? I would not be preaching this sermon about them. The record of scripture would have been different. God would have used some other method to fulfill the prophecy of scripture. The Prophecy of scripture will always be fulfilled.

The wise men would have had a different destiny. And so will you if you do not follow the signs that God sends you.

## **What are the signs that God sent these wise men and that God will send you?**

- **The written Word of God.**

2 Tim 3:16-17

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.  
KJV

2 Peter 1:20-21

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

NKJV

The written Word of God is the easiest sign to see. It was the written Word of God that first prompted these men to anticipate the coming of the messiah and look for His star.

- **The authority figures in your life.**

Rom 13:1-2

13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

KJV

Authority figures are not inspired. Therefore, the guidance they give us is always subject to God's written word. But God uses authority figures to give us signs. If we do not recognize who God has appointed to be the authority figures we will miss the signs and miss our destiny. For these wise men the authority figure was Herod. It was thru Herod that they were guided to the city of Bethlehem.

But Herod was not inspired like the scriptures. When the wise men were warned in a dream that Herod's intentions were evil, the wise men did not obey Herod. They were loyal to the word of God rather than Herod. We will all have to make choices like this during our journey.

- **The dreams we experience.**

Joel 2:28-29

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

KJV

Dreams come thru dreams. Dreams also come thru prayer. Dreams also come thru other believers. God is a dream giver. Besides His written Word, it is the main way God chooses to guide His children.

Are you following the signs that will cause you to fulfill the destiny that God has for you? Are you ignoring them?

The spirit of Christmas is that men and women followed God's signs. The whole Christmas story is filled with characters that were following God's signs. As a result, they became a part of the redemption story.

The same thing will happen to you. You will become a part of God's redemption story if you will follow the signs.

As you consider 2009, will you follow God's signs-thru His written Word, thru your authority figures, thru the dreams He shares with you?

In 2008, have you been ignoring the signs He has sent?

You can really mess up your life if you do not follow the signs God sends you thru His written word, your authority figures, and dreams.

But if you are still breathing, the dream giver still has dreams for you. You are not beyond the power of His redemption.

What Jesus did to purchase your redemption is greater than the sins that any one man or any group of men could ever commit. He died for the sins of the world. This means He more than paid for the sins of the world.

Your sins are just a very small part of the world's sins.

There is more than enough mercy to cover your sins.

But you must repent. You must be willing to stop ignoring the signs. You must be willing to follow the signs like the wise men did to see God's destiny for your life fulfilled.

It is a great adventure but a difficult one. They suffered. But do you think when it was all said and done they were so grateful they followed the signs.

Can you see them? Can you sense their anticipation and excitement as they approached Bethlehem? Can you see their faces as they approached the house and then the door of the house where the messiah lived? Can you hear their voices when they greeted Joseph

and Mary and told them who they were and why they were there? Can you see their eyes when they first looked upon the one they had traveled so far to see? Can you hear the silence as they went to their knees and prostrated themselves in worship before their messiah? The only noise would have been the noise of a young toddler just learning to talk. What do you think He said? Can you sense the joy of these men when they arose and began to open their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh? Can you hear them rehearsing what had happened all the way back to the east? Can you see them gathering their families and friends to rehearse the story for them?

This one event gave their life meaning and purpose unlike anything they had ever known. No matter what they suffered, they cherished this event forever.

I have things like that in my life. Because I have followed the signs, I have had a great life. I have known the greatest love a man can know, not once but twice. I have been there when someone's life has been transformed right before my very eyes. I have been so caught up in the presence of God that I was overcome with awe. I have been blessed beyond measure by the love, the generosity, and the service of others. I have seen dreams fulfilled as answers to prayer that made me stop and offer praise before I could take another step.

And yes, like the wise men, I have suffered. But like the wise men I am so grateful I have followed the signs. What would my life have been like if I had not followed the signs?

It is never too late to start. Today is a good day. Bow before Jesus the way the wise men did and make a commitment to follow the signs, no matter what it cost.

