

“Wise Men Still Seek Him”
Christmas 2023

Introduction:

- ***Christmas has always meant a lot to our family. I remember so well the days leading up to that day when 55 years ago in Berkeley, California I put on my office door at work these words:***

“Wise men still seek him”.

- ***I wonder what those that read it thought. I do not remember any coming to me to ask for an explanation though more than one was saved in those days through my testimony, praise God. Actually there were two! One of them was my office mate.***

In those days I still remember one verse that motivated me though those times when I knew really so very little of the Word of God:

[READ] Hebrews 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

- ***It has always seemed to me that this verse stands as a beacon for all of time, whether for Jews, Gentiles, or the church of the living God. Perhaps you have also been convinced similarly.***

And during this season of the year we all remember these verses well from our childhood even if we were raised in a Christian home:

[READ] Matthew 2:1-6

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

6 And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

[READ] Matthew 2:7-12

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

- *This is at least a significant part of the message of Christmas, isn't it? It is not the whole message but it is a critical part relating to the birth of the Lord Jesus. On other Christmas messages here we have at length looked at other critical parts of the message of Christmas including the incarnation itself, occurring not at the birth of our Lord but at his conception.*

And, most critical, is what this beginning of the miraculous work of the Lord led in the Lord's timing of about 30 years to our Lord's perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world and then, after fulfilling his role as our substitute, was gloriously raised from the dead and ascended into heaven's glory.

- *But where did these men so long ago acquire such knowledge of the creator God's workings that they then set out on such a long and difficult journey as this? Have you ever wondered about that yourself?*

Where did they get the word of God that they might by faith take God at his word believing? They could not have pleased him otherwise.

- *The verses preceding Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 6 reveal how that must have been, however, for they give us strong hints as to how many in*

human history knew of the Lord and his work in this world long before the Bible was committed to writing by Moses, the prophets and the apostles.

Though from our earthly prospective the story begins there in Bethlehem, with the incarnation and then birth of our blessed Lord, the revelation of that “beginning” of God’s plan of redemption here on this planet had in fact begun so much earlier. For all those that were blessed with fellowship with our Lord God, even before the written revelation was given, had the testimony of the God of creation and redemption given “from heaven”. Let’s read again from Hebrews 11:

[READ] Hebrews 11:1-6

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

- ***Recently in our fellowship here we saw from much scriptural evidence how the divine program of redemption had been revealed in large measure, in outline form at least, “from heaven” in a form accessible to mankind from the beginning. And indeed, it is the message of Christmas that is found here in the heavenly witness to the redemptive plan of Almighty God! Let’s read of that again now the scriptures we have studied here before:***

Psalms 19:1-6

1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

5 Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

6 His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

- *We will come back to these verses again later. As we have seen, in addition to the testimony of the Psalm there are other verses as well that we have been dwelling on recently as we have considered Paul's letter to the Romans, Dispensationally Considered. The first chapter of the Romans is foundational for our understanding:*

Romans 1:16-20

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse ...

- *So there was a revelation given by God before the written word, for otherwise how could it have been by faith that anyone "pleased God" as those verses in Hebrews 11 proclaim so powerfully.*
- *There we see a list of some of those that had by faith taken God at his word BEFORE there was any written word at all. Moses wrote at least 500 years before Abraham was called into saving faith by the word of the Lord spoken to him on that most transforming day.*

Our Outline Today: "Wise Men Still Seek Him"

- *The Greatest Story Ever Told — The End of That Story*
- *The Greatest Story Ever Told — The Beginning of That Story*

Next Time (Part 2)

- *The Witness of God In the Stars with All Its Splendor and Truth*

- *We will start now to consider this great story of God's redemptive plan looking firstly at the end of that story and then considering its beginning.*

I. The Greatest Story Ever Told – The End of That Story:

[READ] Rev. 12:1-6

1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

2 And she being with child cried, travailling in birth, and pained to be delivered.

3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and [to] his throne.

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred [and] threescore days. *[This is the 3 1/2 year second half of the Tribulation period.]*

- *Thanks be to the Lord God who finally in due time revealed here these words concerning this Long War Constantly Waged Against Him in this way in the last book of our Bibles. And thanks be to the Lord of Glory and Grace also that he had previously revealed it in the heavenlies as we have seen in recent fellowships here. For it most remarkable for sinners such as ourselves that by so doing all have been held accountable. In fact, it is astounding! Amen.*
- *Throughout mankind's history from the Garden until our current day, God's revelation of his plan of redemption for sinners stands revealed, but against the background of that glorious plan we see Satan revealed as the arch-deceiver and ultimately as the Defeated, just as Gen. 3:15 so clearly proclaims.*

He is therefore called "anti-christ" as he seeks to substitute and to actually attempt to impersonate or to represent himself as the Lord Jesus Christ during the future period of time called in the Bible "the time of Jacob's trouble" or "the Tribulation, the Great One". But there, in those final years before satan is imprisoned at Christ's

second coming to this earth, again the image before us is of Babylon as satan will at that time again return to his constant theme. He is not creative but he is persistent indeed!

- **Several years ago here we considered the “Woman” prophesied under the image of “the Great City Babylon” (Rev. 12 & 17). “Babylon ‘the Great city’” is prophesied in the Old Testament to both rise again and to fall again, of course:**

Is. 21:9 And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, [with] a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground. [Isaiah was “pre-exilic”, before the captivities...] This is quoted in Rev. 18 and referred to in the previous chapter.

- **This is all about Babylon, and ancient city in present day Iraq. We all should remember what the scriptures have preserved of the sacred history of this Long War even back in the days of king Nimrod and his city, this most spectacular city of its day, Babylon. God destroyed that city because of her many blasphemies -- and he would do it again. But now as we reach the culmination of the redemptive plan of God, satan will again recreate a Babylon that would be even greater than what had come and gone before. This is called here in the Revelation, “Babylon the Great [one].”**

This shows the arrogance of satan. He revisits his “Babylon Plan”, one might say, but on an astronomically larger scale indeed as we read in Isaiah and Revelation. This time in the future it will be a worldwide system of finance and dictatorial rule here including all nations— except one, the regathered elect nation, Israel.

Rev. 17:3-6

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

5 And upon her forehead [was] a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

- *Of course this reference takes us back to the Book of Beginnings, Genesis, and to the idolatrous city and tower built by Nimrod and his wife Semiramis:*

Gen. 11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top [may reach] unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

- *Note the italics here in the KJV. They are important. For a proper translation of this verse from the Hebrew would be something like this: “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, at whose top, the heavens.” This tower was it seems a temple of heathen idolatry. It might have been magnificent indeed in size and construction, perhaps the greatest creation of sinful man until that time (except for the pyramids and the sphinx [see comment at the end] which probably predated it by a significant period of time). It seems there was an earthly representation at its top of the heavenly Zodiac, or the witness in the stars, but as a religious token of sinful man is was not acceptable to the Lord God, and it was therefore destroyed completely in God’s good timing as see there in the Genesis account.*
- *We have asked another question here before: What about this city of Babylon and why is it called here by the designation, “a woman”? For the truth we must always go back into the Old Testament and for this all the way back to the beginning of the Bible where we found the original prophecy regarding quite a different “woman” indeed:*

Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

- *Since satan knew this promise so well, one might think therefore that he would seek to use another woman in blaspheming this First Woman and her promised Seed, even the INCARNATED SON OF GOD, destined from the foundation of the world to transform the history of his chosen people forever. And that is in fact the genesis of the Long War Against God and why at the end of the story, in the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, satan’s counterfeit “woman” would appear along with his counterfeit christ, even the antichrist.*

- *Now, it has always been God's Way to reveal his plan even to sinners such as ourselves, even to Gentiles, of all people. And so he has done before he called out his own nation, Israel with the written word initially given through Moses. But in addition, as we have now seen, God had also given a great revelation in the "heavens", especially relevant to the Gentiles, of course, since they did not have the written testimony of God through Moses, the prophets, and the apostles. But, they did have the heavenly witness:. In the Lord God's perfect timing not only the elect nation of Israel and the Jewish saints will be delivered into a glorious salvation indeed, but also the Gentiles as even the Hebrew Scriptures make so very, very clear:*

Isaiah 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

II. The Greatest Story Ever Told — The Beginning of That Story:

- *What Has Been Revealed From Heaven From The Beginning? The Heavenly Testimony Regarding "the Seed of the Woman", that is where the greatest story every told began. And that is what all of human history has been about, if only more sinners knew it. But blindness is on the heart and so few do know it.*
- *We read these verses again earlier, but note what it says here in verses 4 - 6:*

Ps. 19:1-6

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

3 [There is] no speech nor language, [where] their voice is not heard.

4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

5 Which [is] as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, [and] rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

6 His going forth [is] from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

- *Even here in these words we see that there is a beginning and there is an end to the heavenly "proclamation" of the coming Redeemer.*

- *Remember also what stands written in chapter 1 of Genesis in regard to the creation of the earth and the heavens:*

Gen. 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

- *Ps. 19 surely needs to be taken in that context since it is explaining those words in some detail. The word “sign”, by the way, is so important here, for it refers to WHAT (or WHO) is coming! And that is what the heavenly testimony is all about, isn’t it?*
- *Verses 1-6 are about the heavenly testimony of God’s redemptive plan for fallen mankind, but the rest of the verses are about the Written Word of God. When the written word was given, the heavenly testimony was not as much needed. God singled out of the Gentile nations a people for his name and he gave them his written word of truth.*
- *Of course, as always, satan had corrupted this message and indeed, even “the gospel in the stars”, changing the message of redemption as recorded in the heavens into a message of perdition encoded in symbols of animals and corrupt mankind. Romans chapter 1 seems to be all about that and its effect on those who would worship the power behind it, satan himself. Only God’s people, the Jews, with the written revelation now given, could, as satan’s plan of deception developed, preserve that heavenly and eternal message regarding the Seed of the Woman.*
- *And so it was. For about 2500 years before Moses (died in 1452, creation in 4004 B.C.) there was a witness by God to man worldwide concerning his plan of redemption. This was all recorded in the heavens through the so-called “Zodiac” BEFORE IT WAS CORRUPTED BY SINFUL MEN AND BY SATANIC PERSUASIONS AND OBJECTIVES. “The word Zodiac means the degrees or steps, which mark the stages of the sun's path through the heavens, corresponding with the twelve months.” — Bullinger’s Companion Bible, Appendix 12.*
- *This implies that the idolatrous images that were created by sinful and rebellious men may indeed have been representations of what was given in heaven there at the beginning. And, the satanic religion was opposed to that message of redemption and therefore*

created a new religion that perverted it and which used carved images (idols) here on earth as a critical part. The judgment on the Tower of Babel shows so clearly that the Lord God is not pleased with earthly representations of heavenly things unless he makes them himself, as Heb. 9 says regarding the Ark of the Covenant and the temple furniture.

- ***Now what about the Ps. 19 reference to speech and words and language, indeed a “message in the stars”? Does the Bible support this concept elsewhere? We have seen that it does in several scriptures often quickly passed over:***

Ps. 147:4 He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by [their] names.

Is. 40:26

26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these [things], that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that [he is] strong in power; not one faileth. [In other words, his revelation in the heavens was “clearly revealed”!]

- ***So there is Biblical support that the stars and the names of each were given directly by God. That this revelation was also given to God’s servants is a warranted conclusion surely as otherwise they could have had no value to believers here on this earth. There are many other examples of this basic principle in scripture, for example in the giving of names with prophetic meaning to the patriarchs and to the renaming of selected persons done by God at critical points in their lives (Abraham, Jacob, etc.). In fact, there are many stars whose original names are still known in their Hebrew and even more whose names were changed (many simply translated) into Arabic down through the centuries. So indeed there was a “meaning” associated with these star names that was given by God himself, as scripture reveals here. Furthermore, if the names have meaning then there is a story told in the heavens as well, as Paul’s letter to the Romans gives witness where he quotes Ps. 19:4 in chapter 10 and verse 18:***

Rom. 10:16-18

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

- *But Romans chapter 1 as we have read earlier today says even more about this heavenly revelation given far before the written word was ever delivered:*

Rom 1:17-20

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed [it] unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

- *So here it says that in the gospel is the righteousness of God revealed. Once the perfect sacrifice had been offered up for our sins, and that crucial segment of the great story of redemption was complete, the full revelation of that righteousness had been delivered from Christ risen to Paul. In that he gloried. But as he noted here in this verse 17, the righteousness of God had been revealed before “in part” and so here it is referenced as “from faith to faith”. It was the accountability of all to a righteous and holy God that had been revealed before in the heavenly testimony. And that is what this part of the letter is addressing now as chapters 2 and 3 unfold how God was working in the hearts of Gentiles (verses 19-20). But some took God at his word, believing, they cleaved to the truth and lived by their faith whatever the consequences. Some were even “taken”, such as Enoch, before the flood came.*

Now verse 18 mentions “truth”. Now truth requires even more than “words” and “speech”, does as well. This is also I think a clear reference back to Ps. 19. So there are two parts to the divine revelation to man regarding the greatest promise found in the Bible regarding the Coming Redeemer, the Seed of the Woman of Gen. 3:15.

- *Firstly God had revealed his truth of redemption though the Seed of the Woman via the heavenly testimony, and then,*

secondly, through the written word of God given by angels to Moses.

- ***Once the written word of God was given, the heavenly testimony was no longer needed. Praise to almighty God for the written word, since the God-given meaning of the stars and constellations was so thoroughly confused by God's enemy as proven in his destruction of the tower of Babel and the city of Babylon, so many centuries before.***
- ***Next time, Lord willing, we will take opportunity to consider in more detail what that starry and heavenly revelation communicated starting with the first heavenly sign, Virgo or the Virgin, and ending with the last, Leo or the Lion. The first four, Virgo through Sagittarius, are all about the coming redeemer and his glorious work — the provision and heritage of the Seed of the Woman, the last four, Taurus through Leo, are all about the promised judgment of our common enemy, even satan with his many spiritual slaves. Amen and amen.***

Conclusion / Application:

- ***But today the message of the gospel of God's abundant grace stands tall indeed. The full message has been given including the revelation of all that was accomplished by Christ regarding our sins and the full payment of Christ for them. This takes us beyond anything that had been revealed before.***