

The First Christmas

(Stories from the Birth of Christ)

November 30, 2014

Introduction:

A week or so, the kids had a day off school and I was working from home. Bryce was listening to Christmas music; Kaity was working on playing Joy to the World on her keyboard.

This made me very happy because I have always loved the Christmas season.

I enjoy the traditions, the music, the lights, the time with family and friends. I'm excited that my kids are sharing in their love for this season...

But, I have an even greater desire for my kids. A desire for myself, my family and my church family: AT the end of the Christmas season I want to know that I've heard God speak. I want to know that I spent time in God's presence. I want to know that I've truly worshipped Christ.

We often hear that we need to remember that Jesus is the Reason for the Season. I want more than that! I want to truly worship Christ this Christmas.

The First Christmas Series

Today we begin our Christmas Series, The First Christmas. Each week, with the help of the Skit Guys, we will hear from a different character from the Christmas Story. Hopefully, we might gain new insight on what it must have been like for the wiseman, for the Shepherds, for Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth.

1st Character: One of the Wisemen/ the Magi

WE usually look at the wiseman after Christmas.

The biblical text indicates that they did not actually arrive at the night of Jesus birth. They actually arrive 2-3 years after Jesus' birth.

BUT THINK ABOUT THIS! Before the wiseman packed for the journey to follow the star; before the star even appeared. They were listening. They were looking and waiting for a sign that the King of the Jews had been born.

Video:

God was Silent

The 400 years of silence refers to the time between the Old Testament and New Testaments, during which God did not speak to the Jewish people. The 400 years of silence began with the warning that closed the Old Testament: "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse" ([Malachi 4:5-6](#)) and ended with the coming of John the Baptist, the Messiah's forerunner.

God is beginning to speak & he is speaking to Gentiles! The announcement of Christ's birth not just for Israel!

The Story- Matthew 2:1–12 (ESV)

¹ 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, ² 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.” ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶ “ ‘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.’ ” ⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” ⁹ 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. ¹⁰

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ 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. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Even before the star rose, they were Listening/Looking..

- WE know the wisemen/magi were Gentiles. It is very possible that they had become aware of the prophecies of the coming Messiah through their contact with Israel in Babylon.
- ² 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.”

“Go and Search Diligently for the Child”

Herod’s words to the wisemen actually describe what they had already done and what they were doing.

- They saw the star
- They prepared for the journey & followed the star
- They meet with Herod to discover the specific place of the child.
- The star – miraculously guides them to Jesus’ home...
- They find Jesus. They fell & worshipped him. They present their gifts.
- They are warned in a dream not to return to Herod

CLEAR CONTRAST:

The Wisemen

vs The chief priests, the scribes, and Herod

The Magi – The Wisemen

- though they had fewer resources to guide them, had listened, and responded to the appearance of the star.
- They travelled a great length to find the child

Herod:

- Appears oblivious to the promise, but clearly threatened by the new king.

The Chief Priests/Scribes

- Had access to the scriptures: they should have known the prophecies.
- They should have been looking/listening
- And if they understood the prophecies, they should have been making the trip to Bethlehem.

Another Man Who Was Listening/Waiting (Simeon) Luke 2:22–35 (ESV)

When Mary and Joseph present Jesus in the temple:

²⁵ **Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon**, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹ "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." ³³ And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

The Wisemen were listening/ They diligently sought to find Christ.

Simeon – was listening. He had been given a promise; and he was guided by the Spirit into the temple...

What about you? This Christmas, in all the busyness. Will you take time to listen? Will you take time to seek Christ? Will you take time to worship?

Psalm 63:1 (ESV) ¹ O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

John 10:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

John 10:27 (ESV)

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

This Christmas Season, are you listening for God to speak?

In the busyness of the season, are you making it a priority to seek Him! To Worship Him!

Plan time to listen:

- Don't overschedule the season

- Plan times for silence & solitude...

- Read God's Word & invite God's Spirit to speak to you.