

Signs of the Times

Matt. 2:1-12

On December 22, 2019, by Philip Pinto @ Village Bible Church

Is it ok to talk about the _____ men from _____
_____ before Christmas?

- They were NOT at the manger!
- They *may* have come from the region near _____ (“the East”)
- *Mag’os* (Greek) (Maggi – English) for the name given by Babylonians, Persians, etc., to wise men, teachers, astrologers, etc. (“wise men”)

People expected the Messiah, in one sense, but were unaware of His coming

Matthew was concerned about demonstrating that Jesus _____ the signs prophesied.

- 1) Matt. 1:1-17 – Jesus’ _____ in the line of Abraham and David fulfilled promises to both Abraham and David.
- 2) Matt. 1:22-23 fulfilled Isaiah 7:14
- 3) Matt. 2:3-5 fulfilled Micah 5:2
- 4) Matt. 2:15 fulfilled Hosea 11:1
- 5) Matt. 2:17-18 fulfilled Jeremiah 31:15
- 6) Matt. 2:23 fulfilled many prophecies (cf. Is. 53:3) (see Jn. 1:45-46)

Others knew about the birth of the Messiah as prophesied

- Herod (Matt. 2:3)
 - Recognized it as Scriptural and was _____!
- “all _____ with [Herod]” (Matt. 2:3)
 - Concerned about political _____
- The chief priests and scribes (Matt. 2:4)
 - _____ the prophecies

Understanding the “signs of the times”

- God, _____ *explicitly* a few people about the Messiah’s first coming, because of their role in the events.
- The Maggi interpreted _____ of the prophecies accurately.
- The Chief Priests/Scribes interpreted _____ correctly, too

Signs of the Times

Matt. 2:1-12

On December 22, 2019, by Philip Pinto @ Village Bible Church

Is it ok to talk about the **wise** men from **the East** *before* Christmas?

- They were NOT at the manger!
- They *may* have come from the region near **Babylon** (“the East”)
- *Mag’os* (Greek) (Maggi – English) for the name given by Babylonians, Persians, etc., to wise men, teachers, astrologers, etc. (“wise men”)

People expected the Messiah, in one sense, but were unaware of His coming

Matthew was concerned about demonstrating that Jesus **fulfilled** the signs prophesied.

- 1) Matt. 1:1-17 – Jesus’ **identity** in the line of Abraham and David fulfilled promises to both Abraham and David.
- 2) Matt. 2:3-5 fulfilled Micah 5:
- 3) Matt. 1:22-23 fulfilled Isaiah 7:14
- 4) Matt. 2:15 fulfilled Hosea 11:1
- 5) Matt. 2:17-18 fulfilled Jeremiah 31:15
- 6) Matt. 2:23 fulfilled many prophecies (cf. Is. 53:3) (see Jn. 1:45-46)

Others knew about the birth of the Messiah as prophesied

- Herod (Matt. 2:3)
 - Recognized it as Scriptural and was **threatened!**
- “all **Jerusalem** with [Herod]” (Matt. 2:3)
 - Concerned about political **unrest**
- The chief priests and scribes (Matt. 2:4)
 - **Confirmed** the prophecies

Understanding the “signs of the times”

- God, **told** *explicitly* a few people about the Messiah's first coming, because of their role in the events.
- The Maggi interpreted **some** of the prophecies accurately.
- The Chief Priests/Scribes interpreted **some** correctly, too

Mistletoe, candy cane, Chris Cringle, reindeer, Rudolph, Ole St. Nick, elves, stockings, one of the few days even many adults actually want snow, sleigh bells ringing, presents under a tree, a fat man coming down a chimney, decorating an evergreen tree with lights and shiny things, sending cards to people – there are a ton of traditions and symbols that we associate with this time of year. Somehow we manage to cram all these things that seem so unrelated under the general heading of Christmas. Then most Christians are appalled at not just the neglect of Christ in Christmas, but even the total rejection of the mention of Christmas in many settings. Still in that list, which represents only a small portion of the things typically connected to Christmas, there was no mention of Christ or anything that is even remotely associated with God’s word. From where did all these things that are on one hand so innocent and fun and at the very same time so much the center of controversy in the world and often even among Christians?

Christmas in America is a combination of many different traditions and cultures, some dating back as far as 300 A.D., but really not much before then. Celebrating Christmas is not a biblical directive; it’s not even a biblical concept. That creates some of the controversy particularly amongst the most conservative, fundamental Christians.

The question becomes: if the early church did not celebrate the birth of Christ, and it’s not recorded in Scripture, why do we make such a big deal out of this every year? If most Christmas traditions and symbols are so “pagan,” why do those who hate Christ and His followers so much try to disrupt them? And if they are so “Christian” why do some of those who love Christ so much try to stay away from Christmas traditions?

I suppose we may never answer those questions satisfactorily. It is an interesting situation with one common factor at stake – Jesus the Christ. In all the debate and controversy, one assumption is constant: Jesus Christ was born, and people still look at him as God

in human flesh and the way to have access to God. It's that second part of the assumption that causes troubles. It's that second part that brings us here each Sunday morning and compels us to live a new life. If Jesus was not God in human flesh, the Promised Messiah, then Christmas is little more than a fairy tale and is not a "threat" to anybody. That is the issue!

Body

I. Prophecy fulfilled.

We celebrate His birth with great fanfare, when really it is His death and resurrection that we trust for salvation. And yet, His birth is very significant. But it's not just because He was born, it was the way in which He was born. There are many Old Testament prophecies that are fulfilled in Jesus. Many of them relate to His birth. This morning I want to consider just a couple of them from the prophet Isaiah.

A. Bad news for Judah and Israel.

As I read the first chapters of Isaiah this week, I was struck by the sadness of its message of coming judgment on rebellious people. It relates well to the message last week concerning dealing with unrepentant sin in our lives. Let's read some highlights from Isaiah chapters 1-9.

B. A message of hope.

The overall message of the book of Isaiah, however, is that God "is the only power behind the events of history."¹ Isaiah delivered the warning from God that the people needed to rely on God not on political alliances and governments for deliverance.

- a. We need to understand the context here. Isaiah prophesied to the kings of Judah. Judah was the only one of twelve tribes that remained loyal to the royal line of David as their king. The other eleven tribes existed as*

¹ McConville, Gordon. *Exploring the Old Testament Vol. IV, a Guide to the Prophets.* Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002. ,3.

Israel to the north of Judah and had their own king. So if Israel was a relatively insignificant nation in the region at the time, Judah was only a fraction of that.

- b. At this time, Assyria was a growing world power. Assyria was not a great distance from Judah and was a very real threat to their way of life. Israel was apparently making alliances with Syria in an attempt to stand together against Assyrian invasion. They were also looking to expand their own territory into Judah and Jerusalem. The kings of Judah were under tremendous pressure!

C.

II.

III. ~~What if I told you this morning that in the future a boy will be born to an unwed teen in southern Arkansas. Her boyfriend, a construction worker, will marry her and raise the kid as his own. This kid will become a great leader and set us free from a slavery we do not even recognize as such. In fact, let's say I wrote a book about this notion and had it published. You'd probably think I was off my rocker, and you'd definitely question the sanity of any who were actually expecting that to happen. Especially after a few years. Now let's say those few years turned into decades and decades into centuries. No one should cling to a hope that long, should they? America has been a nation for just barely 200 years. We hardly have a vision for our nation beyond the next four years, much less the next four hundred years!~~

a. ~~The birth of a baby in Bethlehem born in a barn to a poor, insignificant family from Nazareth is a story that should by all means have been long forgotten. This is not the kind of background that a leader of any consequence in that day would have wanted to make public. Yet somehow it is one part of the life of Christ that has gained notoriety. It is the part we celebrate with the most fanfare.~~

IV. God incarnate?

- V. *What if Jesus wasn't the Son of God, the Promised Messiah? Jesus is more than a baby. Christmas serves as a good reminder of the birth of the Savior, but we do our faith a great disservice if we leave him in the manger.*
- a. *Jesus has changed the world*
 - b. *Jesus changed me.*
 - c. *Has Jesus changed you?*

Christmas – Why the Controversy?

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On December 23, 2012, by Philip Pinto @ Village Bible Church