

I. Introduction

- A. I have a short meditation for you today.
- B. Let's think together about:
 - 1. **The Christmas Star**
 - 2. *"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, saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.'"* (Matthew 2:1-2)
- C. I actually was going back-and-forth about whether or not to talk about this topic. And on Friday morning I was outside in front of my house with my dogs very early in the morning. And I was praying and enjoying the quietness of the starry night sky.
- D. I was going back-and-forth about whether or not to talk about the Christmas star. And I saw, flashing across the sky, in the east, **a very bright meteor**. If you're into astronomy, you would call it a fireball.
- E. So I figured, I know what I'll be talking about on Christmas Eve.
- F. Because in the year 3 BC, when Jesus was born, there was a conjunction of stars and planets in the night sky that could only have come from an all knowing, almighty, all gracious God who is greater than space and time as we know it.

II. What We Saw

- A. Before I get into that, I want to rewind one week.
- B. If you were able to make it either in person or online to one of our seven **incredible, beautiful, breathtaking, heartwarming, God-honoring, Jesus loving Christmas events** last weekend, put your hands together. Let's hear it.
- C. I have never witnessed such a powerful and real display of the love and gospel of God as what we saw last weekend. I do not have the words to adequately say thank you to everybody who was a part of it.
 - 1. The music was beautiful.
 - 2. The decor was out of this world.
 - 3. The feel was like a little bit of future glory.
- D. Whether you sang or played an instrument or put together decor, or figured out how to make stuff move, or helped hang lights or did technical audio and video feed, or children's choir, or helped keep everybody fed throughout the long weekend, or cleaned up facilities and bathrooms after each event, or in any way gave time, talents, or treasures to make those services possible, I thank you. We all thank you.
 - 1. I could tell you about a husband, who disappeared, but literally came to a Christmas service and prayed that prayer of salvation out loud...
 - 2. Or of a father, who came to see his young adult son in the performance, and even though he might have been a little stoned, he came, and the person sitting next to him said he also prayed out loud to receive Jesus...
 - 3. Or of somebody's sister who joined us online from 2,147 miles away, said she cried through the whole thing, and told her family she prayed to receive Jesus...
 - 4. Or of 3 young adults, and high school students who have been praying for their friends to be saved and saw two of them come to Christ... and who literally told them that their names were on those gingerbread cards on the back wall because hundreds of people were praying for them...
 - 5. Or of more people than we could count whose family and friends thought they would never darken the doors of a church, yet here they were, sitting in a church, singing Christmas carols, and opening hearts to the seeds of the gospel...
 - 6. Since that first weekend of December, the number of people who have told us that they have put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior, just in this one month, now stands at 494.
 - 7. And maybe you would include yourself in that story, and we just don't know yet. We're so happy for you.
- E. I find this remarkable. I've compared notes with other pastors. I've compared notes with denominational leaders. This is rare and this is beautiful.
- F. And here's why I think we see God moving in such powerful ways. It is that for months and months now as a church we have bathed all of this in PRAYER.
- G. If you have prayed, if you have served, if you have given sacrificially to this ministry, you have played an indispensable role in the eternal salvation of men and women, boys, and girls, who are precious to God.

III. The Star of Bethlehem

- A. The wise men who visited Jesus were officially called Magi. They were counselors to Kings in ancient Persia. They were wealthy. They were powerful. They were influential.
- B. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, almost a thousand miles from Persia, the home of the Magi. These star-gazers of antiquity traveled to Bethlehem precisely because of what they saw in the heavens.
- C. What did they see?
- D. Some astronomers have run the starry sky backwards and made a startling discovery. At the time when Jesus was born, there was a once-in-a-lifetime event happening in the sky.
 - 1. **It starts with the planet Jupiter, considered the King of the Planets. Jupiter the planet moves closer and closer to a star called Regulus, or Rex, which is considered the King of the Stars.**
 - 2. Astronomers call this a conjunction—two lights in the night sky coming closer together. The King of the Planets enters a conjunction with the King of the Stars.
 - 3. As the Magi tracked this phenomenon over many days, they would have seen something startling.
 - 4. The Magi observed that Jupiter seemed to stop and turn around. Today's astronomers call this retrograde motion, an optical illusion from the motion of earth relative to other planets. The King of the Planets then seemed to draw a circle, like a halo, around the King of the Stars, and come to rest above it.

5. To deepen the wonder, the ancient astrologers had divided the night sky into twelve sections, known today as the signs of the zodiac. While Christians and Jews alike believe our lives rest in the hand of God, not in the stars, the ancient Magi might have thought otherwise.
6. So it was with genuine astonishment that when the Persian Magi looked to the west, they saw the King of Planets describe a circle around the King of Stars, and come to rest above it, all happening in the zodiacal house of Virgo, the Virgin. And all of this, from their vantage point, directly above Judea.
7. Because of people like Daniel and Esther, these Persian Magi already possessed the Old Testament books and prophecies.
8. So they already know the prophecy that says:
 - a) *"I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel..."* (Numbers 24:17).
9. They could have easily connected this with Micah's prophecy which said,
 - a) *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting." (Micah 5:2)*
- E. So they make the connection to this ancient prophecy and conclude the biblical prophecies have come true.
- F. The Great King is born in Israel.
- G. While this theory cannot be proven beyond doubt, it does offer a credible explanation of what exactly drove the Magi to make a four month journey from the glorious Persian empire to the little town of Bethlehem.
- H. We have seen his star, they said.

IV. Timing and Precision

- A. Now, I want you to think with me about what had to happen so those planets and stars could be lined up that way at precisely the right time.
- B. For those planets and those stars to come into conjunction at the exact time of Christ's birth is the exact opposite of an accident.
- C. From the beginning of creation, that star had to be heading precisely that direction to line up with that planet at that time, for however many millennia there were before the day Christ was born.
- D. And since these celestial objects are millions of light years apart, the line or perspective had to be drawn from where the earth would be, on that year on that date and in that location.
- E. Those calculations were made in eternity past with mind-bogglingly exquisite precision.
- F. Those great planets and galaxies and stars were spun into their trajectories with just the right force, into the perfectly correct vectors, with just the right interaction with the gravitational pull of every other celestial object, at the precise moment at the dawn of creation.
- G. When you think about it you realize:
 1. **Everything in the universe forms an intergalactic orchestra, and God is the Great Conductor.**
- H. He has written the score. He knows every part. Christians rest in the hope that if he shepherds the stars and calls them by name, he shepherds the details of our lives too, and works all things together for our good (Psalm 147:4, 26:1, Romans 8:28)
 1. *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9)*
- I. Christmas is an everlasting reminder that all the chaos of the cosmos, and all the dissonance of our lives, can be brought into the perfect harmony of heaven.

V. The People

- A. Now, I want you to think with me about what had to happen so those men and women who just prayed to receive Jesus, could be living in this city.
- B. They had to be in this city so they could be related to or working with or going to school with just the right person.
- C. And that had to happen so their names could be put on a card on a wall, so God could see us praying for them since the dawn of time...
- D. And that had to happen so they could be invited to be here.
- E. And Tim had to be here, and Margi had to be here, and I had to be here, and the worship team, and musicians, and tech crews, and decor work-crews, and all the prayer walkers and prayer teams, and givers...
- F. We all had to converge on this place in this time so those precious women and men could see all this beauty, and be blessed with all this music...
- G. To open their hearts to the story of a Savior who was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died a suffering death and did it all out of love to bring them back to God...
- H. Every one of all our lives and families going back generations was put into their trajectories with just the right force, and into the perfectly correct vectors, going back to the dawn of creation... so all of it could converge on the glorious, wondrous, very best day called the Day of Salvation for 494 eternal spirits and souls.
 1. And that is how it happened for them.
 2. And that is how it happened for me.
 3. And that is how it happened for you.
- I. **Every salvation is a miracle as great as the Star of Christmas,** and one that will actually shine more brightly through all the ages of eternity.