

# The Gospel According to the Wise Men // Matthew 2:1–18 // *Upside-Down Christmas, #3*

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## Introduction: DPAC

By now I hope it has registered with you that we are doing all of our services next weekend, Christmas weekend, at the Durham Performing Arts Center.

- *Have you gotten that? I need to make sure you have heard that:* we are not going to be meeting at *any of our campuses* next weekend.
- If you show up at your campus next weekend, you're going to be walking around like Kirk Cameron in *Left Behind* thinking the rapture happened. Or maybe that the Mayan calendar was true after all.
- *I want you to understand **why** we do this. 2 reasons:*
  - A few times a year we want to have an event that brings campuses together. On the weekend we meet all across the Triangle, but we are one church.
  - But the other reason is that this is a time of year when it is easy to reach out. We got a great venue in the heart of Durham. It's going to be a great show. It is going to be epic.
- *3 things to do:*
  - **Get tix: TODAY. It's free but you need tickets.** You can get them at [ChristmasatDPAC.com](http://ChristmasatDPAC.com)
  - **Volunteer.** Particularly at Christmas Eve service (next Monday) at 5.
  - **Invite, invite, invite!** No one should show up alone.
    - Get our video off of ChristmastDPAC.com and put it on your Facebook page.

- Think right now of 3 people you could invite. Let's pray about them.

We've got a familiar Christmas story to look at this weekend. We're actually going to start this story this week and finish it next week at DPAC.

- Have I mentioned that we're not going to be meeting at any of our normal locations next week—but all together at DPAC?
- I belabor this because I know you people. *Some of you are going to show up to an empty building and you're going to be mad at us and claim we didn't tell you.*

This is a story many of us know—it probably strikes you as a quaint, little, Christmas bedtime story, but this story is loaded with profound, counter-intuitive truth that reveals to you the essence of the gospel. It answers some deep questions. Like...

- *How can we believe there is a God when the world seems like it is in such a chaotic mess; where is God when something as unspeakable as the events in Newport, Connecticut happen?*
- *Or this question: If Christianity is true, why don't all the smart people in the world automatically agree on it? Why does my college professor ridicule it?*
- *Or, What about all the people in the world who are not Christians? How does God feel about them?*

You ever have those questions? I do. **The answers to all these questions**, or the beginning of the answers, at least, **are in this story**:

## Matthew 2:1–12

[2:1] 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;

First of all, we have several wrong assumptions about the birth story of Jesus that we need to clear up.

- **Our favorite Christmas carols completely romanticize the night of his birth**, making it seem like some genteel, precious-moments-event rather than the chaotic, inconvenient, ‘oh my God she’s having the baby’ moment that it was.
  - For example: “*Silent night, holy night... all is calm, all is bright.*” Have you ever been present for the birth of a baby? I’ve been present for 4 of them. None of them were “silent nights.” *All was not calm; all was not bright.* Even after the epidural, all was not calm and bright.
  - Or how about, *Away in a manger*. Think about this line: “*The cattle are lowing, the poor baby wakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes!*” If on the first night of your newborn baby’s life he wakes up next to a cow staring at him and mooing, do you honestly think, “*No crying he makes!*”?
- **Second, and I really do hate to mess up your nativity sets, but the wise men were not present at the manger scene.**
  - **They started travelling** when Jesus was born; it was several months after he was born that they arrived.
  - I’ve taken the **wise men pieces out of the manger** scenes in our house and put them across the room to show that on the night of Jesus’ birth the wise men were just commencing their journey. That always annoys my wife. But it’s accurate, and I’m the spiritual leader. If you really want to be accurate, bring the wise men back out in June, for like a ‘Christmas, part 2’ event.
- **Third, we always assume that there were 3 wise men**—probably based on the fact they brought 3 gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh.
  - But it never says there were 3.
  - In fact, a school of traveling astrologers like this would likely have included at least a dozen or so. This was a caravan that most likely included these guys, their wives, servants, kids, donkeys, and etc.

- Plus, it says there in vs. 3 that they “troubled” the whole city. A group of 3 guys on camels aren’t going to get the attention of a city. So it’s probably a huge group.
- There is an ancient tradition that they were named “Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar,” but there’s no verification for that. We don’t know their names. I did hear about one little boy who was in a Christmas play...

OK, so now that I have cleared that up... **Who were these guys?**

- It’s obvious they were astrologers. But don’t just think *kooky, stargazing club*. Their title indicates they were part of the Persian priestly, ruling class.<sup>1</sup>
- Well, **how did they put all this together**—the star indicating a king, etc.? Short answer, God revealed it to them. But, let me postulate a little further for you.
- **Persia** is where many of the children of Israel had been sent into exile. And we know from the book of Daniel some of the greatest men of God were kept among the wise men. People like Daniel (the guy with the lions’ den) and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (the 3 guys that got thrown in the fiery furnace) There’s **no doubt they shared** the writings of Moses and the prophets with them.
- Well, the writings of Moses and the prophets are **full of prophecies** about the Messiah. In fact, **there’s one that these guys very likely** would have known that I think is particularly relevant to this event. It’s the story of Balaam from Numbers 23. It goes like this:
  - There’s an enemy king named **Balak** who is afraid of Israel and wants to have them cursed. So he hires a prophet, Balaam, to do it.
  - Balaam, who is not a very conscientious prophet, agrees to do it for the right price.
  - Well, God doesn’t want it to happen, so he sends an angel to stand in Balaam’s way so he can’t do it.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

<sup>2</sup> Numbers 23:23-29

donkey sees the angel standing there with a sword in his hand and turns to the side to avoid it. Well, Balaam, who can't see the angel, beats the donkey. Eventually the angel moves so the donkey continues.

- The angel with the sword reappears but this time he's standing in the middle of a road with 2 walls by it so the donkey veers out of the way and Balaam scrapes his foot. Well, Balaam curses and beats the donkey again.

[Numbers 23:26] Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. [27] When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. (At this point, he's fed up, and he goes OT on that donkey)

[28] Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" [29] And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me. (Not, mind you, "Excuse me, are you talking?") I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you."

This part is great: [30] And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?" And Balaam said, "No."

- And then God opens Balaam's eyes to see the angel and he realizes his ass had saved his... life.
- So instead of cursing Israel, he prophesies a blessing over Israel, and part of that prophecy of blessing was this: "a star will come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17), which meant a king that would rule the whole world and bring blessing to all the nations on earth.

I have to think that these wise men from Persia might have been familiar with that prophecy left for them by Daniel, and when God causes this unusual heavenly activity they say, "That's it! This is what we've been waiting for. Let's go see it."

### **OK, that's the wise men. Next, let's get a little background on Herod.**

Herod was one of the worst tyrant-kings Israel had ever had. He was Jewish, but a Roman puppet.

- **First, he was very ostentatious.** He built these big, showy palaces and temples with his names all over them.
  - For example, there was a Jewish tradition that said when David was running from Saul, he had climbed up into a place called Masada and hid out in a cave there. Herod said, "If our greatest king hid out in Masada; then I will one-up him by living there *in luxury*. So he built this immense palace-fortress there. I've been to it.
  - ~~It was in a part of the country that often experienced drought, so he built this immense cistern system that would collect in one rainfall enough water for 10,000 people for 10 years.~~ He figured out a way to pack and preserve dates and figs that would last for years. A group of archeologists in the 1940's was excavating this area and found one of Herod's storerooms still filled with food he had stored 2,000 years ago.
  - Still preserved. In fact, the account I read said that some of the archeologists actually unwrapped a few and a few of these dates and figs and ate them. But then they had to look quickly for Herod's bathroom.
- **Second, he was psychotically paranoid about losing power.**
  - He had his **wife killed** because he thought she was conspiring against him. And, for good measure, her mother and brother, too.
  - A few years later, he had all **3 sons** of his son killed for the same reason.
  - ~~When he was inaugurated as king, he invited all his family's enemies to a festival as a show of peace, and~~

~~then had them all ambushed and killed. (Everyone else was like, "Killer party, dude.")~~

- The emperor Augustus said, "**It would be better to be Herod's sow than one of his sons.**"<sup>3</sup>
- ~~Herod was known to **dress up like a commoner** and go into the city to see what people were saying about him and then send his goon squads to murder anyone who spoke against him.~~
- Probably the craziest thing—when he was on his deathbed, he ordered that **dozens of other noblemen** be executed at the moment of his death, because he wanted the land to mourn his passing, and he knew no one was likely to do it because just he died. Thankfully that order was never carried out.
- **He only cared about prospering himself.**
  - Once when he was short on money he had the 45 wealthiest citizens executed on trumped up charges and seized their estates. That's how he avoided his fiscal cliff. I mean, he really stuck it to the 1%.
  - But not just them. **Half of everything the common man** made was taken for Herod and another 12.5 % for Caesar. If you were a fisherman, **when you brought your catch to shore** there literally would be a tax collector (like Zacchaeus) standing there who would take Herod's portion (1/2); Caesar's portion (12.5%); and then a portion for himself. They say by the time its all said and done you would have paid as much as **75% in taxes**. It was like living in France. (BTW, Jesus always told them to pay their taxes, even in that ridiculous system.)
  - At one point under Herod's reign the Sanhedrin sent a delegation to appeal to Caesar saying that Herod had **reduced Israel to a land of helpless beggars.**

[4] and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

This part is amazing: [5] They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: (Micah 5:2, in case you are curious) [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." Now you'd expect the next verse to be, "And so all the scribes and religious leaders packed up their stuff and high-tailed it over to Bethlehem to see Jesus." Nope. They did nothing. Indifference. We'll discuss that next weekend.

[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." Now, does he really want to worship him? No. He **pretends worship but intends murder.**

[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.

- We'll talk next week about what those 3 gifts mean...

[12] And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Let's stop there for our first 3 points:

### 1. **The gospel is for the nations**

- Each of the 4 Gospels (Matt, Mark, Luke and John), while they tell the same story, has an intended audience. Matthew's intended audience is the Jews, and his purpose is to show the Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah and King.

<sup>3</sup> From Luther's sermon on Herod. <http://www.preachingtoday.com/30539>

- But, interestingly, the **first people** who come to worship Jesus in Matthew are pagan wise men. That's no accident. Matthew's **last words** in his Gospel are the Great Commission: "*Go into all the Gentile nations and preach the gospel...*"
- So Matthew **bookends his Gospel** with a focus on the nations. He begins his Gospel by showing the nations **coming to see the Messiah**. He ends it by telling us to **go and tell** them about the Messiah.
- The core of the gospel message is that Jesus has come for the nations.
  - Jesus was not a Jewish savior or an American savior he's the only savior; there is no hope for forgiveness of sins and healing from the curse apart from him,
  - and our task is not complete until people from every nation have come to worship him.
- And so we can't read this story without reflecting on the fact that there are still over 6000 UPG's—DEFINE.
  - 1.48 billion people have NO access to the gospel. 3.06 billion have little access to it. In the country I used to live in, Indonesia, there are 76,000 villages; 50K are without a church.
  - Our job is not complete until they know.
- So we will not be content to play church while they don't know; we will keep giving and keep going until everyone has heard.
- For you: *What are you doing with your life?* There are wise men every nation, some of them searching for truth **in the stars**, and we have to go tell them.
  - *I know not everyone is called to go overseas... but I'd say a lot more of us than are probably should. And I think the burden of proof lies on you to show why you should stay. I think it's fine for you to stay here if God directs you. But there are over 800 Baptist churches in RDU alone. And I think you need to be prepared to answer why you stayed in a place where there was so much when there were so many places that had so little.*
- Matthew begins his Gospel by saying to the nations "**come and see;**" he ends it by telling us: "**go and tell.**"

## 2. **God commandeers the universe to accomplish his purposes**

- *This is a review of a point a couple of weeks ago*, but Matthew **stamps his Christmas story** is stamped with evidence of God's absolute control over everything.
- A couple of weeks ago I pointed out that **God caused Rome to tax the whole world** so that he could move Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem where the prophecy said he would be born. I pointed out to you the inefficiency of that—God could have whispered to Joseph to just take a trip to Bethlehem, but instead he moved Rome to do a census of the whole world. This is the Matthew's way of showing you that God has no problem wielding an entire empire to accomplish the fulfillment of one little prophecy!<sup>4</sup>
- Here, Matthew shows you that **God wants pagan sorcerers** to be among the first to worship Jesus at his birthday party to make a point so he **commandeers the constellations** to bring them there. He controls the heavens; he speaks through donkeys; he manipulates the governments; there is not one square inch of this entire universe over which God does not have complete control. **Psalms** says that he'll make **even the unrighteous wrath of man** bring praise to him.
  - Many of you saw *The Hobbit* this weekend—some of you dressed up, you know who you are. One of the reasons **JRR Tolkien**, who was a very sincere Christian and who had the considerable distinction of leading CS Lewis to Christ (*how would you like that on your spiritual resume?*)... One of the reasons he has so many characters in his stories from nature (trees and eagles and what have you) was to show that God commandeers every element of the universe to accomplish his purposes.<sup>5</sup>
- **Psalm 46:10**, "**Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.**" Usually, we think of serving God as actively doing a bunch of things for him. And there is a time for that. But **there is also a time** to just be still and reflect on the fact that God is going to accomplish his purposes, he's not dependent on anybody or anyone to accomplish it for him, nothing and no one

<sup>4</sup> John Piper, Matthew 2.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, *The Gospel According to Tolkien* and *Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth*.

can stand in his way; and if he needs to rearrange the universe to make it happen he'll do that.

- And **if you're a believer**, he's doing the same for you, too. *The same God who sovereignly arranged all of the stars in the sky sovereignly arranges every single detail in your life.*<sup>6</sup> **"All things work together for good... his purpose... he predestined to be conformed to the image of his son."** It's all working together to **form Jesus** in you and **bring forth Jesus** from you. That's what it has always been about.
- In the worst chapters of your life, he's been doing it. You can be still, and rest, knowing that he's in control of every detail to bring forth Jesus in you and from you.

**3. (Tim Keller says that this story shows us that...<sup>7</sup>) *The wisdom of the world has been turned (upside -down) on its head.***

- They are "wise men." It shows you a few things about worldly wisdom, Keller says:
- First of all, the wisdom of this world is *dated*.
  - The wise men were considered wise because they knew how to read the stars. That seems foolish today. Astrology goes in and out of date in terms of how sheik it is. 100 years ago it was defunct. Then about 30 years ago it came back into fashion; now with Tom Cruise it's out again.
  - What seems wise today is ridiculed tomorrow.
    - Freud is in then he's out then he's in then he's out again.
    - Certain dimensions of critical scholarship, like the famous Jesus seminar (which said that only 1/6 of the sayings attributed to Jesus actually come from him), are in; they're out, then they are in again.
    - Certain scientific theories are in then out and then ridiculed.
  - Every generation thinks, "Our intellectuals are different. In 100 years our intellectuals will be admired for their

genius." That's never been true, and don't be so arrogant as to think it will be true for us.

- ***The Bible teaches you (and history bears out) that whatever the educated and intellectual people of one generation believe will be mercilessly ridiculed by the educated intellectual people of the next age.***
- Yet when I pick up the Bible I am dealing with ultimate truths about God and eternity the core of which Christians have believed consistently for thousands of years!
- C. S. Lewis said, *"All that is not eternal is eternally out of date."*<sup>8</sup>
- Second, the wisdom of the world is *inadequate*
  - Question: *How exactly did the wise men find Jesus?* Not through the star. That got them started. But where did they get the details?
  - *Matthew is showing you that worldly wisdom is severely limited.* Worldly wisdom can often help you diagnose the problem, but not how to fix it!
  - I think of the John Mayer song, *"Waiting on the WORRRRLLLLL to Change": "Now we see (what's) wrong with the world and those who lead it. But we just feel like we don't have the means to rise above and beat it."* Mayer knows there is a problem, but he doesn't know the answer, *"So we're waiting, waiting on the worrrrrllllld to change."*
- Third, the wisdom of the world is *narrow and exclusive*
  - The **only people who have access** to the world's wisdom are the worldly wise. **So, if you're smart**, or highly educated in a particular field, you can have access. But if not; if you're not smart, **you're out**. The world's wisdom is very exclusive.
  - By contrast, **the first people to worship** Jesus are the wise men and the shepherds—and they are on opposite ends of the spectrum: the highly educated and the not-at-all-educated.

<sup>6</sup> David Platt, Message on Matthew 2.

<sup>7</sup> Tim Keller, message on Matthew 2, "The Magi."

<sup>8</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1960), 137.

- Both find themselves **kneeling at the foot of a cradle**.
- The gospel is **the most inclusive** worldview ever put forth, because it brings together races, the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant, righteous and the unrighteous because it says that **all mankind has common problem**, and there's one solution, Jesus.
- In Christ, the Jewish Pharisee, pagan philosopher, king, shepherd and prostitute sit down together because the basis of their acceptance is not found in who they are but in what Christ has accomplished by his grace for them all.
- This is the **cradle that rocked the world** and turned upside down all her values.
- And, by the way, don't miss, that in the eyes of Jews, both the wise men and the shepherds were the wrong kind of people. It is **highly significant** that the first people to worship Jesus are uneducated roughnecks (shepherd), pagan philosophers (wise men) and a poor, unmarried couple everyone else thinks is guilty of sin.
- Do you realize how crazy it is to begin a book written for Jews this way?
- ***The gospel turns the world's values upside-down by making the basis of our acceptance before God his grace and not our merits.***

*OK, one more thing this story has to teach us.... but let's go back to our text to see it.*

[13] Now when they (*the wise men*) had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."

[14] And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt [15] and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "*Out of Egypt I called my son.*"

[16] Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male

children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. [17] Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: [18] "*A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.*"

#### **4. Jesus is God's answer to senseless evil and my pain**

- This story ends in a tragedy. Herod, realizing that the wise men are not going to come back and show him the baby so he can go kill it, goes on one of his maniacal rages and orders all baby boys under 2 years of age in Bethlehem killed.
  - *BTW, if you've been in a skeptical NT class at UNC-CH, and heard a scholar say, "this can't be true because there is no other record of it." Bethlehem was rural and rather small, so this massacre would only have killed about 20-30 babies, which would not have even registered among Herod's other horrific deeds. That's why there is no other record of it.*
- But still, it's hard to imagine **anything worse** for these families.
- But Matthew quotes two very important verses that speak hope into the midst of tragedy. Now, pay attention to this.
- The **first**: **Matthew 2:15**. "*Out of Egypt I have called my son.*"
  - A reference to the Exodus from Egypt, in which God took Israel out of the brutal pain of slavery and brought them into a land of peace.
- And a **second** reference: **Matthew 2:18**, "*A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.*"
 

This is a quote from Jeremiah 31:15 in which Jeremiah offers hope to the children of Israel that are being taken off into exile.

  - You see, after God had brought Israel into the Promised Land, Israel sinned so persistently and so defiantly that God sent them into exile.
  - Between 500 and 400 BC the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem and destroyed the city and they took a bunch

- of Jewish captives and held them as prisoners in a place just north of Jerusalem called **Ramah**.
- From there, these families were sold into slavery to various Babylonians. Families were torn apart. Imagine the **pain of seeing** your children torn from you; some sold into slavery to one person and you to another.<sup>9</sup> And you never saw them again.
  - In the midst of this unspeakable pain Jeremiah says, **"One day your voice will cease its weeping, and your eyes cease from its tears, for . . . (your children) shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, declares the Lord."** (Jeremiah 31:16-17)<sup>10</sup>
  - That hope? God is going to bring his people back from exile, and he's going to do it by sending a new, victorious King who will inaugurate a new covenant in which he will change their hearts and reconcile them to each other and to God and bring peace on earth.
    - *Matthew is showing you that Jesus is the ultimate Exodus that all of the other Exoduses pointed to— He is the deliverance from our bondage to sin and the return from our exile from God.*
    - *Chains will be break... for he appears and the soul feels its worth.*
  - Then Matthew applies that truth to this situation: On the one hand, there is horrible news: children all over Bethlehem have been slaughtered. But at the same time, there is good news. There is hope.
  - **"A new King is born."** A King who will conquer death, not cause it. A King Who will heal our hurts. A King who will not exploit others for his purposes, but would pour himself out for us. A king who would reconcile us to himself and to each other.
    - A king who would reverse the curse, bring back the children from exile, and make all the sad things come untrue. The good news is that Herod doesn't get the last word. This new king does.
  - This week in our country we witnessed a horrible, unspeakable tragedy. Nearly 20 children murdered by a crazy gunman.
    - Can I tell you something? There is no answer for that except for the cross of Jesus Christ. I'm sorry, but evolution doesn't cut it. "Well, that's just the way it is. The world has evolved into a dangerous place and we just need to figure out how to deal with it... **but too bad for those kids; that's the last word for them.**
    - The gospel says an emphatic NO to that. The Herod of the world's injustice doesn't get the last word. Jesus does. And God is going to take all that Herod intended for evil and overturn it for good. And the **joy of that moment** will cause the memory of the painful past to dissipate like a **wisp of smoke**... like a **woman in labor** forgets her pain as soon as the baby is born. **Death is swallowed up in victory.**
    - *"And he will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."* (**Rev. 21:4**)
    - *Chains shall he break... and in his name all oppression shall cease. A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn...*
    - *And so "there is **hope** in the midst of **hurt** and **life** in the midst of **death**."*<sup>11</sup>
  - **Jesus is the only answer to senseless evil and my pain.** Evolution and scientism doesn't cut it here. The gospel says that this world is the way it is because of the curse of sin. But a King has been born who is going to bring an end to all that because he bore the curse of sin in our place and he is one day soon going to put everything right again and bring an end to all suffering.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Samuel 10:2; Jeremiah 40:1. See F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NAC, 274.

<sup>10</sup> *"Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for . . . They shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, declares the Lord."* (Jeremiah 31:16-17)

<sup>11</sup> David Platt, Matthew 2, "Christian Pleasure Amidst Worldly Pain."



- Those we lost in tragedy will be brought back and reunited to us.

So again, this is the ***cradle that rocked world***. The most profound questions in the world are answered by the birth of a small baby in a manger!

### Conclusion:

- So have you ever really gotten the message of Christmas?
- Here it is: the gospel is for you that you are lost without! Have you received it?
- *The wise men and shepherds show you that you don't have to be the "right kind of person," smart or perfect. God receives you as you are, for he has died to make you into what he wants you to be.*
  - You just have to have a sense that something is not right between you and God and you are willing to follow the "stars" in your life that are leading you God's direction, and believe the Scripture now that it has been presented to you.
- A savior has been born, who died for your sin and can now reconcile you to God. He is a gift for all who will receive him.
- Fall on your knees today, receive him, worship him and offer him your gifts in response.