

People Who Were Ready for Christ's Coming: Part 3

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and having a desperate hunger after God, and warns Christians to be ready for Christ's return.

Duration: 1:00:58

Scripture: Matthew 8:10, John 14:6, Romans 10:18

Topics: "Second Coming"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of following God's word and not relying on our own understanding. He shares a story of two boys discussing whether the sun moves or the earth rotates, highlighting the danger of trusting our own perception over God's truth. The speaker warns that many who think they are spiritual may not be in God's kingdom, while those who are humble and obedient to God's word will be ready for Christ's coming. He concludes by affirming the ultimate truth and wisdom found in God's word, even if some may try to find fault with it.

Transcript

The last two studies we had, we were considering those who were made aware by God of the first coming of Christ when he was born, even though it was prophesied in the Bible that he would be born in the book of Micah, and even the time of his death was mentioned in the book of Daniel. So people could have had a rough idea of even when he would have been born, yet the vast majority of people in Israel were not ready. They read the scriptures, they studied the Bible, but they didn't even know when Christ came and was born.

In fact, most people didn't know it for over 30 years. And in that, we have a warning that it's possible for Christians today to read the Bible, study, go to meetings, etc., and not be ready when Christ comes again. And do you think any of those people in Israel felt that they were not ready? They all thought they would know when the Messiah came, they didn't.

And I find that many who are born again Christians also imagine that they're ready for Christ's second coming, but many of them are for a big surprise. So in this church, we seek to save people from surprises in the day of Christ's return, and save people from surprises in the day of judgment, so that we have no surprises at all. I don't want any surprises in my life.

I've told the Lord many times that if there's one small little thing in my life that's not right, something I've not settled with God, something I'm not settled with man, I don't want to get any surprises in the day of judgment. I don't want the Lord to point out to me in the day of judgment even one thing, however small it may be, which I needed to set right. I said, Lord, I'm serious.

I'm willing to pay any price, but I want my scorecard in the day of judgment to be a hundred out of a hundred, everything set right. You know, that can be for you too. The Bible says, if we judge ourselves rightly, we will not be judged in 1 Corinthians 11, and if we obey that verse, the promise of God is we will not be judged.

What a promise that is. I won't be judged, if we judge ourselves rightly now. So if you are serious about being ready for Christ's coming, it's good to think of these examples, everything written in Scripture is for a warning and an example for us.

We saw the examples of young people like Joseph and Mary, who are made aware of Christ's coming. Older, much older people like Zacharias and Elizabeth, who were made aware of Christ's coming. We saw simple, illiterate people like shepherds, who are not Bible scholars, who were made aware of Christ's coming.

We saw godly older men and women who were in their eighties, but who had the Holy Spirit upon them, Simeon and Anna, who were also made aware of Christ's coming. So today we want to turn to Matthew chapter 2, and here we read of people who were not Jewish people at all, who were made aware of Christ's coming. They were not, in today's terms, we would say, people who are not Christians.

Do you think that they could be God-fearing people among those who are not Christians? Many Christians say impossible. It's true that the Bible says in Romans 3, there is no fear of God among them. That's generally speaking true of all the world.

All seek their own. And yet, throughout history, we have to acknowledge that here and there, there have been sincere people who sought after God, and who didn't know anything about the Bible, who didn't know anything about Jesus Christ, or the truth, whom God loved because he created all men, and who in the days of the Jews were a thousand times better than the Jews who read the Bible and went to the synagogue, and who in our day, non-Christians, who are a thousand times better than so-called born-again Christians, who fight with others, who love money, who watch internet pornography, and who come to church, and read the Bible, and act very holy, and know all the language, very gifted. We will get some real surprises when Christ comes again.

And that's what I learned from the story of the wise men. They didn't have the Old Testament. They didn't have a Bible.

They were not descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But God revealed to them Jesus. In the New Testament, we have an example of a Roman centurion who came to Jesus once and asked him, can you please come home? His home was many miles away.

And please pray for my servant who is sick. Imagine a master who will travel so many miles to get his servant medically treated. Would you do it for a servant in your home? Or would you tell him or her, go to the hospital, get treated.

Here's a military man who would go all the way to get his servant who is sick treated. Some of these people are 10,000 times better than many who call themselves believers because they are kind to the poor and the weak. The way you treat people inferior to you is a pretty good test of whether you're even a believer.

In the Proverbs, it says that the righteous man is kind even to his animals, whereas a wicked man, even his mercies are cruel. So this centurion came to Jesus and Jesus said, y'all come and heal him. And Jesus said, he said, oh no, Lord, I'm not worthy that you should come to my house.

I'm a nobody. There are many believers who think, of course, I'm worthy to receive Jesus. I'm not a nobody.

But the Roman centurion said he was a nobody. And I believe that if you speak the word right here, many miles away, my servant will be healed. It's humble people who have the greatest faith.

It's those who realize that there are nobodies who have the greatest faith. And maybe this is the reason why you don't have more faith. And when Jesus heard this, he said something which is amazing.

I want you to look at that. Because here was another man like these wise men who came from the East. You read it in Matthew chapter 8. He, you know, the centurion had come and asked him, saying, verse 8, Lord, I'm not worthy for you to come into my room, but just say the word.

And I know my servant will be healed right now. And a man, because I know that when I speak, my soldiers obey me. And if you speak, sickness will obey you.

Can you imagine faith like that? In the military, when a military officer tells a soldier, go, he doesn't wait one second. He goes. It's like these military parades you've seen.

About turn. Turn about. He knew that Jesus had such power that if he spoke a word, that sickness would not stay for one moment.

There's a principle in God's dealings with us. According to your faith, be it unto you. It's according to not our desire.

Our desire may be immense, but our faith may be zero. God greatly desires to bless us, but it's a principle he has established that everything he does is by grace through faith. Grace is God's hand reaching down, offering us every blessing in the heavenly places.

Faith is not saying, Lord, I believe. Faith is our hand reaching up and taking from God's hand what he offers. If I don't take it, I don't get it.

This centurion took it. He said, Lord, just speak the word. And I know it'll be exactly like when I tell my soldiers, go.

It'll go immediately. And Jesus, when he heard this, verse 10, there are only two places in scripture in the New Testament where it says Jesus was surprised. Jesus marveled.

Only two places. Here is one of them. Can you do something that makes Jesus marvel? Can you say something to the Lord that'll make even Jesus surprised? Boy, you have such faith in me.

You know, we should be like that. We've got to learn things from non-Christians. We have to learn things from this Roman centurion.

He marveled. The other place where, I don't have time to show it to you. The other place where Jesus says Jesus marveled was when he saw the unbelief of certain people.

He marveled at their unbelief. I think it's in Mark 6. He marveled at their unbelief. And here it says he marveled at their faith.

The only two things that Jesus ever was surprised by when he saw fantastic faith and when he saw, boy, look at the unbelief of these people. They don't trust me. After all that they've seen, after all they've done, still don't trust me.

Even today, he's the same yesterday, today and forever. He marvels at the unbelief of so many so-called believers who get into a panic when they have faced some problem. He marvels at their unbelief.

When they get into some difficulties, some sickness, some trials, something, they say, oh God, have you forsaken me? He marvels at their unbelief. And this is not some person who doesn't know the Bible. These are people who come for years to church listening to God's word.

They don't believe. They sing well. They know a lot of the scriptures, but most important thing they don't have, faith.

You know, I often think it's like having a lot of gadgets in your house, but you don't have electricity. And what's the use of all that information and all that knowledge, dear brothers, sisters? Don't keep accumulating electronic gadgets. Get a little electricity.

Faith. And then Jesus said, I have never found such great faith with anyone among all these Bible believing, Bible thumping, synagogue going, religious Israelites. Do you think Jesus would say today among all these believers who look so holy and sing so well and read the Bible and go to meetings every day, I have never found such faith as I found in this non-Christian.

Do you think it's possible? I believe it's possible. You think such Roman centurions come only once in 6,000 years? There could be people like that today, not knowing anything about the Bible, but the little they know about Jesus, they trust him. Now, don't misunderstand me.

There's no salvation outside of Christ. Nobody died for the sins of the world except Jesus Christ. Nobody rose up from the dead never to die again in the history of mankind except Christ.

Those are the two things that make the Christian faith absolutely unique. And that's why I believe what Jesus said, that I am the way, no one comes to the Father but by me. And everyone who enters the kingdom of God, even in the Old Testament times, even before the law was given, Enoch, Abel, they're in heaven today, but how did they get there? Through Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection.

But Abel and Enoch knew nothing about Christ. They didn't know the word of God. There was no word of God in those days.

And it's like that today. God is no respecter of persons. And there is a verse in Romans which says, I want to show you this.

Romans chapter 10, it's a very interesting verse. Romans chapter 10. It says here in verse 18, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have.

Their voice has gone out into all the world. The words to the hands of the earth is a quotation from the Old Testament. But I say surely Israel did not know.

First Moses says, this is the Lord telling Israel, I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation. Or as a message Bible says, when you see God reach out to those whom you consider as inferiors or outsiders, you'll become insanely jealous. How in the world can God reach those people? We are the Christians.

Well, you don't behave like Christians. You're not passionately seeking after God. And when you see God, I'm reading from the message translation, verse 19.

When you see God reach out to people who you think are religiously wrong and stupid, you will throw temper tantrums. How in the world can God go to them? But Isaiah dares to speak, verse 20, these words of God. People who never looked for me found and welcomed me.

And I found and welcomed people who had never even asked about me. That means they didn't know Jesus, but they were seeking after God. But as far as Christians are concerned, he caps it all with a damning indictment.

Day after day, after day, after day, and we can say week after week, I beckoned these people who call themselves my people with open arms. And I got nothing for my trouble, but cold shoulders and icy stairs. I tell you, I believe with all my heart, many who are lost will be first.

Many who are first will be lost. And many who think themselves very spiritual will not even be in God's kingdom. And you'll be surprised at some of these people who will be there, redeemed by the blood of Christ, the Christ whom they didn't know.

How do you think babies go to heaven? Babies go to heaven, redeemed by the blood of a Christ they didn't know, whom they never knew anything about. Look at all the millions of abortions that take place in the world today. They're all living souls.

And those living souls have all gone to heaven. All with a high rate of infant mortality in many parts of the world. People who don't know, babies, they're going to be in heaven.

So God is, God's heart is larger than ours. Many Christians, particularly the legalistically minded ones, are so narrow-minded in their thinking. God is not.

God's got a large heart because he created them. You may be narrow towards them because you didn't create them. Think how you look at your little children who came out of your womb, mothers.

Every human being was created by God. And God looks at them in an entirely different way than we do. And wherever on earth he sees someone even having a little desire after him, he responds.

It's what Jesus said when the prodigal son's father saw that boy coming at a distance, he ran. It's the only place in the Bible where we read God running to welcome someone who was seeking after him. And that's what we see in Matthew chapter 2. These wise men from the east, I don't know where they came from, maybe Iran, Persia.

Why did God reveal himself to them? He doesn't just pick names out of a hat and say, okay, I'm going to choose him. No. He's always been a rewarder, Hebrews 11, 6, of those who seek him diligently.

That's the truth about God. The other truth about God you need to know is it says in Romans chapter 2, there is no partiality with God. God doesn't look at anybody's face and God doesn't condemn a man because he was born in some jungle where he could never hear about Christ.

No. God doesn't condemn a man because he was born in some religion and grew up without any knowledge of Christ. And God's not going to accept you because you were born in a believer's family and you knew all about Christ.

He sees the heart. And I tell you, he sees many things that we don't see. And that's why many who are very prominent in many churches, because they are gifted, maybe in preaching, maybe in singing, maybe who are the ones who stand up in front in all churches, people who can preach or sing or good organizer, good master of ceremonies.

These are the people who are prominent in almost all churches in the world. But they may not be the most prominent in that church in God's eyes, because God sees the heart. And what he looks for, this is where we are all equal.

He doesn't look at your gift, because gift he gives. None of us can take credit for it. But the hunger of the heart after him, I think of one whom I consider to be the greatest saint that India ever saw, and that's Sadhu Sundar Singh.

When he was about, I mean, his mother used to take him to different Hindu and Sikh gurus out in the forest, to hermits and whatever knowledge she had about, she had no knowledge about Christ. But there was a God, a creator, tried to instill in him a certain reverence for God. He never cared for Christians.

He tore the Bible and things like that. He's anti-Christian. When he was 14 and his mother died and he's 14 years old.

Imagine a boy, 14 years old. Have you seen a 14-year-old boy around here? Can you imagine a 14-year-old boy like that kneeling down before God early in the morning saying, Oh God, I cannot live without you. Where are the 40-year-olds who pray like that? Where are the 60-year-olds who pray like that? God, I cannot live one day without you.

I need to know you. I need to know who you are. There's a Sikh who hates the Bible and Christians, but who wants God, wants to know God and assumes that God is in maybe his religion or some religion, but definitely not in the Bible.

He seeks God and he's so desperate after some time that one day he says, if I don't find you, it's not worth living on this earth. He wasn't saying empty words. He meant it.

There's a train that goes by here every morning around five o'clock. I'm going to put my head on the tracks and kill myself. What's use living if I don't have you? I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters, some of you have heard the most wonderful truths that's proclaimed in this country through many, many years of your sitting here.

Do you have such a desperate hunger after God? But you say, God, life is not worth living if I don't have you. If I don't know you, if I can't live close with you, it's not worth living. I mean, according to his understanding, suicide was the only alternative.

We know that's not a wise alternative, but he was so desperate and suddenly he sees a vision. He expects to see a vision of some other God, but he sees a vision of Jesus. I'm not surprised.

I'm not one bit surprised. And his whole life has changed. His whole life has changed for the next 28 years.

What a life he lived. There's never been a man in this country who lived like him. Christ radiated through his life.

He was never once interested in money or the honor of men or any such thing, but the terrific passion that never died out in 28 years to share this wonderful message of the gospel with others, even though he was poisoned by his own parents. God took care of that and healed him. Lives like these have been a challenge to me and should be a challenge to you.

Non-Christians who found Christ. In the year that he died in 1929, there was another Sikh who also tore the Bible, who was converted, and that was, his name was Buxing. And I consider him to be the greatest man of God I ever met in this country till today.

Not necessarily the greatest preacher. The greatest preachers are not necessarily the greatest men of God, but a man who knew God, a man who never feared any man. I learned a lot from him in my younger days.

A man who never cared for money, came from a non-Christian religion. What about all these people who are taught the Bible from childhood? What are they doing? We'll get a lot of surprises in the Day of Judgment. It's not doctrine that's going to take us into God's kingdom.

The Pharisees had all the right doctrines, but Jesus said, you know, we know they had the right doctrines because Jesus said to his disciples in Matthew 23, verse 2 and 3, whatever the Pharisees say to you, do, because they are saying the right thing. The only thing is they don't do it themselves. Jesus himself gave a certificate there that the doctrine of the Pharisees is a hundred percent right.

Later on in the same chapter, he told the Pharisees, will you escape the damnation of hell? Can people who have all their doctrines right, like all of us sitting here, end up in hell? I really believe that. It's possible. I don't like to say this, but I have to be faithful as a servant of the Lord to tell you that some of you who sat here for years may end up in hell.

What delight can that bring me to see you in hell? But I have to warn you, because you play the fool with God in your daily life. You take sin lightly, and you think because you come to CFC, you'll be all right. I'll tell you something when you stand before the Lord, he's not going to ask you which church did you go to.

You'll find Roman Catholics who had a lot of their doctrines wrong, like Mother Teresa and others, way ahead of you in God's kingdom. Is doctrine important? Sure it is, because it's only through correct doctrine that we can bring many others into the truth, into salvation, into victory over sin, to building the church as a pure testimony for Christ. All that is important, but for the individual person, for the church, doctrine is more important than life, but for the individual person, life is more important than doctrine.

Your hunger for God is what we see in the Roman centurion. Later on you see in Acts chapter 10 of another Roman centurion, another guy who killed lots of people in battle. I want you to see his example.

You see, these are all people who followed in the footsteps of these wise men from the east, and that's why I mentioned them. Acts chapter 10, we read about a centurion, a captain of the Italian guard, a very devout man. Boy, he doesn't know a thing about the Bible.

He doesn't know anything about the Old Testament. He doesn't know about Jehovah, or Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob. He's living after Jesus died and rose again.

He doesn't know anything about Jesus. This is years after Pentecost, probably 10 years after the day of Pentecost. We read this, he led everyone in his house to live worshipfully before God.

He led everyone in his house to live worshipfully before God. Boy, I know a lot of Christians who don't do that, and he was always helping poor people who were in need, and he had the habit of prayer. He prayed to God continually.

Did he pray in the name of Jesus? No. He didn't know about Jesus. Did he know about Jehovah? No.

Did he read the Old Testament? He didn't know anything about the Old Testament. He was a Roman. He knew there's a supreme being who runs this universe.

He didn't know who he was, but whoever it is, oh God, I want all of your children to worship this God, be kind to poor people. I wish we had more believers like Cornelius. I tell you, the church would be a better place.

I don't believe Cornelius was a gossip, going around speaking all types of nonsense like a lot of believers speak about each other. He can't be a worshipper of God if he does things like that. He wasn't just to nominally, for name's sake, go and pray on a Sunday or a Saturday and then do his own thing the rest of the week.

He was not the type of person who'd say, oh, I'm a bit busy today on Wednesday. I don't have time to go for the meeting. I'll tell you something.

I believe if Cornelius were here, non-Christian, he would have come here on Sunday morning at 9.30. He wouldn't have been late because these non-Christians have a tremendous reverence for God, which Christians don't have. I found everywhere when Christians go late. Now, I can understand if you've got a flat tire or the baby needed to go to the toilet or something like that.

There are all types of circumstances which delay us, but I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about just plain laziness, where if I were to ask people, how many days were you late for work? How many days did you punch in late at the factory in the whole year? The answer is probably zero because that means money. Okay, then people say we have children.

Okay, you've got children. How many days did you take your children late to school in the whole year? And school is at 8.30, not 9.30. How many days did you take your children late to school? The answer is zero because you're afraid of the principal. How many days were you late for church? Almost Sundays, because that's only God, you see.

These are Christians. Don't be surprised. Don't say, hey, isn't it Jesus the only way? But not the type of Jesus you believe in.

Not the type of Jesus who doesn't give you any respect for God. That's another Jesus. I wonder sometimes whether many people who claim to be believers are even born again.

There's no reverence for God. There's no respect for God. There's respect for the boss in the office, respect for the principal in the school, but no respect for Almighty God.

I will be the first to vote. Lord, take the Corneliuses into your kingdom and put these wretched believers, send them to hell because there's no partiality with you. God's not going to accept you just because you had the good fortune to be born into a Christian family, or you had the good fortune to be born to parents who brought you to this church, or you had the good fortune to be married to a husband who brought you to this church, or your brother came here, or your sister came here.

It means nothing to God. My own children can't get into God's kingdom saying, Lord, my dad served you. So what? The Lord will say, so what if your dad served me? That's within him and me.

But you got to have a relationship with me. I wonder what you glory in. The Jews in John the Baptist's day said, we have Abraham for our father.

Oh yeah, we'll get into God's kingdom. John the Baptist said, leave alone the non-Christians. Leave alone the non-Jewish people.

These stones, stones can get into God's kingdom before you. That's what he said, you know. God can raise up children for Abraham from these stones.

Don't you think some of those non-Christians are better at least than the stones on the ground? John the Baptist was a prophet who knew God. And I would say to you, don't take God for granted. You may get a lot of surprises when you stand in the final day as we all have to stand before him.

We need to have a lot more reverence. And that's what these, I believe it was the reverence that these wise men had. Let's turn now to Matthew chapter two.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, certain wise men, we don't know exactly what that word means, scholars or, you know, people who specialize in astronomy, scientists, people who studied the stars. I mean, brilliant, brilliant men. These were not like the dumb shepherds.

These were people who were PhDs. Can PhDs find Christ? Why not? Illiterate shepherds and PhDs, both are there in God's kingdom. That's another thing I found with some Christians, because they themselves are not very clever.

They think clever people can't be in God's kingdom. It's not true. Some clever people are more God-fearing than some dumb Christians.

Because with God, color of skin doesn't matter. Intelligence level doesn't matter. Nationality doesn't matter.

Nothing matters. But you look into your mind. I think many of us may think rich people cannot be spiritual.

Jesus said it's very difficult for a rich man to enter into God's kingdom. He said it's impossible without God's help. But if he did manage it, boy, he must be quite an overcomer.

More than the poor man who just got into God's kingdom because he was so needy. The Bible says God has hidden the truths from the wise and the clever, revealed them to babes. So for a wise and a clever man to understand, get revelation from God, he must have overcome something.

With someone who is dumb and stupid, didn't have to overcome. We got to get a lot of prejudices out of our mind. Many people despise, you know, the white people in the U.S. two or three hundred years ago who used to look down on the blacks and make them slaves.

But it's possible that some of you may have the same attitude. You know, if you're poor, you may say, God accepts me, but he doesn't care for the rich. Or you're not so clever.

You say, I'm not so clever. I'm spiritual. But that fellow is so clever.

He can't be spiritual. Where do you get that idea from? Any type of prejudice, you know, where rich look down on the poor or the poor look down on the rich or the clever look down on the stupid or the stupid look down on the clever is all ungodly. And I found a lot of it among Christians.

I've seen, you know, unfortunately, we have the caste system in Hinduism in this country. And so there are many who are in the lower caste, are very dark and not very educated because of circumstances, but they're all equally precious to God. But I found some Christians when they come up from that, those lower rungs of poverty and from the despised levels of society, and they become Christians, they look down on the people who are in the upper classes.

It's a reverse phenomenon. They don't understand that that is as much stupidity as those upper class people looking down on the lower ones. No, don't despise anyone.

These men were great scholars, much cleverer than you and me, if they knew about astronomy 2000 years ago, and they sought God. And God revealed to them that a king of the Jews was born in the East. Now, you see, the Jewish nation at that time was one of the despised, defeated nations.

Once upon a time, Persia had ruled the Jewish people. After Babylon ruled the Jews, Persia ruled the Jews. King Cyrus, you read about in the time of Nehemiah.

So these people were from a country that had ruled another nation. And God shows them, there's a king born in that nation which you despise. You may be a very powerful nation, that may be a very weak one, but there's a king born there.

You need to go and see it. These people, though they were PhDs, must have been extremely humble. I love to see a PhD who is humble.

That's greater than an ordinary laborer who is humble, because a laborer has nothing to glory about. So if he's humble, that's not a great thing. It's good, but it's not a great thing.

But when a PhD who has accomplished something in life, when he's humble, that's an accomplishment, because he has a lot of things to glory about. When I see a young believer, humble, newly converted, that's good, but it's not a great thing. He's not done much in the Christian life.

But it's very rare to see a man, I mean, I've mixed with so many of the so-called great preachers, but I'll tell you one thing, it's very rare, very rare, to meet any of them who are humble, who are ordinary men. They become big in their own eyes. These men, they were so scholarly, they were esteemed, I'm sure, in their country very highly, but it never went to their heads, because if it did, God would have revealed nothing to them, and they would not have been willing to make that long journey to go and see the king of a despised nation born.

So I see something that God reveals himself to people who don't know him, because he sees in their heart a hunger and a humility, a recognition of the fact that though they are so scholarly and educated, it's all from God. You know, I'm sure these wise men understood what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 6 or 7, it says there, what have you that you did not receive? Think about it. If you received it, how can you be proud of it? Your knowledge, your ability, you received it.

Don't ever be proud of it. Whenever you're proud of anything in your life, you act as though you didn't receive it, as though you made it yourself. Did you make your pretty face? You tried to make it prettier, but God gave you the features.

Did you create your own intelligence? No. You could have got education, but your intelligence was given by God. It's good to humble ourselves always.

And I want to say this, not just for one day after you hear this message, but I pray that these truths will make such a deep impression on us, that it's not a momentary humility. I mean, right now, when you hear all this, you all feel pretty humble, right? But how long will it last? That's the question. Will it last till tomorrow? This is the first time you've heard a message on the first day of the month.

It challenges you, it exposes your pride. Well, I want to say, these are the people who are ready for Christ's coming. The first time, and it's going to be such people who are going to be ready for Christ's second coming.

And it says here, they came to Jerusalem and they heard it was a king. And here we learn that even wise men can sometimes do something stupid. They follow the star, I don't know for how many hundreds of miles, probably a thousand, two thousand kilometers, all the way from Persia to Jerusalem on a camel.

I don't know how many days it took, how much money they spent to find God. How far will you travel? Will you travel two thousand kilometers to find God? A lot of people, I ask them, they tell me which church they go to. I ask them, why do you go to that church? Well, it's sort of around the corner, it's convenient.

Do you think such people have any interest in God? They have only gotten interest in their convenience. Not because that's a place where I hear God, that's a place where I hear the truth of God. You can't class such people with these people who traveled two thousand kilometers to find God.

There are many people who travel great distances. Jesus once said to the people in his time, the Queen of Sheba traveled many hundreds of kilometers to listen to Solomon's wisdom. And here in your midst you have, that was Jesus, someone greater than Solomon, right in your midst and you won't even cross the street to listen to him.

The Queen of Sheba will rise up in judgment against you. There are many non-Christians who will rise up in judgment against believers in the final day. Say, Lord, how can you take these people into your kingdom when they didn't have half the desire for God that we had? Maybe they had more knowledge and correct

information because they were born in Christian homes.

We didn't have that good fortune. We were born into some other type of non-Christian home or we grew up in a jungle where we were barbarians. But now that we know the whole truth, how can you let these fellows go in? They didn't have a hunger after God.

They were just religious. And even when they heard so much, he didn't bring in them a humility and a reverence for God that we had, who are non-Christians, without all that information. We never went to Sunday service in CFC, but we had a reverence for God.

In the Old Testament, the Lord said to his people, one of the ways you show your respect for me, it's in Leviticus 19, is when you respect older people. And I've seen something through the years. When people lose their respect for older people, it's a pretty good indication they've lost their respect for God.

And shall I tell you something? I have seen more respect for older people among Hindus than among Christians. I've seen more respect for older people among Hindus than even in CFC. The Lord has taught me to respect older people, even if they are two or three years older than me, even if they are beggars.

They are older. They may not be believers. You know why? Because I respect God.

Now you can start respecting older people from today after hearing this message. It doesn't prove you respect God. That's just because you heard a message.

Your respect for older people must come from your respect for God, not because you heard a message. Respect older people. So I'm just mentioning these things.

These men made a mistake. When they came to Jerusalem, they thought, ah, king must be born in the palace, let's go and ask Herod. That's a mistake they made.

They followed the star all those thousands of kilometers. And then at one point they thought, now I don't need to follow the star. Now I know.

King of the Jews, where else will he be born? The palace is in Jerusalem, let's go. Now that's the picture of many people who follow the word of God, follow the word of God. And at some point they say, well, I don't need to follow God's word there.

I know what I do. I've got intelligence. That's the point they go astray.

When you think you know better than God's word, Proverbs 3.5 says, trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't lean to your own understanding. I'm reminded of that little, two little boys standing in a garden when the older boy, 10 years old, was telling his six-year-old brother, see the sun, it moved. It was in the east.

Now it's in the west. The sun has moved. The six-year-old boy said, no, you remember what daddy told us? That the sun doesn't move.

It's the earth rotating under our feet, giving the impression that the sun moves. And the older boy said, no, I believe what I see. I saw the sun move.

The younger boy said, I believe daddy. You'll find finally that daddy's right, particularly our heavenly father. And all the clever people will go astray, leaning on their cleverness.

You'll find ultimately that God's word in the Bible is the truth. Even though some people try to nitpick and find some fault here or some fault there, you'll discover in the final day that the man who lived his life trusting God's word was the wisest man in the world. That's the mistake these people went.

They went to Herod and Herod didn't have a clue where the king of the Jews was born. So he was troubled. Hey, somebody's threatening my throne.

That's all he's troubled about. Worldly people are only concerned about, will that disturb me? Will that shake me? Then they are disturbed. He was troubled, it says, all Jerusalem was troubled.

Hey, what's this? Some king born with him? Verse three, born here and we don't know about it. So he called the chief priests and the scribes, people who had studied the scriptures for years. He said, where is this Messiah supposed to be born? They knew the scriptures.

He said, it says in the book of Micah that he must be born in Bethlehem. Verse five, they even quoted the verse. They knew the verse immediately.

A lot of people who know the scriptures very well, who don't seek after God. In Bethlehem, the land of Judea, somebody comes and says, Hey, we heard that the son of the king is born. And these scholars, you know, Bethlehem was only 10 kilometers from Jerusalem, 10 kilometers.

How long does it take you? Even if you walk and can get there in three hours, 10 kilometers, they wouldn't go that distance to find the king, but they knew the scriptures. Even when somebody says, Hey, we heard that the king is born. Where is he? Yeah, it's here.

Go and look for him, find him. God never rewards lazy people. I'll tell you that.

Here were people who had traveled 2000 kilometers and here were scholars who knew the Bible wouldn't go 10 kilometers to see the king. And Herod, he called these wise men secretly and he wanted to, he was concerned about his throne. And he said, when exactly was this star appear? He discovered it a little over a year and a year and a half ago because they took a long distance travel.

Don't look at long time traveling. And it says here, please go search carefully for this child. When you find him, report to me because I also want to worship him.

You know, some people look so pious. I want to worship him. He didn't want to worship him.

He wanted to kill him. Don't believe everybody who says we want to worship. There are many people nowadays in the time in which we live who will secretly pretend to be Christians and profess to have an interest in becoming Christians, who only want to get you into trouble.

Be careful. We have to be wise. And if you listen to God, we'll be wise because later on it says, the wise men were told, verse 12, in a dream by God, don't go back to Herod.

God will give us discernment about the people who try to trap us. Don't go back to them. Go another way.

They went another way. They were not afraid of Herod. But we read here that these wise men, finally, they realized that these scholars can't help them.

And when they came out, it says here, they saw the star again, verse 9, and they were delighted. Great. When we finished with the foolish advice of men, we come back to God's word.

That star is a picture of God's word. Now I'll tell you something. You follow the star, word of God, it will always lead you to Jesus.

Always. If you read the scriptures and it doesn't lead you to Jesus, it leads you to some law or rule or legalism, you have missed the road. Those other guys were like that.

They studied it and some rules and all that they got out of it. But if you really follow the star, it'll lead you to Jesus. It'll lead you to the exact spot.

I found that through the years. I found Jesus in the whole Bible. And it says here that they came, and you know, they came to Jerusalem and they saw this little house.

He was not in a stable now. He was not in the cow shed because all the people who had come for their senses had gone back. Now rooms are available and Mary was too weak to travel.

So Joseph was considerate and kept her there for some time. He rented a little house, small little house. They couldn't, they were poor people.

It was probably a small little one room house. And these wise rich men were not stumbled. This doesn't look like the house of a king.

The star is here, so I suppose this is it. It's good to recognize that Jesus is found in the most unlikely places. Today, Jesus is in the midst of his church, and the church is not the grand cathedrals and the place where 30,000 people gather.

Maybe a small one room place where a few people who love Jesus come together to meet him. And you're a wise man, a wise woman, if you can see that Jesus is there. That's how we started 33 years ago.

Very few people recognized it then. But these people recognized Jesus is here. And they went in and it says here, this baby looked like any other baby.

No, nothing special, no halo around his head. Poor, poor, humble couple with a little baby. But the star had led them, they knew this was God.

And it says here, they came into the house, they saw two people, the child and Mary, and they fell to the ground. And listen carefully. They did not worship Mary.

They worship Jesus. It's written right in the beginning of the Gospels. They were wise.

Mary was a very godly woman. We don't worship her. We don't worship any man.

They worship Jesus. And they gave him their treasures. That's the other thing.

When we really find Jesus, we give him our treasures. It says here, they opened their treasures, presented it to him. You have treasures.

And I don't mean only of money, time, energy, a house. Have you opened it and given it to Jesus? Or do you stock it all up for yourself? That's the difference between the wise men and the foolish. And they presented him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Well, those have symbolism. They were prophetic in the sense that the myrrh symbolized his suffering on the cross. We could say that the gold and frankincense recognized him as God and king.

You offer incense to God, gold you offer to him. He was a king, he was God, and he was going to suffer. There was something prophetic about the gifts they asked God to give them wisdom to buy before they started on their journey many months earlier.

What wonderful men! God could find them, in them, those who were fit to see Jesus and be ready for his coming. And I believe there are going to be people like that in the last days, who are ready for Christ's coming, more than many who call themselves believers. That's what we learned from that story.

And how wonderful it is when we allow God to lead us to give something to someone. Because that was exactly what Joseph and Mary needed when they went off to Egypt. Immediately after that, they had no money in Egypt and they had to stay there in Egypt for some years.

How God gave them money in advance. God always does that. He always provides his need, not from heaven, but through men, but not by begging and asking.

God provides our need if we honor him. He sees dangers ahead, he sees needs ahead, there's persecution ahead, the children are going to be killed, etc. God sees it all and he provides our need.

What a wonderful God we serve. Let's pray. While I head about, let's respond to the Lord and say, Lord, I want to be ready for your coming.

Help me to see if I'm ready. Help me to be ready. Help me never to despise anyone, whoever they are.

Teach me to reverence God in my own life. Thank you, Father. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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