

Crossroads International Church
Sunday, 19 December 2010
Edition 5-RG

Preaching: Rick

Music Leader: Enriko

Team: Misha, Wynonna, Cheong Yong, Deborah, Cynthia, Alisa, Susan, Swapna, Beth

		<u>Slides</u>
1. Prelude	Christmas DVD	1 Welcome—Looped
2. Welcome	Enriko	2 Welcome—Glad
3. “O Come All Ye Faithful”	Music team	3-9
4. “Joy to the World”	Music team	10-18
5. Advent candle	Rob Barkel family	19-20
6. “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”	Music team	21-30
7. Christmas Realities (Drama)	Youth	31 All About You
8. Wise Man (Babylon)	Rick	32 Babylon
9. “Mary Did You Know?”	Cynthia, Deborah, Alisa	33-39
10. Wise Man (Journey to Jerusalem)	Rick	40 Journey
11. “O Little Town of Bethlehem”	Music team	41-49
12. “O Holy Night” (We Give Our Gifts)	Offertory WT	50-59
13. Wise Man (Bethlehem)	Rick	60 Bethlehem
14. “One King”	Susan, Alisa	61-90
15. Wise Man (Still Seek Him)	Rick	91 Wise Men Seek
16. “The First Noel”	Music team	82-102
17. Closing & Prayer for Meal	Lewis	103 Promised One
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19. “Silent Night”	Music team	104-110
20. Prayer	Rick	111 God Bless You
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Christmas Reflections from a Wise Man

Matthew 2

Topic: Christmas
Theme: Jews ignored Christ but Gentiles worshipped Him.
Thrust: How about you?
Purpose: The listeners will worship Christ

1. **Prelude: “Christmas Collection” iTunes songs (Slide 1 with animated loop)**
2. **Welcome: Enriko (slide 2)**
3. **“O Come All Ye Faithful” (slides 3-9)**
4. **“Joy to the World” (slides 10-18)**
5. **Advent Candle: Barkel family (slides 19-20)**
6. **“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” (slides 21-30)**
7. **Christmas Realities: Youth Drama (slide 31)**

Mom enters the stage. She sits down in a chair. Blake (11-year-old son) dashes into the room in his shepherd costume.

Blake: *(scratches his head)* Mom, this thing is itchy!

Mom: *(looks up)* Come here, let me see. *(removes head covering)* Oh, this fabric is very rough. I'll fix it for you.

Blake: Why do I have to be a shepherd again this year anyway?

Mom: Because you look very handsome in that robe!

A door slams. Christy (17-year-old daughter) enters carrying a shopping bag

Christy: Christmas is for lunatics!

Blake: Uh oh, somebody slipped in front of you in line again?

Christy: No, little shepherd, not this time.

Mom: You look upset, Christy. Did something happen?

Christy: It's no big deal.

Blake: You always say that when it IS a big deal!

Mom: We can talk about it if you'd like. Blake, will you go see if we have enough mix for hot chocolate?

Blake: Oh sure, kick me out of the room.

Mom: *(sternly)* Blake, please go and check for me.

Blake: Okay, I'm going. *(glares at Christy and leaves)*

Christy: Mom, it's no big deal – really. I had a hard time with my math test today and the crowds were really bad at Orchard Road.

Mom: Um – the lunatic part – what's that all about?

Christy: It happens every year. People are rude and selfish and ... it's Christmas! Don't they know that?

Mom: You know, I'm not sure they do.

Christy: Well, it doesn't seem to make any difference at all what Christmas really means.

Mom: It's been like that for a long time, Christy...

Blake: *(interrupts calling from offstage)* Mom! Come and see this!

Mom: Now what? Excuse me, I'll be right back. (*leaves*)

Christy: (*loudly*) She's such a thief! And at Christmas too. She's just like that ... that... Grinch on TV – only worse! (*leaves stomping*)

Mom: (*enters*) Christy? Boy, something's really bugging her. (*calls out*) Christy?

Blake: (*enters without costume*) Forget it, Mom. She's in her "leave me alone" mood. And thanks for fixing my head piece.

Mom: You're welcome. Do you have your lines memorized for the play?

Blake: Yeah, I think I can handle it. (*hand to ear*) What's that I hear? It's a baby! His name is Jesus.

Mom: How about your friend, Devin, how's he doing?

Blake: I'm not so sure he's my friend.

Mom: Did something happen?

Blake: It sure did!

A door slams. Dad enters

Dad: (*exasperated*) Doesn't anybody have the Christmas spirit anymore?

Mom: Apparently not. What has happened to this family today? Christy is upset, Blake had a bad experience with a friend, and now you. (*turns to Dad*) Will at least one of you tell me what's going on?

Christy: (*enters*) I will.

Mom, Dad and Blake turn to Christy

Mom: Finally!

Christy: Today after school my friend, Addison, and I went to a sale at the mall to see if we could find some of the gifts we want to get people. Addison saw this cool looking shirt for her brother and ... (*hesitates*)

Dad: And?

Christy: She carries this huge handbag (*spreads hands*) and she stuffed the shirt inside when nobody was looking! She acted like it was no big deal.

Mom: What did you say to her?

Christy: We went to the rest room and I freaked out on her. I told her to put it back.

Dad: And?

Christy: I said it was Christmas and didn't that mean anything to her? She laughed and said something about Christmas being the world's biggest sale. I was so annoyed!

Mom: Poor girl.

Christy: And then she said I should lighten up and try a prank or two myself! I could hardly talk to her on the way home. She hasn't got a clue.

Blake: Sounds like Devin.

Christy: I thought he was your best friend.

Blake: He is and that's what makes it so hard. He told me he thinks angels and big shiny stars in the sky are stupid. He's only in our Christmas play because his mom is making him do it.

Mom: But you told me you didn't want to be in the play either.

Blake: I don't want to be a shepherd again. I wanted to be Joseph but there's only other boy besides me and Devin gets to do it. He's older.

Mom: (*looks at dad*) So what happened to you?

Dad: I'm going to have to work late on Christmas Eve – very late. We have a big contract due right after the holiday and the boss is in a panic.

Mom: He's just telling you now, two days before Christmas?

Dad: The client keeps changing the specs... it's complicated.

Blake: Wow, it's bad news all over the place (*wise man starts walking to the front*).

Christy: Hey, who's that? What's he doing here? He looks like he's come out of a Christmas play.

All go off, and the wise man moves to the center

8. Wise Man – Part 1: Babylon (slide 32)

(To actors, as he pursues them) Pardon me! Salam! (Apologetically to the audience near the back of the room) Excuse me. I doubt myself to be in the right place. Do you know which celebration these people were referring to? I was asked to share my experiences about a holiday called "Christmas." Could this possibly be what they were discussing? (no response) As far as I can remember, the story begins on a very unique night when I lived in Babylon...

OXO My evening work that night began as did any other. My colleagues and I at the
OOO observatory set about our task to discern the movements of the heavenly bodies. Others before us had taught us how to predict the daily positions of the moon and sun—and they plotted the paths of the five planets one could see with the naked eye. And the 1000 plus stars we could see? They remained relatively stationary as they traversed the sky each night. Other magi before us had already plotted them into 12 configurations for the 12 months of the year...

Then Sheshbazzar, my fellow astronomer, suddenly had a curious and wonderful look on his face. I asked him about it as he gazed towards the west. "Do you see it?" he said. "Do you see that star within the southwest coordinates? We have never seen this star plotted on our charts!"

I looked intently at where he had pointed. Sure enough, it was a star—at least it looked like a star—but it was so low and brighter than all the others. I noticed that it hung directly over the land of Israel. "It lies just beyond the Dead Sea," I noted. "Do we have anything in the library about a star at that location?"

"No, wait. The ancient Jewish scroll of Numbers quotes one of our own magi. One of our ancestors, named Balaam, was a diviner who talked about a star. Remember? He said:

'A star will come out of Jacob;
a scepter will rise out of Israel' [Num. 24:17]."

Sheshbazzar looked at me with curiosity and said, "So a star will rise in Israel? How odd! And why is the star associated with a scepter?"

"Scepters go with kings!" I replied excitedly. "But is not Israel under Herod's jurisdiction? He has ruled Israel for...hmmm, 33 years already. Why would the star appear now?"

"Ah!" my friend said. "It must be a *new* king! Perhaps one was just born! Maybe Herod just had a son!"

"No, that would not make sense," I said, "The Jews are looking for a descendant of *David* to be their king to free them from Rome. Herod is not a Jew but a collaborator with Rome. It must be another king..."

(Pacing) I searched my memory for any other mention of stars relating to Israel. Yes, there was another! I reminded Sheshbazzar, "Years ago during the reign of King Xerxes there was a queen—a Jewish queen over our land. Her Jewish name was Hadassah, but

she also took a Persian name, Esther. Surely you know what ‘Esther’ means in the Persian language. ‘Esther’ means ‘star’! She brought about a miraculous deliverance for her people. A miraculous star, royalty, a miraculous deliverance...

(Stops) Then it dawned on me. A miraculous star points to a *miraculous* birth—not just *any* birth. This new king of the Jews just born must be *from God*—the one the Jews have expected all these centuries! No, he must be divine Himself, for what human has a miraculous star attest to his birth?

(Music starts) “Something wonderful has happened this night!” I declared finally. “We must go at once to Israel to see this Babe with our own eyes—and offer the worship He is due!” (lights dim)

9. “Mary Did You Know?": Trio of Cynthia, Deborah & Alisa (slides 33-39)

10. Wise Man – Part 2: Trip & Jerusalem (slide 40)

OXO Indeed, we too wondered of the great implications of God taking on human flesh—
OOO thus we sought to visit Him. My companions and I desired to leave quickly, but we had to receive permission from the king, gather supplies and leave our work in the hands of reliable associates. Our entire entourage finally ready, we set out by “desert ship” toward the west, still seeing the star in the distance. You do know what a “desert ship” is, do you not? This we also called a camel.

OOO (Walking to front of room) I laugh when I see our journey depicted as three men
XOO trekking alone in the desert. Had we traveled in this manner, our gifts would have ended in the hands of bandits rather than the Christ! No, we were a *large* group which traveled slowly near the rivers (not the desert) for over five months from Babylon to Israel—a long train of camels led by a donkey, for camels are much too stubborn to lead.

And some think we were kings. I wish this had been the case! No, we were *searching* for the King!

Alas, the star still shone, leading us into the hill country of Judea, but for some reason it then disappeared. “Where should we go?” I asked. “Surely the king of the Jews would be born in the capital,” Beltizer replied. So at last we arrived at Jerusalem, bearing the dust of a thousand miles.

And what a stir we caused! We did not intend to make such commotion, but someone in our group disclosed our purpose—that we had come to worship the newborn king of the Jews.

Now I would think that would have been good news. We thought it was—so much so we bore the heat of the day for months on end. But we soon discovered that everyone knew Herod had not fathered another son recently. In fact, he recently had killed one of his ten wives and her two sons. The saying began to be told that it was safer to be Herod’s pig than to be his son! The Jewish historian Josephus records that, at nearly 70 years old, Herod the Great was entering into *great* suffering. Soon after that time, “he had a terrible craving to scratch himself, his bowels were ulcerated and his privates gangrenous and wormy. He tried in vain to relieve his gasping and convulsions in the warm springs at Callirrhoe, and returned to Jericho. Here he assembled the men of distinction from all

parts of the nation and ordered them shut inside the hippodrome. He told his sister Salome that as soon as he died, all these men were to be killed, so that there would be grief throughout the country at his death rather than joy!" (*Ant.* 17.146, trans. Paul Maier, 252).

OOO Alas, when Herod heard why we had come to Jerusalem, he called in the entire
OXO Sanhedrin for questioning. I understand that many of them thought they would all be executed on the spot, for when Herod got angry, heads flew. But when he asked where the Christ was to be born, they had an answer from Micah's prophecy. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. In fact, this was common knowledge among all the people—at least any who went to synagogue—which certainly did not include Herod.

We had not intended an audience with Herod, but that very afternoon we were secretly ushered into his court for questioning. I must say, I was impressed and fearful at the same time. But he too was disturbed. In fact, Matthew notes that Herod was "troubled" or "shaken" or "stirred." Matthew uses the same word for how the disciples shook in fear when they saw Jesus walking on the water since they thought He was a ghost!

So Herod interrogated us, trying to sound objective and compassionate. We were treated quite well. But he seemed for some reason to be very concerned about the exact time the star appeared, though he did not tell us why. We told him it had been many months, and then he surprised us by actually encouraging us to go to Bethlehem. He told us to return and tell him the exact location so he could worship the child as well.

I thought we might have had a Roman escort to Bethlehem. After all, it was only slightly more than an hour's walk from Jerusalem. But I suppose Herod feared that this would cause an even greater stir in the city, so we were allowed to go by ourselves. Even more surprising was that not one of the members of the Sanhedrin desired to go. I remember thinking, "Are not any of these Jews interested in the birth of their king? After all, this is *their* king, not the king of us Gentiles! Will no one investigate this miraculous birth—the appearance for which Israel has awaited for centuries? Could it be that Jews are so caught up with their daily routine that they exert no effort to seek the very God of the Universe who is right near them?" This kind of news they should have known would come from humble Bethlehem!

11. "O Little Town of Bethlehem": Congregational song, all standing (slides 41-49)

12. "O Holy Night" Offertory: We Give Our Gifts: Enriko introduces offering (slides 50-59)

13. Wise Man – Part 3: Bethlehem (slide 60)

OOO It was late, yet we decided to go straight to Bethlehem. As we wondered how to
OXO find an infant in Bethlehem, suddenly one of the scholars shouted, "There it is again!" I looked, and sure enough, the star had reappeared. In fact, it led us not only to Bethlehem but to the very house we sought!

OOO After but an hour's journey from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, a common-looking
OOX peasant woman invited us into her humble dwelling. When I saw the crude walls, the woodworking tools, and sawdust everywhere, I almost felt it improper for us to give our lavish gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh. But we did. We bowed in reverence to the young baby even without hesitation.

The young couple felt so honored by our visit. They really had had few visitors—only the very lowest strata of society, shepherds—some months previous. To my surprise, they invited us to stay the night—the whole lot of us—but we declined and stayed at an inn.

That night each of us had a dream—the same dream. God warned us not to return to Herod. Believe me, this was a relief! So we returned to Jericho through the back route and on to Babylon from there. Such a long journey for so short a visit! But all the way we marveled about the privilege of visiting the very God who had visited us. But what an irony! Those who lived closest to Bethlehem had missed this great privilege. Jews ignored Christ but Gentiles worshipped Him (repeat). How about you? The Jews who should have worshipped their newborn King ignored Him—but Gentiles like me embraced Him as God. Have you? (Music starts) The people had no room in their hearts even for *the one King*.

14. “One King” (Duet by Susan & Alisa)

15. Wise Man (Part 4: Transformation)

OOO People missed both the stable and the house because it was too simple, too
OXO humble, too ordinary, too plain. Had they come they would have seen and felt
what I did—a transformed stable, a beautiful home where God’s peace dwells.
Not outwardly, but inwardly where it really counts.

OOO (Walking to right) As He entered the world that night long ago, so He longs to
OOX enter our lives today—transforming the plain into something magnificent, the old
into something new, the dying into that which throbs with life. In the midst of
overwhelming trials and everyday stresses, He wants to lift us up and make us
strong. Why did He come? He came that we might have life—complete and
satisfying. His method: Not to change our external surroundings, but to change us
from within. He Himself is that light which shines in our hearts—a light worth
passing on to you.

16. “The First Noel” (Music team)

17. Closing & Prayer for Meal (Lewis)

The shepherds were men of humble means who heard God’s message and acted on it. The wise men were wealthy astronomers who had studied the Scriptures regarding the promised child. When they saw the rising star, they responded to its call (brief evangelistic message, ending with an invitation & prayer for the dinner).

18. Dinner (YMCA staff with “Christmas Collection” songs)

19. “Silent Night” (Rick lights his candle up front, then lights others who pass light to all)

20. Prayer (Rick) & 21. Postlude (“Christmas Collection” songs)

GBC/ CIC
24 Dec 95/ 24 Dec 06
NIV

Dr. Rick Griffith
Single Message
30 Minutes

Christmas Reflections from a Wise Man

Matthew 2

Topic: Christmas
Theme: Jews ignored Christ but Gentiles worshipped Him.
Thrust: How about you?
Purpose: The listeners will worship Christ

I. Entrance (Shopping, Sales, Gifts)

(House lights dim. Actors enter briskly and loudly from the back of the church and offstage carrying gifts. Those without speaking parts move to their places while speakers move to center of choir loft.)

Son: (With excitement) I finally did it! I finished MY Christmas “to-do” list!

Daughter: (Sarcastically) Yeah, so hard! Your list only had one job—eating! My list as has 231 items! I’ve walked from one end of Orchard Road to the other and I’m only half done but my feet are killing me!

Mom: (Bitterly) Dad only has to put up the tree. I have to decorate it, bake the cookies, buy the presents, wrap the gifts, deliver them to the owners, write and stamp and send all the Christmas cards...

Dad: (Defensive and interrupting) Hey, that’s not true! I have to drive you all down here to Orchard Road! You get to see all the multicoloured lights and displays. I only see red—(pause) yeah, from all the brake lights in front of me!

Daughter: (To Mom) By the way, Mom... did you see the sale at Tangs? There is a purse I want there for only \$175!

Dad: Are you kidding? I can buy *three* Christmas buffets at the Carlton for that price!

Mom: Yeah, but this year don’t eat all three all-you-can-eat meals at the same time!

Son: Mmmm....all you can eat! That reminds me I’m starving!

Daughter: (to brother) (Wise Man begins walking to stage from back) All you think about is food for yourself! Christmas is about the spirit of giving! Especially to those who give back even more!

Dad: I think it’s mostly about giving to the next generation! If I hear another plea for a new X-Box I’m gonna lose my mind—and my savings!

Son: Oh, Dad.....!

Mom: (With curiosity as she looks at the Wise Man who “freezes” as he walks up the dark aisle) Hey, what’s that? Wow! They are sure making the displays life-like this year!

Son: Either that or tonight’s Christmas get-together is a costume party.

(Spotlight moves to Wise Man as he steps to center stage. The men and women quietly sit down up front.)

II. Wise Man (Part 1: Follow Star)

(To speakers, as he pursues them) Pardon me! Salam! (Apologetically, to audience as he walks up aisle) Excuse me. I'm not sure that I'm in the right place. Do you know what celebration these people were talking about? I was asked to share some of my own experiences about a holiday called "Christmas." Could this possibly be that which they were discussing? (no response) As far as I can remember, the story begins one very unique night when I lived in Babylon...

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OOO about our task to discern the movements of the heavenly bodies. Others before us had taught us how to predict the daily positions of the moon and sun—and they plotted the paths of the five planets one could see with the naked eye. And the 1000 plus stars we could see? They remained relatively stationary as they traversed the sky each night. Other magi before us had already plotted them into 12 configurations for the 12 months of the year...

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I looked intently where he had pointed. Sure enough, it was a star—at least it looked like a star—but it was so low and brighter than all the others. I noticed that it hung directly over the land of Israel. "It's between the Dead Sea and Sea of Galilee," I noted. "Do we have anything in the library about a star at that location?"

"No, wait. The ancient Jewish scroll of Numbers quotes one of our own magi. One of our ancestors named Balaam was a diviner who talked about a star. Remember? He said:

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"Ah!" my friend said. "It must be a *new* king! Perhaps one has just been born! Maybe Herod just had a son!"

OOX "No, that wouldn't make sense," I said, "The Jews are looking for a descendant of *David* to be their
OOO king to free them from Rome. Herod is not a Jew but a collaborator with Rome. It must be another king..."

(Pacing) I searched my memory for any other mention of stars relating to Israel. Yes, there was another! I reminded Sheshbazzar, "Years ago during the reign of King Xerxes there was a queen—a Jewish queen over our land. Her Jewish name was Hadassah, but she also took a Persian name, Esther. Surely you know what 'Esther' means in the Persian language. 'Esther' means 'star'! She brought about a miraculous deliverance for her people. A miraculous star, royalty, a miraculous deliverance..."

(Stops) Then it dawned on me. A miraculous star points to a *miraculous* birth—not just *any* birth. This new king of the Jews just born must be *from God*—the one the Jews have expected all these centuries! No, he must be divine Himself, for what human has a miraculous star attest to his birth?

(Music starts) "Something wonderful has happened this night!" I declared finally. "We must go at once to Israel to see this Babe with our own eyes—and offer the worship He is due!" (lights dim)

III. Choir: "What Will I Give?"

IV. Joseph & Mary

(Lights come upon Joseph sitting up and Mary lying down at the stable. Mary stirs and sits up...)

Joseph: Oh Mary, you're finally awake. Are you feeling any better now?

Mary: (Sleepily, with a yawn) Yes, I'm OK. Sorry I feel asleep. I was just so tired after the trip and the delivery. How's the baby?

Joseph: He's fine. Now He's the one asleep. (Pause) Mary?

Mary: Yes. What is it?

Joseph: Tell me again what the angel told you.

Mary: Well, he said that I was conceived with the Holy Spirit, so that the baby inside of me would be the Son of God...

Joseph: I trust the Lord in all this, and I know that our Jesus is special, but at the same time I'm a carpenter, not a scholar. (Music starts, and Joseph says to the baby) I know you are God's Son, but what really does that mean?

V. Joseph sings "Little Yeshua"

VI. Mary sings "Isn't He Beautiful?"

VII. Wise Man (Part 2: Trip & Jerusalem)

OOX Indeed, we too thought Him to be beautiful—thus we sought to visit Him. My companions and I
OOO desired to leave quickly, but we had to receive permission from the king, gather supplies and leave our work in the hands of reliable associates. Our entire entourage finally ready, we set out by "desert ship" toward the west, still seeing the star in the distance. You do know what a "desert ship" is, do you not? This we also called a camel.

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And some think we were kings. I wish this had been the case! No, we were *searching* for the King!

OOO Anyway, the star still shone before us until we got into the hill country of Judea, but for some
OXO reason it then disappeared. "Where should we go?" I asked. "Surely the king of the Jews would be born in the capital city," Beltizer replied. So at last we arrived at Jerusalem, bearing the dust of a thousand miles.

And what a stir we caused! We did not intend to make such commotion, but someone in our group disclosed our purpose—that we had come to worship the new king of the Jews.

Now I would think that would have been good news. We thought it was—so much so we bore the heat of the day for months on end. But we soon discovered that everyone knew Herod had not fathered another son recently. In fact, he recently had killed one of his ten wives and two sons. The saying began to be told that it was safer to be Herod's pig than to be his son!

When Herod heard why we had come to Jerusalem, he called in the entire Sanhedrin for questioning. I understand that many of them thought they would all be executed on the spot, for when Herod got angry, heads flew. But when he asked where the Christ was to be born, they had an answer from Micah's prophecy. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. In fact, this was common knowledge among all the people—at least any who went to synagogue—which certainly didn't include Herod.

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I thought we might have had a Roman escort to Bethlehem. After all, it was only slightly more than an hour walk from Jerusalem. But I suppose Herod feared that this would cause an even greater stir in the city, so we were allowed to go by ourselves. Even more surprising was that not one of the members of the Sanhedrin desired to go. I remember thinking, "Aren't any of these Jews interested in the birth of their king? After all, this is *their* king, not the king of us Gentiles! Will no one investigate this miraculous birth—the appearance for which Israel has awaited for centuries? Could it be that Jews are so caught up with their daily routine that they exert no effort to seek the very God of the Universe who is right near them?" This kind of news one should shout from the mountain!

VIII. Youth: "Go Tell It On the Mountain"

IX. Wise Man (Part 3: Bethlehem)

XOO It was late, but we decided to go to Bethlehem anyway. As we were wondering how we would
OOO find an infant in Bethlehem, suddenly one of my fellow scholars shouted, "There it is again!" I looked up, and sure enough, the star had reappeared. In fact, it led us not only to Bethlehem but directly to the house we sought.

Within an hour a common-looking peasant woman invited us into her humble dwelling. When I saw the crude walls, the woodworking tools, and sawdust everywhere, I almost felt it improper for us to give our lavish gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh. But we did. We bowed in reverence to a young toddler even without hesitation.

The young couple felt so honoured by our visit. They really hadn't had many visitors—only the very lowest strata of society, shepherds. To my surprise, they invited us to stay the night—the whole lot of us—but we declined and stayed at an inn.

That night each of us had a dream—the same dream. God warned us not to return to Herod. Believe me, this was a relief! So we went back to Jericho through the back route and on to Babylon from there. Such a long journey for such a short visit! But all the way we marveled about the privilege of visiting the very God who had visited us. But what an irony! Those who lived closest to Bethlehem had missed this great privilege. Jews ignored Christ but Gentiles worshipped Him. How about you? The Jews who should have worshipped the newborn King ignored Him—but Gentiles like me embraced Him as God. Have you? (Music starts) The people had no room in their hearts for Him—just as there was no room for Him months earlier at the inn.

X. Shige: "No Room"

XI. Wise Man (Part 4: Transformation)

XOO (Music starts as the Wise Man narrates this introduction to "The Stable of Our Lives") People
OOO missed the stable and the house because it was too simple, too humble, too ordinary. Had they come they would have seen and felt what I did—a transformed stable, a beautiful home where God's peace dwells. Not outwardly, but inwardly where it really counts.

OXO (Walking to right) As He entered the world that night long ago, so He longs to enter our lives
OOO today; transforming the plain into something magnificent, the old into something new, the dying

into that which throbs with life. In the midst of overwhelming trials and everyday stresses, He wants to lift us up and make us strong. Why did He come? He came that we might have life—complete and satisfying. His method: Not to change our external surroundings, but to change us from within. He Himself is that light which shines in our hearts—a light worth passing on to you. (Spot dims and Wise Man exits behind manger)

XII. Susan: “The Stable of Our Lives” (candles start to be lit at the end)

XIII. Message & Altar Call (Lewis)

(Pastor George narrates the ending of the song)

The shepherds were men of humble means who heard God’s message and did something about it. The wise men were wealthy astronomers who had studied the Scriptures regarding the promised child. When they saw the rising star, they responded to its call.

(Evangelistic message)

Grace Baptist Church
24 Dec 95
NIV

Dr. Rick Griffith
Single Message
30 Minutes

Christmas Reflections from a Wise Man

Featuring Choirs, Wise Man, Joseph & Mary
Sunday Night, December 24, 1995 at Grace Baptist Church

Main Idea: Jews ignored Christ but Gentiles worshipped Him. How about you?

I. Choir Entrance (Shopping, Sales, Gifts)

(House lights dim. Choir enters briskly and loudly from the back of the church and offstage carrying gifts. Those without speaking parts move to their places while speakers move to center of choir loft.)

Man 1: (With excitement) I finally did it! I finished my Christmas “to-do” list!

Woman 1: (Sarcastically) Whaa, so hard! Your list only had one job—eating! My list as your wife has 231 items! I’ve walked from one end of this Orchard Road to the other and I’m only half done—but my body feels done in!

Woman 2: (Bitterly) Yeah, my husband only has to put up the tree. I have to decorate it, bake the cookies, buy the presents, wrap the gifts, deliver them to the owners, write and stamp and send all the Christmas cards...

Man 2: (Defensive and interrupting) Hey, that’s not true! I have to drive the kids down here to Orchard Road too! They get to see all the multicoloured lights and displays. I only see red—from all the brake lights in front of me!

Woman 3: (To Woman 2) Speaking of Orchard Road... did you see the sale at Tangs? They had Zoe CDs for only \$75 each! So cheap, lah!

Man 1: Aiyah! That’s cheap? I can buy *three* Christmas buffets at the Carlton for that price!

Woman 1: Yeah, but this year don’t eat all three all-you-can-eat meals at the same time! So maloo!

Woman 2: (Wise Man begins walking to stage from back) All you think about is food for yourself! Christmas is about the spirit of giving! Especially to those who give back even more!

Man 2: In my house it’s about giving to Singapore’s future! But if I hear another plug for Mighty Morphin Power Rangers I’m gonna lose my mind—and my savings!

Woman 3: (With curiosity as she looks at the Wise Man who “freezes” as he walks up the dark aisle) Hey, what’s that? They’re sure making the displays life-like this year!

Man 1: Either that or tonight’s Christmas get-together is a costume party.

(Spotlight moves to Wise Man as he steps to center stage. The men and women quietly sit down in the choir loft.)

II. Wise Man (Part 1: Follow Star)

(To speakers, as he pursues them) Pardon me! Salam! (Apologetically, to audience as he walks up aisle) Excuse me. I’m not sure that I’m in the right place. Do you know what celebration these people were talking about? I was asked to share some of my own experiences about a holiday called “Christmas.” Could this possibly be that which they were discussing? (no response) As far as I can remember, the story begins one very unique night when I lived in Babylon...

OXO My evening work that night began as did any other. My colleagues and I at the observatory set
OOO about our task to discern the movements of the heavenly bodies. Others before us had taught us
how to predict the daily positions of the moon and sun—and they plotted the paths of the five
planets one could see with the naked eye. And the 1000 plus stars we could see? They remained
relatively stationary as they traversed the sky each night. Other magi before us had already plotted
them into 12 configurations for the 12 months of the year...

Then Sheshbazzar, my fellow astronomer, suddenly had a curious and wonderful look on his face. I asked
him about it as he gazed towards the west. “Do you see it?” he said. “Do you see that star within the
southwest coordinates? We haven’t ever seen this star plotted on our charts!”

I looked intently where he had pointed. Sure enough, it was a star—at least it looked like a star—but it was
so low and brighter than all the others. I noticed that it hung directly over the land of Israel. “It’s between
the Dead Sea and Sea of Galilee,” I noted. “Do we have anything in the library about a star at that location?”

“No, wait. The ancient Jewish scroll of Numbers quotes one of our own magi. One of our ancestors named
Balaam was a diviner who talked about a star. Remember? He said:

‘A star will come out of Jacob;
a scepter will rise out of Israel’ [Num. 24:17].”

Sheshbazzar looked at me with curiosity and said, “So a star will rise in Israel? How odd! And why is the
star associated with a scepter?”

“Scepters go with kings!” I replied excitedly. “But isn’t Israel under Herod’s jurisdiction? He’s ruled Israel
for 33 years already. Why would the star appear now?”

“Ah!” my friend said. “It must be a *new* king! Perhaps one has just been born! Maybe Herod just had a
son!”

OOX “No, that wouldn’t make sense,” I said, “The Jews are looking for a descendant of *David* to be their
OOO king to free them from Rome. Herod is not a Jew but a collaborator with Rome. It must be another
king...”

(Pacing) I searched my memory for any other mention of stars relating to Israel. Yes, there was another! I
reminded Sheshbazzar, “Years ago during the reign of King Xerxes there was a queen—a Jewish queen over
our land. Her Jewish name was Hadassah, but she also took a Persian name, Esther. Surely you know what
‘Esther’ means in the Persian language. ‘Esther’ means ‘star’! She brought about a miraculous deliverance
for her people. A miraculous star, royalty, a miraculous deliverance...”

(Stops) Then it dawned on me. A miraculous star points to a *miraculous* birth—not just *any* birth. This new
king of the Jews just born must be *from God*—the one the Jews have expected all these centuries! No, he
must be divine Himself, for what human has a miraculous star attest to his birth?

(Music starts) “Something wonderful has happened this night!” I declared finally. “We must go at once to
Israel to see this Babe with our own eyes—and offer the worship He is due!” (lights dim)

III. Choir: “What Will I Give?”

IV. Joseph & Mary

(Lights come upon Joseph sitting up and Mary lying down at the stable. Mary stirs and sits up...)

Joseph: Oh Mary, you’re finally awake. Are you feeling any better now?

Mary: (Sleepily, with a yawn) Yes, I’m OK. Sorry I feel asleep. I was just so tired after the trip and the
delivery. How’s the baby?

Joseph: He's fine. Now He's the one asleep. (Pause) Mary?

Mary: Yes. What is it?

Joseph: Tell me again what the angel told you.

Mary: Well, he said that I was conceived with the Holy Spirit, so that the baby inside of me would be the Son of God...

Joseph: I trust the Lord in all this, and I know that our Jesus is special, but at the same time I'm a carpenter, not a scholar. (Music starts, and Joseph says to the baby) I know you are God's Son, but what really does that mean?

V. Joseph sings "Little Yeshua"

VI. Mary sings "Isn't He Beautiful?"

VII. Wise Man (Part 2: Trip & Jerusalem)

OOX Indeed, we too thought Him to be beautiful—thus we sought to visit Him. My companions and I
OOO desired to leave quickly, but we had to receive permission from the king, gather supplies and leave our work in the hands of reliable associates. Our entire entourage finally ready, we set out by "desert ship" toward the west, still seeing the star in the distance. You do know what a "desert ship" is, do you not? This we also called a camel.

I laugh when I see our journey depicted as three men trekking alone in the desert. Had we traveled in this manner, our gifts would have ended in the hands of bandits rather than the Christ! No, we were a *large* group which traveled slowly near the rivers (not the desert) for over five months from Babylon to Israel—a long train of camels led by a donkey, for camels are much too stubborn to lead.

And some think we were kings. I wish this had been the case! No, we were *searching* for the King!

OOO Anyway, the star still shone before us until we got into the hill country of Judea, but for some
OXO reason it then disappeared. "Where should we go?" I asked. "Surely the king of the Jews would be born in the capital city," Beltizer replied. So at last we arrived at Jerusalem, bearing the dust of a thousand miles.

And what a stir we caused! We did not intend to make such commotion, but someone in our group disclosed our purpose—that we had come to worship the new king of the Jews.

Now I would think that would have been good news. We thought it was—so much so we bore the heat of the day for months on end. But we soon discovered that everyone knew Herod had not fathered another son recently. In fact, he recently had killed one of his ten wives and two sons. The saying began to be told that it was safer to be Herod's pig than to be his son!

When Herod heard why we had come to Jerusalem, he called in the entire Sanhedrin for questioning. I understand that many of them thought they would all be executed on the spot, for when Herod got angry, heads flew. But when he asked where the Christ was to be born, they had an answer from Micah's prophecy. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. In fact, this was common knowledge among all the people—at least any who went to synagogue—which certainly didn't include Herod.

We hadn't intended on having an audience with Herod, but that very afternoon we were secretly ushered into his court for questioning. I must say, I was impressed and fearful at the same time. But he too was disturbed. In fact, Matthew notes that Herod was "troubled" or "shaken" or "stirred." Matthew uses the same word concerning how the disciples shook for fear when they saw Jesus walking on the water since they thought He was a ghost!

XOO So Herod interrogated us, trying to sound objective and compassionate. We were treated quite
OOO well. But he seemed for some reason to be very concerned about the exact time the star appeared,

though he did not tell us why. We told him it had been many months, and then he surprised us by actually encouraging us to go to Bethlehem. He told us to return and tell him the exact location so he could worship the child as well.

I thought we might have had a Roman escort to Bethlehem. After all, it was only slightly more than an hour walk from Jerusalem. But I suppose Herod feared that this would cause an even greater stir in the city, so we were allowed to go by ourselves. Even more surprising was that not one of the members of the Sanhedrin desired to go. I remember thinking, “Aren’t any of these Jews interested in the birth of their king? After all, this is *their* king, not the king of us Gentiles! Will no one investigate this miraculous birth—the appearance for which Israel has awaited for centuries? Could it be that Jews are so caught up with their daily routine that they exert no effort to seek the very God of the Universe who is right near them?” This kind of news one should shout from the mountain!

VIII. Youth: “Go Tell It On the Mountain”

IX. Wise Man (Part 3: Bethlehem)

XOO It was late, but we decided to go to Bethlehem anyway. As we were wondering how we would
OOO find an infant in Bethlehem, suddenly one of my fellow scholars shouted, “There it is again!” I looked up, and sure enough, the star had reappeared. In fact, it led us not only to Bethlehem but directly to the house we sought.

Within an hour a common-looking peasant woman invited us into her humble dwelling. When I saw the crude walls, the woodworking tools, and sawdust everywhere, I almost felt it improper for us to give our lavish gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh. But we did. We bowed in reverence to a young toddler even without hesitation.

The young couple felt so honoured by our visit. They really hadn’t had many visitors—only the very lowest strata of society, shepherds. To my surprise, they invited us to stay the night—the whole lot of us—but we declined and stayed at an inn.

That night each of us had a dream—the same dream. God warned us not to return to Herod. Believe me, this was a relief! So we went back to Jericho through the back route and on to Babylon from there. Such a long journey for such a short visit! But all the way we marveled about the privilege of visiting the very God who had visited us. But what an irony! Those who lived closest to Bethlehem had missed this great privilege. Jews ignored Christ but Gentiles worshipped Him. How about you? The Jews who should have worshipped the newborn King ignored Him—but Gentiles like me embraced Him as God. Have you? (Music starts) The people had no room in their hearts for Him—just as there was no room for Him months earlier at the inn.

X. Shige: “No Room”

XI. Wise Man (Part 4: Transformation)

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