

Do you know Him?

A few days before Christmas, a mom declared that she was no longer going to remind her children of their thank-you note duties.

As a result their grandmother never received acknowledgments of the generous checks she had given that year.

The following year things were different, however. "The children came over in person to thank me," the grandparent told a friend triumphantly. "How wonderful!" the friend exclaimed. "What do you think caused the change in behavior?" "Oh, that's easy," the grandmother replied. "This year I didn't sign the checks."

Like those grandkids who didn't acknowledge the generous gifts of their grandma, we, too, don't acknowledge the enormous kindness and love of our God, especially during this time of the year.

It seems that Christmas is becoming more and more as a day-of-gift-exchanging, retail-store-revenue-increasing, running-around-all-over-the-city-like-a-chicken-head-cut-off and everything else except celebrating the birth of the main character of Christmas.

Satan and his cohorts effectively use ignorant liberal people including the major TV network in America to remove even the word "Christmas" from Christmas, so that the people at the workplace or marketplace use a phrase "Happy Holidays" to be politically correct or culturally tolerant. But I say, "Merry Christmas" to you all.

This morning we are going to take a look at three groups of people who had a great chance to meet the Messiah at His entrance to the earth, yet completely lost it because they were preoccupied for their own things.

A. THE PEOPLE WHO LOST THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET THE MESSIAH

Matthew 2:1-4 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

Just a side note: If you have your fancy nativity figurines on your coffee table, you might consider putting the wisemen figurines about 10 miles away from that coffee table.

Because they didn't come when Jesus was born. They came about two years later. Since I blew the bubble of your nativity scene, I will continue to do so.

Somehow we think that there were three wisemen. Do you know there is no place in the Bible that mentions three wisemen? We think there were three wisemen because of three gifts – gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Who knows there might have been 15 wisemen and they all chip in?

When Herod get troubled in his heart, it usually means that some heads are going to roll. Herod was appointed by the Roman government. If there is another king who was not supported by the Rome, that means it is a insurrection. That translates to a possible war in the land of Israel. It is no wonder why the Israeli people were troubled.

1) THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES

Matthew 2:5-6 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.' "

Sadly, these experts have the right information though. They were quoting from Micah 5:2. But they seem personally uninterested in meeting the Messiah for themselves, just like some liberal "Bible scholars" today. On the contrary to the wisemen who traveled a long distance to seek the King of the Jews, these chief priests and scribes would not travel even 5 miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. To compare with these sorry excused priest and scribes, the wise men were both hearers and doers of the Word!

The wisemen went out their ways to find the truth and show their homage to the King of the Jews.

I feel sorry for those who will not go out of their ways to seek God like these chief priests and scribes. When it rains, they don't go to church. When there is some sports games on TV, they don't go to church. When they have a little headache, they don't go to church. It seems that they would find any excuse not to go to church. But the same people would go to a football game in just about any weather and scream their heads off for their team. Am I asking for them to be here? No, a thousand times no! I want them to come to seek God's will for their lives, not for anyone else, but for themselves.

The priests and scribes were preoccupied with their pious Bible knowledge for their religion's sake and didn't seek the Messiah.

2) HEROD THE KING

Matthew 2:7-8 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

Herod the Great was a small fellow, 4 feet 11 inches high and famous for both his magnificent public building projects and his ruthless, cruel paranoia.

Herod did not know the Word and the truth. But when he found it, he tried to demolish it. His idea of worshiping this young Child would be using a chopping ax. Later, we find out that Herod ordered to kill all the male child anyone who is two years old or younger in Bethlehem and in all its districts.

Herod was used by satan to destroy the Son of God from the beginning. Satan had no idea how God was going to bring the salvation to the mankind as all the prophets of the Old Testaments didn't know. Now that the devil heard that the Son of God came into the world in a helpless new born baby form, he wanted to make sure that He wouldn't be able to grow up to be the Savior of the world.

King Herod was preoccupied with his political and personal ambition and didn't want to seek the Messiah.

3) The innkeeper

Luke 2:1-7 1 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. 6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

When was the last time you have the Messiah coming into your home to stay overnight? In my opinion, the innkeeper missed out the greatest opportunity for anyone can have – hosting the Son of God, the Creator of the universe and God Himself to his home.

You might say, “Hey, he was not a theologian. He was just an innkeeper. At least he gave them the stable as a place to stay.” Yes, you are right. But if he sought the Messiah, he would have found Him like the wise men did later.

Jer 29:13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

The innkeeper was preoccupied with his daily routine and he didn’t seek the Messiah.

B. THE SON OF GOD IN ETERNITY PAST

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

“In the beginning” – the Book of John opens with the same grandiose words as Moses’ account of the Creation in Genesis.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

But the Gospel writer transports us back beyond the earth’s beginning, beyond when the galaxies were spun into space and mountains and rivers and valleys and vast oceans first etched the face of the earth. He guides us to a time before time, where Christ existed with the Father and the Spirit.

How do we know this “Word” is Christ? Later in the passage, John unveils His identity:

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Why did John call Jesus “the Word”? The word is Logos in Greek. This Logos has no beginning. Rather, He existed before the “beginning” – the realm of the eternal, triune God.

Psalms 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.

There in eternity past, the Word was with God, communing in perfect harmony with the Father and the Spirit.

Yet He also was God. There is the mystery of the Trinity beyond our comprehension: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – three in one. Coequal, coexistent, and coeternal.

Further evidence of Jesus' eternal preexistence comes later in John's Gospel:

John 8:58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

C. THE SON OF GOD WITH FLESH

John 1:10-11 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

As an ordinary baby, God had come to earth. Incredibly, only a few shepherds tiptoed in to welcome the King. Maybe everyone else expected a more regal fanfare or was too busy to notice.

Verse 11 literally says, "He came to His own things" – His own creation – but "His own ones did not receive Him." His own people, like the innkeeper, turned Him away.

The world is still shutting the door to Him. Our children can act out the Christmas story on stage, we can purchase electric nativity scenes to display on our mantles, we can sing the carols and light the candles, but do you know Him? Is He your Savior? Have you received Him into your heart?

Take another look at that baby in the manger. Don't just notice the dimpled cheeks and curly hair. Rather, gaze into His eyes. Can you see what's inside Him?

Do you see the Child and the glory, the infant-God? What you are seeing is the Incarnation – God in human flesh.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The proof is the wonderful fact that He "dwelt among us." Later in Jesus' life, John and other disciples ate with Him, walked with Him, were taught by Him, lived alongside Him for three years. They all testified He was the Son of God.

'Dwelt' literally means "tabernacled" in Greek. This is a direct reference to the tabernacle of Israel in the wilderness. The tabernacle was a temporary place where man could meet with God. It was humble in its external appearance, but inside dwelt the Shekinah glory.

John records the results of His incarnation: "we beheld His glory," a possible reference to the transfiguration, and through Him we have received grace.

We find another example of God the Son in His glory from the Book of Luke:

Luke 9:28-36 28 Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. 30 And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. 33 Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"–

not knowing what he said. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" 36 When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

In verse 18, John reveals the final result of the Son's coming.

By explaining the Father, Jesus did what no ordinary man could do – bridge the gulf between us and God. Suffering heartache and pain, Jesus knew what it was like to be human. Being one of the triune God, Jesus intimately knew the Divine. And He interpreted or, literally, lived the Father through His words and actions so that the world could understand and believe in God.

D. AN OPEN INVITATION

Isa 9:6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Two thousand years ago, God became a man to build the bridge, so that the mankind can come to their Maker. He did that out of pure love, He did that out of wonderful grace and He did that out of marvelous mercy.

Jesus is the Son of the Living God, God Himself and the Savior of the World. You can believe whatever you want to deny that fact. Just because you deny it, that doesn't mean that the fact is going to be changed. It remains as is. That is what the truth is, that is what the fact is. The absolute truth cannot be denied by anyone or anything or anytime.

If you believe anything other than what I have just told you, you are not receiving the truth by your own choice. But why? Why do you want to reject the loving hands of God to stick with your opinions? He is inviting you to receive Him into your heart today, so that you may have eternal life and have a life abundantly. Seek Him today, He will be found by you.