



John's Schedule

Subscribe to Living Hope daily devotionals

Check out our daily Living Hope devotional message in both print and audio link. Start your day or add to your day a moment in God's Word! The archived devotional messages [are here](#).



- [Current Broadcast](#)
- [Previous Broadcasts](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [Featured Series](#)
- [All Series](#)
- [This Week's Sermon](#)
- [All Sermons](#)
- [Tell A Friend](#)
- [Ask A Question](#)

Series CD/DVD

GCM-The Glory of Christmas—Jesus Christ our Lord (MP3 CD)



Come to the manger and see God. Visit those first moments again as the cast of Christmas gathered around the new born King. See Joseph and Mary, Simeon and Anna, Zacharias and Elizabeth and so many others you have heard of—as never before. Learn lessons on how to cultivate worship, humility, and finishing fruitfully from the many characters in the Christmas story including Herod, the Magi (Wise Men), the Shepherds, and the Scribes. Watch these precious moments of Christmas touch every area of your life! This MP3 CD will play in MP3 players, computers, or DVD players. This disc contains over 35 individual teaching messages and over 150 pages of study notes as PDF files that correspond to the messages (footnotes and references included).

Product Code: ISBN193356105X

Price: \$15 **ORDER**

Sermons in this series
([click to see details](#)):

- Part: 100 [Christmas: God Gave the Only Gift Everyone Really Needs](#)
- Part: 41 [Anna: Living a Life of Praise](#)
- Part: 40 [Simeon: Living A Life of Hope](#)
- Part: 39 [Lessons in Worshipping Christ from the Wisemen](#)
- Part: 34 [Christmas: How Close Can You Get? Knowing Him for Salvation](#)
- Part: 33 [Christmas: The Only Gift Everyone Really Needs](#)
- Part: 32 [Christmas: Call His Name Jesus—At the Name of Jesus](#)
- Part: 31 [The Six Names of Christmas - Seeing Jesus as: Immanuel God with us](#)
- Part: 30 [The Six Names of](#)

Are you looking for Christ this Christmas?



Part 5 (981220PM)

[Return to previous Page](#) | [Print](#)

Listen:

(To download [Right-click here](#) and choose "Save As")

[Purchase this single sermon on CD](#) 

Who was looking for Jesus at His first coming? It's interesting to note briefly tonight the state of readiness that was present when the miracle came 2,000 years ago! I like to call this [Characters of Christmas](#). You see, God had a cast of characters, 17 different ones in 4 chapters out of 250 in the New Testament.

Okay: 4 chapters - Mt. 1-2 and Lk. 1-2, and, 17 characters who could be listed as:

- 6 saints
- Some shepherds
- 3 sinners
- A prophet
- A host of angels
- A bunch of stuffed robes (religious leaders)
- Some Magi
- Gabriel
- **And, the Savior of the world!**

So which ones were looking for Jesus? Let's just zero in on a few of these folks and **try to heed what God is trying to tell us. Okay? Who were they?** Well, Matthew lists a cast of 6 (turn to Mt. 1-2).

1. Mary - pondering, worshiping, trusting and obeying
2. Joseph - fearful, faithful, obedient, seeking and sacrificing
3. Magi - willing to follow anywhere to find their king
4. Herod - more concerned about his crown than his soul
5. Chief priests and religious leaders - knew of the prophets, but did not believe their prophecy
6. Jesus

Luke lists a cast of 11 more (turn to Lk. 1-2).

1. Zacharias - doubts, but believes
2. Elizabeth - humble [mother of my Lord]
3. Gabriel - stands in God's presence
4. Innkeepers - helpful, but distracted
5. John (the Baptizer) - forerunner
6. Shepherds - in tune
7. Simeon - looking and seeing
8. Anna - waiting and praying, waiting and worshipping
9. Caesar Augustus - set the stage, too big to notice
10. Quirinius - followed, failed to know
11. Angels - proclaiming

On the first Christmas when God invaded the time space prison of earth, there were four characters we examine tonight.

- Two of them were looking for Him and found that day the greatest in their lives,
- The other two were not looking for Him, and missed the greatest opportunity in their lives.

How about it? Are you looking for Jesus this Christmas? Or is this Christmas flying by so fast you will miss what God is offering you? Everyone who was looking for Jesus to come enjoyed His arrival. As we examine their lives we can often see ourselves. **Who are you like?**

Let pause and read the story again [Matthew 1:18-2:12](#)

First, Mary a devout student of God's Word and a godly woman was looking for Jesus ([Matthew 1:18](#))

| | |
|----------|---|
| | Christmas-- Immanuel: God with Us |
| Part: 29 | Joseph & Mary: The King's servants |
| Part: 28 | Lessons from the Wise Men Giving our Worship to Jesus |
| Part: 27 | Simeon & Anna-- Single Hearted Devotion |
| Part: 26 | The Humble Shepherds |
| Part: 25 | Priests-- Indifferent People |
| Part: 25 | The Characters of Christmas |
| Part: 24 | Christmas Traditions: Their origins and meanings |
| Part: 24 | Ordinary People: Zechariah & Elisabeth |
| Part: 23 | The King's Glory |
| Part: 22 | Joseph & Mary-- Does God have all of YOU? |
| Part: 21 | So close and yet so far Zacharias, Elisabeth, Chief Priests and Scribes |
| Part: 20 | The King's Seekers the Shepherds |
| Part: 19 | The King's Seekers Magi and Shepherds |
| Part: 18 | The Wonder of Christ's Love |
| Part: 17 | The King of Christmas and Herod |
| Part: 16 | What is Christmas |
| Part: 15 | Simeon & Anna Finishing Fruitfully |
| Part: 14 | The Shepherds |
| Part: 13 | The Magi |
| Part: 12 | Joseph & Mary Walking with the Lord |
| Part: 11 | Zacharias and Elisabeth -- The 1st Spirit Filled Family |
| Part: 9 | The Priests & Scribes: So close and yet so far |
| Part: 8 | The Two Kings: Herod and Jesus |
| Part: 7 | Joseph and the Magi |
| Part: 6 | The Origin of Christmas Traditions |
| Part: 5 | Are you looking for Christ this Christmas? |
| Part: 4 | The Fourth Glory of Christmas: His Name |
| Part: 3 | God With Us |
| Part: 3 | Lessons in Worshipping Christ |
| Part: 2 | Anna: Living a Life of Praise |
| Part: 2 | God In A Manger |
| Part: 1 | The Fullness of Time: The Day Jesus Was Born |

1. Mary listened to God. (Luke 1:26-28)
2. Mary humbled herself before God said yes to God's Grace. (Luke 1:29 Who me? No airs, no pride, just a humble troubled heart that anyone would even say such a thing. She knew her own heart, certainly God would to! She was Saved by God. (Luke 1:30 lit. 'discovered grace of God') Mary joined the countless multitude who are heirs of life eternal by God's grace. Her study of the Word led her to the open arms of "God my Savior".
3. Mary surrendered to God's will. (Luke 1:31-33) To produce within her body tiny hands that would some day touch lepers with a healing touch, to form a mouth within her womb that would speak the very Word of God, to feel the kick of feet that would walk the roads of Israel and spread the Gospel. What an incredible ministry opportunity.
4. Mary experienced God. (Luke 1:34-37) She wouldn't even consider anything immoral. Instead she was surrounded by the Shekinah as God the Son entered her womb. God doing the impossible is what our life for Him is all about.
5. Mary served God joyfully (Luke 1:38-45) She was a Slave of God. Luke 1:38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (NIV) Wow, what a submissive and godly attitude. I'll say yes Lord yes to your will and to your way! All I am all I have all I'll ever be . . . And off she goes to be a blessing, starting with her cousin who hadn't told her the big news yet!
6. Mary immersed herself in the Scriptures. (Luke 1:46-55) She sought God. Have you paused to ask yourself how she did it? For starters, chew on this - In a world where Mary lived:

- Every drop of water was carried home by women from springs or wells in clay pots.
- Every ounce of flour was ground with a stone mill.
- Every loaf of bread was baked in an oven with a wood fire burning to heat it.
- Every dish was hand washed (remember that well, the pot, the walk . . .)

All this to say that, time was at a premium, what's new right? But also, women were not at a premium. Jesus was the first to elevate women to their proper place. In Mary's time they were close to being furniture. So her knowledge of the Scriptures must have come from either her dad who Luke tells us was named Heli (Luke 3:23 traces Mary back to Adam to show Jesus was Savior of the world. Matthew 1 traces Joseph back to Abraham to show Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews.)

Maybe Heli encouraged his daughter by exposing her deeply to the Scriptures. What a wonderful pursuit for any dad. Whatever the means Mary SOUGHT GOD! Mary was a woman about whom all we know in a practical way is that she learned her manners from the Word of God. Sounds like a good idea. If we were to look over her shoulder as she read from the scrolls and listened to God's truth we might learn what made her tick!

Second, Joseph a faithful and obedient follower of the Lord was looking for Jesus. (Matthew 1:19)

1. Joseph was full of compassion. Matthew 1:19 and demonstrated his love to his family. Matthew 2:13-16 Joseph was a leader in Caring. He was a protector of his family: he made decisions for the future of his family going to Egypt.
2. Joseph listened to God. Matthew 1:20-24
3. Joseph stayed in touch with God. Matthew 2:13-19
4. Joseph worked hard to provide for his family. Matthew 2:19 Joseph was a leader in God's order for the home. He was a provider: he went to Nazareth and worked.
5. Joseph gave his children lessons in living. Mark 6:3 He was a modeler: He taught Jesus his trade and that took time side by side mowing, driving, care for the car, finances, etc. Men just put some time in them each week.
6. Joseph lead his family in worship. Luke 2:41 He was a worshiper, he took them to the feast Joseph was a leader in godliness. He was a Maintainer: Pr. 22.28 keep family boundaries.

Third, Herod the earthly minded was not looking for Jesus (Matthew 2:1)

Matthew 2:1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem (NIV)

Herod was to earthly minded to notice the significance of this event. King Herod - more concerned about his crown than his soul. But one person in the crowded court believed the Scriptures! Herod believed the Scriptures! That is why he dispatched a corps of butchers to Bethlehem to slaughter innocent children, in hopes of destroying this rival to his throne. But he was too late. The magi had come and gone and Jesus was by now safe in Egypt

John 3:19-21 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." (NIV)

A Brief Bio of Herod

This Herod, known as "the Great," is the first of several Herods mentioned in the New Testament. Julius Caesar had appointed his father, Antipater, to be procurator, or governor, of Judea under the Roman occupation. Antipater then managed to have his son Herod appointed prefect of Galilee. In that office Herod was successful in quelling the Jewish guerilla bands who continued to fight against their foreign rulers. After fleeing to Egypt when the Parthians invaded Palestine, Herod then went to Rome and in 40 b.c. was declared by Octavian and Antony (with the concurrence of the Roman senate) to be the king of the Jews. He invaded Palestine the next year and, after several years of fighting, drove out the Parthians and established his kingdom.

Herod tried to be kind at times. Because he was not Jewish, but Idumean (Edomite), Herod married Mariarune, heiress to the Jewish Hasmonean house, in order to make himself more acceptable to the Jews he now ruled. He was a clever and capable warrior, orator, and diplomat. In times of severe economic hardship he gave back some tax money collected from the people. During the great famine of 25 b.c. he melted down various gold objects in the palace to buy food for the poor. He built theaters, race tracks, and other structures to provide entertainment for the people,

and in 19 b.c. he began the reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

But Herod was also cruel and merciless. He was incredibly jealous, suspicious, and afraid for his position and power.

- Fearing his potential threat, he had the high priest Aristobulus, who was his wife Mariamne's brother, drowned -after which he provided a magnificent funeral where he pretended to weep.
- He then had Mariamne herself killed, and then her mother and two of his own sons.
- Five days before his death (about a year after Jesus was born) he had a third son executed.
- One of the greatest evidences of his bloodthirstiness and insane cruelty was having the most distinguished citizens of Jerusalem arrested and imprisoned shortly before his death. Because he knew no one would mourn his own death, he gave orders for those prisoners to be executed the moment he died -in order to guarantee that there would be mourning in Jerusalem.
- That barbaric act was exceeded in cruelty only by his slaughter of "all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under" ([Matt. 2:16](#)) in hopes of killing any threat to his throne from the One the magi said had been born King of the Jews.[1]

A Tale of Two Kings

So, Christ's birth was a day in history when two vastly different kings confronted one another for the first time. One was an earthly king. He sat that day at the pinnacle of power. His name was Herod the Great, who was an Edomite or (as the New Testament had it) an Idumean. Herod the Great had slaughtered the babes of Bethlehem in his desire to exterminate Christ. The motto of his reign was: "What will it profit me?"

The other king was baby Jesus. He was the King of Kings, one who, according to the flesh, was the natural heir to David's throne and who, according to His divine nature, was the supreme King over all the kings of this earth. But He did not look like a king. He was wrapped in humble clothing. He would live to be rejected. At the height of His ministry He was to die a felon's death. If Jesus had wished, He could have called forth legions of angels who would have vindicated His cause instantly and have swept the usurper Herod from the throne. But Jesus did not want the throne in that way. He did not want the throne until you and I could share it with Him. To make that possible He would die.

Herod said, "What does it profit me?" Jesus said, "What can I do that will be the greatest possible benefit to My brethren?" God vindicated Jesus! Jesus grew up, went to the cross, and He died. But His death was followed by a resurrection, and today He lives to enable those who believe on Him to behave as He did and bring a true, supernatural brotherhood to this world. For his part, Herod went on with his revelry but soon he died in misery[2]. This is the choice before you: to go Herod's way or Jesus' way. You cannot do both!

GOD only can be known through Jesus! LISTEN AGAIN TO PAUL: I [Corinthians 2:14](#)
The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. (NIV)

Fourth, the RELIGIOUS LEADERS were not looking for Jesus ([Matthew 2:4](#))

[Matthew 2:4-5](#) When he had called together *all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: (NIV)*

The Religious Leaders were too SELF-RIGHTEOUS. They felt they were GOOD enough for God. Consequently God's word isn't for me here and now, its something for out there or something. So they knew about the texts but failed to notice the significance of this event.

You see, GOD COMES TO THE LOST SEEKERS. They knew it, but didn't care enough to go five miles south of town and experience it. They pointed others to seek out the Savior but never went to worship themselves. Chief priests and religious leaders - knew prophets, not believe prophecy. The immediate reaction of the theologians of Herod's court who knew the Scriptures well—was "in 'Bethlehem". What is amazing is that as they recited these words they showed the terrible condition that though they knew the Scriptures, they did not believe them!

What a sad indictment upon these Bible students that they did not even bother to travel the five or six miles to Bethlehem to see their Messiah.

God can only be found when we seek Him! [Deuteronomy 4:29](#) *But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul. (NIV)*

Are you:

- Dark hearted like Herod? Too earthly minded. More concerned for earthly career than his soul. God uses spiritual minded.
- Hard hearted like the Religious leaders? Too heavenly minded. Knew it but not believe it enough to go 5-6 miles south of town and Experience it! Pointed others, but not worship them selves. God uses seekers.

Or, will you be a:

- God hearted like Mary? And treasure this in your heart
- Faithful hearted like Joseph? Overcome fear to be faithful, obedient, and observant.

Lessons We Can Draw From the Ones Who Saw Jesus

First, looking for Jesus must become a daily habit. learn to practice noticing his presence sometime each day.

- Really try to follow Paul's words, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17, KJV).
- Punctuate every moment with inward whisperings of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving. Psalm 55:17 Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And He will hear my voice. (NASB)
- Have personal times of inner worship and confession and Bible study and attentiveness to Christ, your present Teacher. Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. NASB Joshua 1:8 "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. NKJV
- All this will heighten your expectancy in public worship because the gathered experience of worship just becomes a continuation and an intensification of what you have been trying to do all week long. Psalm 42:1-2 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? NKJV

Second, we need to offer ourself to the Lord as an instrument to look for Jesus.

- That is, as an individual I must learn to let go of my agenda, of my concern, of my being blessed, of my hearing the word of God.
- Cultivate a life of complete spiritual dependency. Dependency means we completely dependent upon God for anything significant to happen. The work is God's and not yours.

Third, we must guard ourself from exposure to things that blurs our sight of Jesus.

- There is no better way to erase worship than to turn on the TV when you walk in the house after church. Sunday afternoon sports, and television in general, with the incessant beer commercials, materialism and inane chatter, is a sure-fire way to flatten out -one's spiritual brain waves.
- And the whole family will suffer - "You want daddy to look at your Sunday school paper? In a moment, son. . . at half-time maybe."
- Men, if you're the kind who sits in church fretting because you've already missed the 1st quarter of the game and wonder when the preacher is going to end, you will rarely get anything out of the service!
- Have you ever tried dieting your spirit? Stay away from any "Junk food" of the soul, cancer causing agents, high spiritual cholesterol than hardens your arteries?
- Some of us are in the high skin cancer risk category. So what do we do? We stay away from exposure to those deadly UV rays. Well, all of us are prone to soul cancer that eats away at our worship so we should avoid very much exposure to TV rays. They distract, deaden and deflate the welling up of our souls in worship to God!
- If you can't fast from TV, newspapers and magazines for a week then you are very weak and at risk spiritually.

The Magi

The Magi who were willing to follow God's way anywhere in order to find the Promised King and Savior. Another group also believed, those magi believed the Scriptures. They had traveled several hundred miles to worship this Babe. They were guided to Bethlehem by a supernatural celestial phenomenon--and by the Scriptures. Apparently, their ancestors had been instructed by Daniel the prophet about the coming Messiah. . . When they saw the child, they fell down and worshiped him. This was God in the flesh. They could do no other.

The Magi first appear in history in the seventh century b.c. as a tribe within the Median nation in eastern Mesopotamia. Many historians consider them to have been Semites, which if so, made them-with the Jews and Arabs-descendants of Noah's son Shem. It may also be that, like Abraham, the magi came from ancient Ur in Chaldea. The name magi soon came to be associated solely with the hereditary priesthood within that tribe. The magi became skilled in astronomy and astrology (which, in that day, were closely associated) and had a sacrificial system that somewhat resembled the one God gave to Israel through Moses. They were involved in various occult practices, including sorcery, and were especially noted for their ability to interpret dreams. It is from their name that our words *magic* and *magician* are derived.

A principle element of magian worship was fire, and on their primary altar burned a perpetual flame, which they claimed descended from heaven. The magi were monotheistic, believing in the existence of only one god. Because of their monotheism, it was easy for the magi to adapt to the teaching of the sixth-century b.c. Persian religious leader named Zoroaster, who believed in a single god, Ahura Mazda, and a cosmic struggle between good and evil. Darius the Great established Zoroastrianism as the state religion of Persia.

Because of their combined knowledge of science, agriculture, mathematics, history, and the occult, their religious and political influence continued to grow until they became the most prominent and powerful group of advisors in the Medo-Persian and subsequently the Babylonian empire. It is not strange, therefore, that they often were referred to as "wise men." It may be that "the law of the Medes and Persians" (see Dan. 6:8, 12, 15; Esther 1:19) was founded on the teachings of these magi. Historians tell us that no Persian was ever able to become king without mastering the scientific and religious disciplines of the magi and then being approved and crowned by them, and that this group also largely controlled judicial appointments (cf. Esther 1:13). Nergal-sar-ezer the Rab-mag, chief of the Babylonian magi, was with Nebuchadnezzar when he attacked and conquered Judah (Jer. 39:3). [3]

[1] MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

[2] I am indebted for this comparison to a small tract written years ago by Joseph Hoffnran Cohn for the American Board of Missions to the Jews, entitled "The Man from Petra," No. 65 in the series "What Every Christian Should Know About the Jews" (revised 1961, no original date of publication).

[3] MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

[Send this page to a friend](#)

Site hosting by FamilyNet | Site development by Brent Riggs

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [We Believe](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Tulsa Bible Church](#) | [Grace To You](#)
© 2007 - Discover the Book Ministries. All Rights Reserved.

Comments, suggestions, concerns about this page?
[Contact the Web Manager](#)