

Lesson #3

“Wise Men Worship the Infant King”

Series 1 – Story 3

Matthew 2

Principle Truth # 1: Even within the most heartbreaking evil, God’s purposes are accomplished.

Principle Truth # 2: Following Jesus is a journey that requires you to disobey man in order to obey God.

THE POWER OF PROPHECY FULFILLED

I. Bethlehem

- A. Magi follow star**
- B. Herod murders baby boys**

II. Egypt

- A. God warns Joseph to leave Bethlehem**
- B. Old Testament prophecy fulfilled**

III. Ramah

- A. “Rachel crying for her children”**
- B. Fulfillment of Jeremiah. 40: 1 and Genesis 30: 1**

IV. Nazareth

- A. Joseph returns with family to Nazareth**
- B. Jesus fulfills prophecy and is called “the Nazarene”**

Story 3

Jesus Birth and Early Life

Wise Men Worship the Infant King

Matthew 2

***WE ARE WISE TO SEEK AND WORSHIP JESUS
FOR HE ALONE IS WORTHY OF OUR PRAISE.***

Story Outline:

- I. Magi follow star to Bethlehem to worship infant king
- II. Murder of innocent children ordered by evil King Herod
- III. Messiah saved through Joseph's dream to flee to Egypt
- IV. Message through second dream to return to Nazareth

Life Application Principles:

1. God is always speaking and His timing is always perfect.
2. The light in the heavens reveals that Jesus is the Light of the world.
3. An evil heart leads to great destruction not only for oneself but for others.
4. Evil always seeks to usurp God's power, position and authority.
5. Earthly kings receive temporary reigns but the Most High God reigns forever.
6. Even in the most heartrending evil, God's purposes are accomplished.
7. God shows His faithfulness, protection and provision to those who seek and obey His guidance.
8. It is only fitting that our most precious gifts be given to the King of Kings.

NAME OF JESUS
Devotional Reading
“BRIGHT MORNING STAR”

On the last page, of the last book of the Bible—the book of Revelation—Jesus, while speaking some of His last words of promise and encouragement to His children, gave them a new name for Himself declaring: “*I am the **BRIGHT MORNING STAR.***” Literally translated, the phrase “morning star” means: “*Light Bearer*” or “*Dawn Bringer.*” To further understand the meaning of this phrase we must look to astronomy where we learn that the term “*morning star*” is most commonly used as a reference to the planet Venus. As the second planet from the sun, it orbits the sun faster than the Earth, and is therefore, visible to the naked eye as it sets in the western sky in the evening and rises in the eastern sky hours before the sun rises lighting up the pre-dawn sky. Outside of the sun and the moon, Venus is the brightest object in the night sky, thus it is called the “*BRIGHT morning star.*” Full of hope and promise, it points to the new day -- to a new beginning that is about to unfold.

For thousands of years men have navigated their journeys by looking at the stars. Whether sailing on the sea or walking on the land, the stars and planets are a reliable point of reference to help man understand his true location in space and time. How fitting that Jesus would refer to Himself as the **BRIGHT MORNING STAR** because He is THE reference point to understanding all of life, past, present and future. It is when we look up and lift our faces to Jesus, the **BRIGHT MORNING STAR** that we begin to understand our place and position in relation to His predetermined plan for us and for the world. As we look up to Him, He correctly guides us along our journey helping us navigate through the joys, trials and tribulations of life. The **BRIGHT MORNING STAR** gives us hope and assurance that the darkness of this world will not last forever. When we turn our eyes upon Jesus, the **BRIGHT MORNING STAR**, we are reminded that a new and better day is coming. A day that will be eternally bright and never end, a day when darkness and death will be no more, a day when there will be no sin and evil, a day so pure and bright that there will be no need for the sun because Jesus will be the radiant unending Light of the glorious eternal Kingdom of God over which He will reign forever and ever (Revelation 22:5).

When Jesus refers to Himself as the “***BRIGHT MORNING STAR,***” He is giving us a picture of His very nature. By His radiant light, He is the One who overcomes the darkness of sin and suffering and brings hope for the future. Isaiah, the prophet spoke of the Him when he wrote:

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness and death, on them the light has shined.” (Isaiah 9:2)

“ a light to the Gentiles...to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” (Isaiah 49:6)

Therefore, *“arise, shine, for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth...but the glory of the Lord will rise over you, His glory will be seen upon you. Gentiles and kings shall come to Your light, to the brightness of Your rising.”* (Isaiah 60:1-3).

While on earth Jesus affirmed this promise stating:

“I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

He stated also: *“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world!”* (John 16:33)

Thus, the one who lives his life with Jesus, the **BRIGHT MORNING STAR**, as his reference point, will also be able to overcome the darkness of this world as he walks steadfastly in the Lord’s guiding light.

As the **BRIGHT MORNING STAR**, Jesus reveals what is in the darkness so we will not stumble. He turns the darkness into light before us leading us along unfamiliar paths (Isaiah 42:16). He *“leads us in paths of righteousness . . . even when we walk in the valley of the shadow of death”* (Psalm 23:3-4). When we look to Him, He guides us along into the unknown future. As we turn our eyes upon Jesus and look fully to Him through His word and prayer, He will make the crooked places straight, the rough places smooth (Isaiah 45:2), and the dark places bearable by shining His light into them. In the presence of Jesus, the **BRIGHT MORNING STAR**, the darkness always flees.

Lastly, when Jesus, the **BRIGHT MORNING STAR** rises in our hearts, He will change us from within. Just as when Venus rises in the early morning sky transforming the darkness of night into glorious light, Jesus’ presence with us and in us, transforms us. He changes us from *“dead men walking”* in darkness and doomed to destruction, into men who are alive, having been *“born into a living hope through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1:3). No longer destined for wrath and eternal condemnation, we are now men destined for salvation and eternal glory. *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, the new has come”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Therefore, *“we are now God’s children...and when He appears, we shall be like Him”* (1 John 3:2-3), and we shall *“be with Him always”* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). As Jesus, the **BRIGHT MORNING STAR** shines His laser beams of light into our hearts, penetrating and removing the darkness of sin and shame, we are transformed that we might be called His children and enjoy Him forever.

Little did the Magi in the East know that the bright light in the sky was the **BRIGHT MORNING STAR**. A star they were destined to follow that would lead them to the divine Son of God whose kingdom was about to dawn upon the world. Little did they know that the little child they found who in a roughly hewn cave was the One promised from the moment Satan

introduced sin and darkness into the world. When they gave their extravagant gifts fit for a king, little did they know they were giving gifts to the King of all creation, the One whose life was the beginning of a new day filled with the bright promise of a glorious future. Little did the Magi know that the bright light in the sky guiding them along paths unknown would lead them to the One who destroys darkness and transforms it by the light of His presence. O, what a glorious appearing! Jesus, the **BRIGHT MORNING STAR** had come bringing with Him the radiant light for the salvation of the world.

**“In Him was the life, and the life was the light of men.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.”
John 1:4-5**

THE DOCTRINE

The POWER of FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

The term “*prophecy*” means to speak forth, proclaim, or announce. In biblical Greek these terms always carry the connotation of speaking, proclaiming or announcing something under the influence of spiritual inspiration.

The Old Testament prophets spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit of Almighty God (2 Peter 1:19-21). They did not understand what they prophesied (1 Peter 1:10-12). They believed that their prophecies as to Christ were all to be fulfilled at his “*First coming.*” This accounts for why the people of Christ’s day looked for him to set up a “*Temporal Kingdom.*” They did not see that this present time period in which we are living - the Church Age – was to intervene between the Cross of Christ (His sufferings) and the Crown of Christ (His glory that would follow (1 Peter 1:11). The prophets saw the events they foretold as separate peaks of one great mountain. Only when the separate peaks are studied together can we attain the perspective of the mountain range in its totality.

The Bible is unlike all other sacred books in that it bases its authenticity and authority on fulfilled prophecy. All other sacred books contain no predictions as to the future. If their authors had attempted to foretell future events, their non-fulfillment would have discredited their writings instantly. Fulfilled prophecy is stronger evidence for the inspiration and authenticity of the scriptures than even miracles. Prophecy is not a haphazard guess, nor is it a probability made up from uncertain data like our weather reports or Hurricane forecasts.

The great significance of the study of prophecy is seen when we recall that two thirds of the Scriptures are prophetic, either in type, symbol or direct statement, and more than one half of the Old Testament prophecies and nearly all of the New Testament ones point to events yet future. God in His great wisdom knew that mankind would need the “*SURE WORD OF PROPHECY*” to light the way over the turbulent waters of time and history (2 Peter 1:19). When men see that God has a plan and purpose He is accomplishing throughout history, they can take heart as they discover something solid as a rock upon which they can pin their faith. One of the reasons the Jews of Jesus’ day failed to recognize him at his first coming and even rejected him was because they were not students of the prophetic scriptures. We too must understand that our neglect of the study of prophecy will leave us ill prepared for Christ second coming as well.

I. The Prophets of God and Their Announcements

One of the clearest and most significant statements on the nature of prophetic inspiration and its fulfillment in the Old Testament is found in Number 12:6-8 concerning the Lord’s servant and

prophet, Moses. The line of great prophets upon whose shoulders the entire story of the Old Testament moves forward began with Moses, who is recognized as the prophet par excellence (Deuteronomy 34:10). This is an accurate assessment of Moses for all the distinctive marks of a prophet belonged to him: 1) He was called by God; 2) He was aware of the importance of historical events as acts of God in which He confirmed His word; 3) He was ethically, socially and spiritually concerned for God's people; 4) He was a champion of the helpless. The passage in Numbers states:

“Now listen to me! Even with prophets, I, the Lord, communicate by visions and dreams. But that is not how I communicate with my servant Moses. He is entrusted with my entire house. I speak to him face to face, directly and not in riddles! He sees the Lord as he is.”

Several important insights into the nature of prophetic inspiration are found here. 1) The prophetic gift of Moses was unique in that he alone out of all the biblical prophets received revelations directly from God. 2) Ordinarily prophetic revelation was received through a dream or a vision. 3) The meaning of prophetic revelation is not always clear to the one speaking the prophecy; therefore the interpretation of fulfillment is sometimes ambiguous.

Further insight into the nature of prophetic revelation is found in Deuteronomy 18:18: *“I God will raise up for them a prophet like you (Moses) from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.”* While this passage is of interest because Jesus was identified as *“the prophet like Moses”* who came in fulfillment of this prediction (Acts 3:22; 7:37), the more immediate historical reference is to the succession of prophets that guided Israel from the days of Joshua to the end of Old Testament history through the days of Malachi. The phrase *“I will put my words in his mouth”* refers to the process of that familiar prophetic formula *“the word of the Lord came”* . . . to such and such a prophet. **Therefore, a true prophet is one who speaks or repeats all that God has told him to say.**

II. The Message of the Prophets

The most common introductory formula for prophetic messages is found in the Old Testament phrase, “Thus says the Lord.” This phrase occurs hundreds of times in various prophetic writings clearly implying that the announcement introduced is not the word of the prophet who speaks the message but of the God of Israel who delivered His word to that prophet. The prophet's message was of divine commission with God speaking in first person.

III. Jesus as a Prophet

Jesus was popularly regarded as a prophet, particularly in the gospel accounts. This assessment was based on the mighty deeds he performed in addition to his prophetic speeches and predictions. Though Jesus nowhere claimed prophetic status directly, that claim is implicit in Mark 6:4 (also Matthew 13:57) where Jesus states: “*A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown.*” In the book of Acts, Jesus is regarded as “*the prophet like Moses*” prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:18. Matthew, writing to a Jewish audience, presents Jesus as the New Moses, but he does not particularly emphasize Christ’s prophetic role. John however like Luke, emphasizes Jesus role as prophet. There are 12 solid reasons for regarding Jesus as a prophet in the Old Testament tradition:

1. The sovereign authority of Jesus’ teaching (Mark 1:27) – This is a feature emphasized by his common use of an introductory phrase, “*Amen,*” “*I say to you,*” or “*Thus says the Lord,*” all of which were used by Old Testament prophets.
2. The poetic character of many of Jesus’ sayings is unlike contemporary rabbinic teaching but similar to the poetic rhetoric of the Old Testament prophets.
3. Jesus experienced visions as did the ancient prophets (Luke 10:18).
4. Jesus, like the prophets, made many predictions.
5. Like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus performed symbolic acts such as cleansing the temple, his entry into Jerusalem, and the Last Supper.
6. Jesus, like the prophets, when necessary rejected the formal observance of religious ritual and emphasized the spiritual dimensions of obedience to God.
7. Jesus announced the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God – an eschatological (end time) proclamation similar to those made by the prophets.
8. Like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus functioned as a preacher of repentance.
9. Jesus, like many of the prophets, was conscious of a special calling of God upon his life. (Matthew 15:24)
10. Jesus, like the prophets, received divine revelation through intimate communion with God (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22).
11. Like the prophets, Jesus represented God; to obey Christ was to obey God, to reject him was to reject God. (Mark 9:37)
12. Like the prophets, Jesus was conscious of a mission to all Israel (Matthew 15:24; 19:28; Luke 22:30)

Among the many prophetic predictions of Jesus are the following:

1. Predictions of the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 10:7-8, Mark 1:15; 9:1, and 13:28-29)
2. Predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (Matthew 23:37-39; 24:2; 26:61; Mark 13:2; 15:29; Luke 13:34- 35; 21:6)

3. Predictions of the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 10:23; Mark 3:38; Luke 9: 26)
4. Predictions of the end of the age. The longest prophetic section in the Gospels is the eschatological discourse of Jesus in Mark 13:1-32, in which a number of predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age are woven into a lengthy discourse to the disciples. (The Olivet Discourse)

IV. Messianic PROPHECIES AND FULFILLMENTS

For the gospel writers, one of the main reasons for believing in Jesus was the way his life fulfilled precisely what had been foretold of the coming Messiah through the Old Testament prophets. The following is a list of some of the main prophecies spoken of the coming Messiah.

(Scripture references are not all inclusive)

<u>The Prophecy</u>	<u>Old Testament</u>	<u>New Testament</u>
1. Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem	Micah 5: 2	Matt. 2:1-6
2. Messiah was to be born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Luke 1:26 -38
3. Messiah was to be a prophet like Moses	Deut. 1: 15; 18- 19	John 7:40
4. Messiah was to enter Jerusalem in triumph	Zechariah 9:9	John 12:12 -16
5. Messiah was to be rejected by his own people	Isaiah 53:1,3; Ps. 118:22	Acts 4:1-12
6. Messiah was to be betrayed by one of his followers	Psalms 41:9	Luke 22:19-23
7. Messiah was to be tried and condemned	Isaiah 53:8	Luke 23:1-25
8. Messiah was to be silent before his accusers	Isaiah 53:7	Mark 15:3-4
9. Messiah was to be struck and spat on by enemies	Isaiah 50:6	Mark 14:65
10. Messiah was to be mocked and insulted	Psalms 22:7-8	Luke 23:11, 35

<u>The Prophecy (con't)</u>	<u>Old Testament</u>	<u>New Testament</u>
11. Messiah was to die by crucifixion	Psalm 22:14, 16 -17	Mark 15:20, 25
12. Messiah was to suffer with criminals and pray for enemies	Isaiah 53: 12	Luke 23:32-34
13. Messiah was to be given vinegar	Psalm 69:21	John 19:28-30
14. Others were to cast lots for Messiah's garments	Psalm 22:18	John 19: 23-24
15. Messiah's bones were not to be broken	Exodus 12: 46	John 19: 31-36
16. Messiah was to die as a sacrifice for sin	Isaiah 53:5-6,8,10 -12	Acts 10: 43
17. Messiah was to be raised from the dead	Psalm 16:10	Acts 2:22-32
18. Messiah is now at God's right hand	Psalm 110:1	Mark 16:19

V. The Miraculous Nature of Divine Inspiration in FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

The value of the argument for divine inspiration of prophetic scripture is evident when we simply look at the law of compound probabilities.

For example:

If I were to predict an earthquake in South Carolina next year, the chance would be 1 in 2 that it would occur. If I should add another prediction that it would be on July 4, the chance is decreased to 1 in 4. And if I add another detail that it will take place in the daytime, the chance then becomes 1 in 8. And if I should add a fourth detail, the chance would be 1 in 32. If the details were 10 in number, the chance would be 1 in 1024.

Taking that simple example and referring back to the above chart, we can with certainty see from the various prophetic predictions that there were 25 specific predictions made by the Old Testament prophets bearing on the betrayal, trial, death and burial of Jesus. These were uttered by different prophets during the period from B.C.100 to B.C.500, yet they were all LITERALLY FULFILLED in 24 hours in one person – the Messiah, Jesus Christ. According to the law of Compound Probabilities, there was one chance in 33,554,432 that these 25 predictions would be fulfilled in one person as prophesied. If one prophet should make several predictions as to some one event, he might, by collusion with others, bring it to pass, but when a number of prophets,

distributed over several centuries, give detailed and specific predictions as to some event, the charge of collusion cannot be sustained. It is a fact that there were 109 predictions literally fulfilled at Christ's first advent in the flesh. If we apply the law of "*Compound Probabilities*" to this number, the chance was only one in billions that they would be fulfilled in one person at one specific point in time!

It is quite significant that the argument Jesus used to convince the two mourning disciples walking on the road to Emmaus (after the crucifixion and resurrection) was the appeal to prophecy. Luke 24:27 records that conversation: "*And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He (Jesus) expounded unto them from all the scriptures, the things concerning Himself.*" In other words, Jesus took those prophecies spoken by different men over a span of several centuries and quoted them on that day to the disciples in order to show that what had just taken place (His death and crucifixion) was precisely what the prophets foretold would happen to Messiah when He came the first time. Is it any wonder that as Jesus outlined the "**Prophetic Christ**" to these men on the road to Emmaus and compared Him with the "**Historic Christ**" that the hearts of those walking with the RISEN LORD JESUS that day "*burned within them*" as Jesus literally opened up to them the scriptures. "*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?*" (Luke 24:25-26).

It is quite insightful that the angel who appears to John in Revelation 19 says these words:

(The angel speaking to John)

*"Then I fell down at his feet to worship him (the angel), but he said to me, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.' For the testimony of Jesus is the **Spirit of Prophecy.**"*
(Revelation 19:10)

How important then is the study of biblical prophecy and its astounding precision of fulfillment? It is important enough to give serious attention and deep study for in doing so, a fresh understanding of that mysterious power of the prophetic word will never fail to create a new reverence and awe of the beauty of our awesome God and His infallible, inerrant and never-changing word!

"And we have the prophetic words more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (1 Peter 1:19-21)

Notes: Tyndale Bible Dictionary, and Dispensational Truth, Clarence Larkin, 1918

Questions for Reflection

Read Matthew 2:1-12.

1. Who were the Magi? Why did they come? What prompted the timing of their coming?

2. Throughout the ages, stars have always been a reference point to guide travelers on their journey. How has your study of Jesus, THE BRIGHT MORNING STAR, increased your understanding of WHO He is and WHY He came?

3. In what areas of your life do you need the brightness of His Light to penetrate your heart so that darkness may flee? How might His presence change your outlook in spite of challenging circumstances and difficulties?

4. Describe the responses to the news about the birth of a new king and why you think each response was different.
 - a. The Magi

 - b. King Herod

 - c. The Chief Priests and Scribes of the Law

5. How is each of these reactions evident in our culture today? What was your initial response to the Good News of Christ, the King? How has your understanding of His Deity been challenged by this study?

6. What words or phrases prophesied in Micah 5:2 reveal the following information:
 - a. The Deity of Christ
 - b. The Humanity of Christ
 - c. The Kingship of Christ

7. How has your understanding been challenged concerning Christ's deity by this study?
8. Read Ruth 4:11-17. How does the village of Bethlehem connect Jesus with King David, his great ancestor?
9. The desire of the Magi was to worship the newly born King. What did they do when they found Him? What gifts did they bring Him? What significance did these gifts represent?
10. How do you respond when you come into the presence of King Jesus? How much do you joyfully give Him of your time, money, energy and emotions?

Read Matthew 2:13-18, Hosea 11:1 and Jeremiah 31:15

11. Christ's birth fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies. How were these prophecies fulfilled in Jesus's early life?
12. Beginning with Herod, Christ's life was marked with hostility, hatred and persecution from the unbelieving world. In what ways is this response repeated in the lives of those who are closely linked with Jesus? How have you personally experienced this?

Read Matthew 2:19-23

13. Why did Joseph not return to Judea with his family? Where did he go instead?
14. What are some lessons you have learned through this study about God's care for His own and the importance of obedience to His word?

SALVATION CHALLENGE:

Has Jesus, the BRIGHT MORNING STAR, truly risen up in you, saving you from the sin and darkness into which you were born? Have you fully acknowledged Him as your Savior and worshipped Him as your one and only King?