




Theme: The Wisdom of Christmas


"Wisdom in the Naming of Jesus"

Weekly Memory Verses:

²³ "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'" – Matthew 1:23

Meditation Moments for Monday, December 22 – Read **Matthew 1:20-23**. Matthew filled these verses with meaningful images. He said the angel told Joseph to name Mary's child "Jesus." The name *Jesus* comes from the Hebrew *Yeshua*, or *Jehovah*, which means "deliverance" or "salvation." Matthew also stressed *Immanuel*, which is a symbolic name from Isaiah 7:14. This connection made with the words of Isaiah gives us an essential insight about the meaning of Christmas and the significance of Jesus. The main audience of Matthew's gospel was Jewish Christians, so this connection to the Hebrew Bible, our Old Testament would have been especially meaningful for them.


 The Greek word *sōtēr* is translated to *savior* and appears twenty-four times in the New Testament. We also find the words *salvation* and *save* many more times, typically with Jesus as the subject. This image is also found in the Hebrew name for Jesus, *Yēšūa'*, which is shortened to *Yēšū*. It means "Yahweh saves," or "May Yahweh save." From what has Jesus' sweeping salvation most delivered you?


 *Immanuel* is the Hebrew spelling in Isaiah, spelled *Emmanuel* in Matthew because it was in Greek. In either language, it means "God with us." Matthew was the only New Testament writer to use the name with its deep meaning. Jesus was not a mere human "savior"—he was God, present and visible in God's world. In what situations do you most need to trust in Jesus as "Emmanuel," God with you?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you didn't stay safely away from this world's brokenness. You were born to be with us, and to save us. Thank you for the hope and comfort your presence can give me. Amen.*

Summit Church offers candlelight Christmas Eve services on Christmas Eve, Eve at 6 as well as Christmas Eve at 1,3, 5, and 7, plus online. www.summitduranog.org/christmas has detailed information. Please join us for a light-filled service honoring Jesus' birth.


Tuesday, December 23 – Read **Matthew 2:1-6**. These Christmas events happened **after** Jesus' birth. While we often sing, "We Three Kings", Matthew used the Greek word *magoi* to identify students of the stars. We often call them Magi. Matthew said these visitors, likely from the area of Persia, which is modern-day Iran, arrived an unspecified amount of time "after Jesus was born." Judea was a minor Roman province. No one expected non-Hebrew scholars to travel far to see, or worship, a "king of the Jews." No one except God, who drew them by a star.


 Roman historians Suetonius and Tacitus described an ancient prophecy that led many to believe a world ruler would rise in Judea. Both Romans said the promised ruler must have been Emperor Vespasian. They missed the true king, as did the priests and legal experts who recited Micah's words about Bethlehem. The visitors from the East did not, hoping that this new King would bring a fresh start and peace to the violent world. How can you keep your mind and heart open to notice where God is at work?

 The Magi may have spent as much as 18 to 24 months following the star. After their visit, Herod ordered the death of every child 2 years old and younger based on the time he learned from the Magi in [Matthew 2:16](#). Did you need to make a lengthy journey in life to find Jesus, or was he "right there" for you as a child? How have you learned to value and worship him?

Prayer: *Lord of the whole world, you didn't limit the message of Jesus' birth to only people with "correct" beliefs. Thank you for love that included everyone and for reaching far beyond any one group to share that joy. Amen.*

Wednesday, December 24 – Read **Matthew 2:9-12**. Herod's evil fueled paranoia led him to kill even family members to defend his hold on the throne. He hid his real intentions about the new king behind courteous, even religious-sounding, words. But the Magi were honest seekers, maybe even inspired by [Isaiah 60:6](#). When they saw the star that had led them on their journey, they "were filled with joy." Matthew said the Magi "entered the house," not the stable, another hint in the text that some time had passed since Jesus' birth in an animal shelter.

 Don't miss that this scene seemed unexpected to the visitors from the East. Matthew wrote that the wealthy foreigners who'd visited Herod's court saw the child with Mary his mother, a poor peasant girl. Falling to their knees, they honored him. What allowed the Persians to value the simplicity of Mary and her child more than the external glitter of Herod's court? What do you learn about the God who valued worship from Zoroastrian visitors who came to see the newborn king because of an invitation in the stars?


 Bethlehem was only five miles south of Jerusalem. King Herod's fear had him locked in his palace, a fortress called the Herodium. It literally towered over Bethlehem ([click here](#) to see the Herodium's remains.) He would have kept a close eye on the main travel routes. It no doubt took effort and planning for the


magi to find “another route” Herod wasn’t watching. When have you needed to choose a physical or emotional “road less traveled” to be true to your values and God’s direction in your life?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, the magi honored you not just with their gifts, but when they paid attention to the dream warning them not to play along with Herod. Help me to honor you both by acts of worship and by avoiding foolish choices against which you warn me. Amen.*

Thursday, December 25 – We pray that God’s peace and joy will fill your Christmas


Day! Read **John 1:1-5**. John started his gospel by deliberately echoing the first words of Genesis: “In the beginning.” The images of “light” and “life” also echoed those “beginning” stories. John meant that in coming to earth, Jesus the creator was creating anew. Talking about “the Word” drew from both Greek and Hebrew thought worlds. Many Greek thinkers used *logos* (“the Word”) to identify the great Idea behind nature. For Hebrews, meanwhile, Genesis 1 said God created by speaking, by “the Word,” in [Psalm 33:6](#).

 Verse 5 reads, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn’t extinguish the light.” That’s not just a theory; it’s physically true. If you light even a small candle in a dark room, the darkness doesn’t extinguish it. Have there been times when it felt as though “darkness” was trying to put out God’s light in your life? What spiritual practices keep you connected to Jesus “the Word” so that his light can keep shining in and through you?

 John’s prologue linked Greek and Hebrew thought. Greek philosophers said, “the Word” (Greek *logos*) was a divine thought that orders the universe. The Hebrew Bible’s first three words were “in the beginning,” and said God spoke everything into being. John chose words and ideas to draw cultures and world views closer, not pitted against each other. Do you believe that continues to be part of the mission of Christ followers, at their best, as they live in Jesus’ power?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you came to earth, not just for some small subset of humanity, but aiming to restore and uplift your entire creation. Help me play my humble part in that vast, saving mission. Amen.*

Friday, December 26 – Read **John 1:6-14**. Scholar N. T. Wright in his commentary *John for Everyone*, concisely expressed the point of John’s powerful claims: “John knows perfectly well he’s making language go beyond what’s normally possible, but it’s Jesus that makes him do it; because verse 14 says that the Word became flesh—that is, became human, became one of us. He became, in fact, the human being we know as Jesus. That’s the theme of this gospel: if you want to know who the true God is, look long and hard at Jesus.”

 Greek thinkers like Plato said the “*logos*” was too pure to enter the corrupt material world. Hebrews usually saw God as so awesome and distant that they feared to even say the divine name. John drew on both those thought worlds, but he boldly wrote, “The Word became flesh.” How can it help you realize how much God values you to believe that he “became flesh,” like us, rather than just wishing you well from afar?



There was tragedy in the story in the words: "his own people didn't welcome him." There still is a bright note in the prologue. After the arrival of the eternal Word, some have accepted the light and become children of God. Into this darkened world, Jesus brought inextinguishable life and light for all who trusted in him, and who trust in him today. When did your spiritual journey start? In what ways has trusting and following Jesus given you a whole new life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for being born, for becoming flesh, so that you could give me the authority and power to be born anew, as a child of God. Thank you for my new life. Amen.

Remember that there is NO IN PERSON SERVICES at Summit December 27 and 28. We have pre-recorded the worship service so you can enjoy it online and our staff and leaders can take a "pause" before the New Year. It will be live on Saturday at 5:30 and Sunday at 10:30 a www.summitdurango.online.church. The service will be available on our website, YouTube page, and app Saturday night and after.

Saturday, December 27 – Read **John 1:15-18**. John's gospel made clear what the first Christians believed about Jesus. The letter to the Hebrews, likely written before John's gospel, began with verses 1-3: "In the past, God spoke through the prophets to our ancestors in many times and many ways. In these final days, though, he spoke to us through a Son. God made his Son the heir of everything and created the world through him. The Son is the light of God's glory and the imprint of God's being. He maintains everything with his powerful message." Scholar William Barclay wrote in his commentary on John, "When John said that no man has ever seen God, everyone in the ancient world would fully agree with him... But John does not stop there; he goes on to make the startling and tremendous statement that Jesus has fully revealed to men what God is like.... Here again the keynote of John's gospel sounds: 'If you want to see what God is like, look at Jesus.'"



In recent decades, some Christians have waged too many hurtful and fruitless arguments over the Bible. Some have said that at times we fling Bible verses at one another like hand grenades! Those "battles" sadly miss the point. The person of Jesus, not a book, was the ultimate revelation of God. Our faith is meant to be based on a relationship with a living God, the Word made flesh in Jesus. How can you deepen your knowledge of what Jesus revealed about God's heart, character and will?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you that your love is a fixed point I can depend on in an ever-changing world. Keep me steady, stable and loving with your love every day. Amen.