



prayer *life!*

Weekly Prayer Focus

December 28 2014

The Orchestrator

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 saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." –Matthew 2:1-2

Providence usually works through natural agencies, and that God did so in this case is made at least very probable by a remarkable discovery in astronomy. –Philip Schaff

One afternoon in the Garden of Eden, God approached the first couple, whose sin had just ruined their entire existence and spoiled His pristine creation. Evil had entered the garden in the form of a snake and deceived the woman into sin, and her husband followed suit. God's words of judgment gave the first hint of Christmas: *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel"* (Genesis 3:15). The seed of the woman would destroy Satan and his curse.

Untold millennia later and 700 years before Jesus' birth, God used the political machinations of cynical King Ahaz to foretell the miracle that would fulfill this ancient promise. Rather than trust the God of Israel, Ahaz secretly negotiated with the Assyrian Empire to insure his protection. Unbeknownst to him, his faithless schemes would bring the empire's ruthless armies to the very gates of Jerusalem, unleashing death and destruction throughout the land.

This the wicked king did, despite God's gracious promise of protection. For reassurance, Isaiah, God's mouthpiece, promised a sign—whatever he'd choose. *"Ask it either in the depth, or in the height above."* With pious hypocrisy, the King turned him down flat. *"Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD."* In an amazing orchestration of history, God used this wicked king's unbelief to predict the miracle that would fulfill His ancient promise about the seed of the woman. *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:11-12). How unfathomable are God's ways!

"In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." True to Benjamin Franklin's wry observation, Rome's first emperor ordered a census of all the earth. It is doubtful that Caesar Augustus had any notion how this effort to organize his empire would affect a young Jewish couple in Nazareth. He certainly felt as command of himself and his choices as he was of Rome. But Someone was pulling his strings.

God had a plan and had made a promise to King David's hometown. *"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days"* (Micah 5:2). *"The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will"* (Proverb 21:1). And mighty Caesar was no exception.

Johannes Kepler's astronomical observations and calculations helped map the solar system and proved the sun's central position. Late in 1603, he saw a stunning heavenly sight. A student of planet Mars, he watched the red orb move into alignment with Jupiter and Saturn, appearing "like the most beautiful and glorious torch ever seen."

Kepler continued observing the phenomenon for months, until a mysterious star moved into this conjunction, burning brightly. After the star faded, the great astronomer calculated the recurrence of this conjunction, concluding that Mars would move into alignment with Jupiter and Saturn every 800 years. Thus, they would have conjoined at just the time the magi of Persia started in search of the Christ Child.

Christmas isn't magical. It's miraculous. It's not the contrivance of elves or fairies. It's the outworking of the carefully laid and deliberately executed plans of the Master and Creator of the universe. At this season, we enjoy a symphony, crafted by the Great Composer, who works all things according to the counsel of His will, and for the good of those who are called according to His purpose. Peace on earth and peace to you. Merry Christmas.

Prayer for Northpoint: Pray that the message of the Gospel will reach the heart of those who attend church only at Christmas. Pray for their salvation.

Prayer for the United States: Ask God to keep Christmas alive in America, to spread the light of Christ in our culture.

Prayer for the World: Bible translators labor in hidden cultures throughout the world to bring God's truth to everyone in their own tongue. Pray for strength, patience, and divine enabling. Pray for an eternal impact on those who read.

Prayer Supporting Ministry:

- *Winter Camps:* Ask God to be present in power at our camps for children and youth. Pray that His truth will establish Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in young lives.

Prayer for the Week

Sunday Church & Ministry: Pray for Carolee Jefferson, Ministry Assistant for Students: May those she works with follow Christ as they see Him in her life.

Monday Home & Family: Pray for the salvation of every family member who needs to know Christ.

Tuesday *School or Job:* Pray for the Lord to make a connection between you & someone you work with that He can use to reveal Himself to them.

Wednesday Neighbors & Community: Pray for The quality and effectiveness of your work, so that it exalts Christ.

Thursday Nation: Pray for God to revive the Church in the United States, filling us with the Holy Spirit, the knowledge of God, & His love through Jesus Christ.

Friday World & Kingdom: Pray for God to transform lives through the ministry of our partner church in Ethiopia.

Saturday Praise for God's Blessings: Return Thanks for God's constant faithfulness, even when things seem hopeless.

Prayer Record

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