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*This Christmas, with all the tragedy
and despair in our world right now...*

Do you need Hope?

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Do you need Hope?



On October 1, 2017, a gunman opened fire on a crowd of concertgoers at the Route 91 Harvest music festival on the Las Vegas Strip, leaving 58 people dead and 546 injured.



What is Hope?

Biblical hope not only desires something good for the future; it expects it to happen. And it not only expects it to happen; it is confident that it will happen.

– Pastor John Piper

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Where does the first Christmas story take place?

Israel in the time of Jesus

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First week...

Hope Expects

Location: Nazareth

Passages: Luke 1:26-35

Matthew 1:18-25

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Last week...

Hope Arrives

Location: Bethlehem

Passage: Luke 2:1-14

Hope Arrives

While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2:6-7

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But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11

What do we need to hear this Christmas?

- Do not be afraid
- Good news for all people
- We can have great joy in the midst of crisis
- The Savior has arrived for you

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This week...

Hope Responds

Location: Bethlehem

Passage: Luke 2:15-20

Matthew 2:1-12

Meet Mary of Nazareth

- *Greek name Maria [Μαρία, Μαριάμ]
- *Hebrew name Miryam [מִרְיָם]; named after the elder sister of Moses and Aaron
- *As a young teenager, she was betrothed (Hebrew Erusin אֵירוּסַיִן) to Joseph
- *She was taught a woman's role in Jewish prayers and blessings, and like all Jewish people she was waiting for the promised Messiah
- *She is described as a “virgin” in Luke 1:27
- *She is called “favored one” of the Lord in Luke 1:28
- *The angel Gabriel said “the Lord is with you” in Luke 1:28

Meet Joseph of Nazareth

*He is betrothed to and later husband of Mary (Matthew 1:18)

*He is called a “righteous man” in Matthew 1:19

*He was by trade a carpenter or craftsman (Matthew 13:55)

*Carpenter = τέκτων tektōn in New Testament Greek

Definition: a worker in wood, a carpenter, joiner, builder; a ship’s carpenter or builder; any craftsman, or stone workman

When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.” Luke 2:15

Do you need Hope?

When you wonder if there really is a Savior? When God shows up and your world changes forever?

Meet the Shepherds

Nearly everyone in ancient Israel was involved in pastoral activity, from the lowly herdsman (cf. Amos 7:14-15) to the master breeder (cf. 2 Kings 3:4). The economic importance of sheep meant that many townspeople also tended flocks on a part-time or full-time basis. In addition to being a major sacrificial animal, sheep provided the ancients with meat, milk, fat, wool, skins, and horns. Sheep become lost easily and are defenseless (Ezek. 34:5-6; Matt. 18:12). The unaggressive behavior of sheep is emphasized in Matt. 7:15: 'Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.' Perhaps most famous are the sheep's submissiveness (Isa. 53:7; Jer. 11:19) and its trust in the shepherd (John 10:3-5). Shepherd's work was often boring but it called for diligence and endurance. The search for pasturage and water sometimes took the herdsman and his flock far from home. Shepherds put up with simple food, harsh weather (cf. Gen. 31:40), and primitive lodging (Song of Sol. 1:8; Isa. 38:12). Routine hardships were accompanied by danger from wild animals (lions, bears, wolves) (1 Sam. 17:34-35; Isa. 31:4; Amos 3:12; Mic. 5:8; John 10:12). Shepherds had to be on guard against thieves (Gen. 31:39; John 10:1, 8, 10). Shepherd's work involved leading the sheep to food and water and returning them to the safety of the fold. The shepherd had to keep alert for strays and count the sheep as they entered their enclosure for the night (Lev. 27:32; Jer. 33:13; Ezek. 20:37). The herdsman's duty was to rescue the lost (Ezek. 34:11-12; Matt. 18:11-14). - Harper's Bible Dictionary

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So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.

Luke 2:16-17

Do you need Hope?

When you remember when God first spoke to you?
When people ask you how you met Jesus?

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And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. Luke 2:18

Do you need Hope?

When people tell you about their connection to Jesus? When you consider God's kindness in calling out to you? When you respond to Hope in Faith?

But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Luke 2:19-20

Do you need Hope?

When pondering God's amazing grace? When you pray that your life causes others to glorify and praise God?

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Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”

Matthew 2:1-2

Do you need Hope?

When you long to truly worship God? When you have been looking for a Savior and finally understand that He is real?

Meet the Magi

The Wise Men, or Magi (from the Greek root meaning ‘magic’) are said to be ‘from the East’, which could mean Arabia, Mesopotamia, or elsewhere. They are portrayed as astrologers, since they are guided by the star, and as Gentiles, since they do not know the scriptural prophecy concerning the location of the Messiah’s birth. Source: Harper’s Bible Dictionary

Matthew 2:2 suggests that these men were astrologers who employed study of the stars for predictions of future events. This activity flourished in Persia and may explain their origin. The description of their gifts suggests that they had come from Arabia. Another suggestion points to Babylon, which had a large community of Jews who could have supplied the mági with information about the anticipated Messiah. Source: Eerdman’s Bible Dictionary

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Byzantine
depiction of
the Three
Magi in a
7th-century
mosaic at
Basilica of
Sant'
Apollinare
Nuovo

Meet King Herod

In 40 BC, the Roman Senate appointed Herod I as king of the Jews. Herod, an Idumean, took Jerusalem in 37 BC and until his death in 4 BC, Herod ruled as king of the Jews.



Herod constructed the magnificently planned and constructed port city of Caesarea Maritima. The crown of his constructions was the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, which he rebuilt on a grandiose scale. The project, begun in 20 BC, was not completed until AD 62, and it is this Temple that Jesus and His disciples knew.

Herod also fortified his realm with a string of impressive wilderness fortresses. Eventually, Herod ordered the execution of his Hasmonean wife, Mariamne, of their two sons, of other members of the Hasmonean family, and of his son Antipater.

JUPITER

The wise men referenced in the Biblical story are accepted to have been top-notch astrologers. In astrology speak, Jupiter is the King planet and around the birth of Jesus, it completed a retrograde loop (backward motion among the stars) near to Regulus in Leo, the King star! The interaction in the sky between these two objects would have been a sign to the astrologers of the birth of a new King.

A COMET

Comets occasionally produce a stunning show in our night sky with the tail of the comet giving an arrow-like appearance. There was one such bright comet in Capricorn in around 5 B.C. Calculations have shown that it would have appeared low in the sky from the area surrounding Jerusalem, with its tail likely pointing almost vertically.

*What
was
the
star?*

CONJUNCTION

One of the more striking naked-eye events in the night sky is an alignment of two or more of the brighter planets. There are a number of conjunctions that might have been interpreted as an event that was pretty significant. Of particular interest might have been a rare conjunction between Jupiter and Saturn.

NOVA

The sighting of a new star, or 'nova', was recorded by Far Eastern astronomers in 4 B.C. in the constellation Aquila. This stellar outburst was visible to the naked eye and would have been visible from Jerusalem.

*What
was
the
star?*

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Matthew 2:3

Do you need Hope?

When the reality of King Jesus causes people to be angry and spiritually troubled? When the truth of Jesus confronts people and forces them to choose?

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Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.' " Matthew 2:4-6

Do you need Hope?

When you learn about God's past promises regarding Messiah? When the Lord makes and keeps promises?

Old Testament Prophecy

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.” Micah 5:2

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Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him."

Matthew 2:7-8

Do you need Hope?

When people lie and pretend about their commitment to Jesus? When people say one thing and live another?

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A masterpiece
of Gentile da
Fabriano

Adoration of
the Magi in
paintings (1423)

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After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. Matthew 2:9-10

Do you need Hope?

When, after hearing about Jesus, you finally meet Jesus? When FAITH becomes SIGHT?

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After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Matthew 2:11

Do you need Hope?

When you bring your best to the Savior? When you wonder if the Lord will be honored by your offerings?

Gifts presented to Jesus by magi

Gold = the most precious of metals, a sign of wealth and nobility; given for Jesus' royalty

Parallel for us: We give Jesus our Resources

Frankincense = costly, beautiful-smelling incense that was used only for the most special of occasions; used at weddings if it could be afforded; used in grain offerings at the Temple; given for Jesus' deity

Parallel for us: We give Jesus our Worship

Myrrh = valuable perfume; mixed with spices, it was used in preparation of bodies for burial; given for Jesus' humanity

Parallel for us: We give Jesus our Eternity

And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way. Matthew 2:12

Do you need Hope?

When your heart is touched by Jesus but your circumstances are still difficult? When the Lord speaks to you about troubles coming in the future?

How do you respond to the baby born at Christmas?

- **Like Herod** – with hostility, hate, wanting nothing of God's way except to attack and destroy it
- **Like chief priests and scribes** – with indifference, paying little attention God or His way; what they know of God they do not accept or obey; at most, He is given lip service
- **Like magi** – with worship; they accept the Lord when He comes to them; they believe, obey, and then worship; their lives are changed forever

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Who has hope this Christmas?

“Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who **hope in the Lord.**”

Psalm 31:24

Do you need Hope?

This Christmas, don't learn about a baby (or a holiday) and go away unchanged.

This Christmas, let us respond to the Savior like the shepherds and magi did... leaving our pasts behind, we can seek Him and bow our hearts to Him.