

***The Case for Christmas***  
**Advent Worship Series - Week 3**  
***God Speaks through Scripture, not Stars?***

**WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES**

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

**Announcements & Offering**

**Call to Worship**

His birth was the well-kept secret of God, whispered among the stars. Only a handful of people even cupped their ears to listen. And they were from Persia, not Palestine. They were Gentiles, uncircumcised and without the promises of God.

It was odd that the revelation of a Jewish Messiah was heard by foreigners, astrologers, of all people. Odd that it wasn't heard by priests or rabbis or members of the Sanhedrin. Odd too, that the messenger was not a prophet but, of all things a star. Not a comet or a meteor shower but a mere star, hung quietly in the night among a million others.

Something about this star captured the attention of these Eastern astrologers. Somehow they knew this sapphire dangling among the constellations was “his” star. Whatever it was, the Spirit of God spoke to them through this hushed revelation and beckoned them to follow.

*(Moments with the Savior, page 41)*

<b>HC#121 – Joyful, Joyful</b>	<b>HC-121</b>	<b>HCD11–T11</b>
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory</b>	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
<b>SB#112 – It was on a starry night</b> <b>HC#180</b>	TB-535 – same HC-280	HCD16-T20
<b>SB#114 – Light of the world</b> <b>HC#146 – Here I am to Worship</b>	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship HC-146	HCD13-T16
<b>SB#107 – Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,</b>	TB-87 – Joy to the World!	D4-T9 (3 vs.)

SB#115 – If I were a star then I would shine, shine, shine	TB-773- Noel	No CD
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## *The Evidence*

### Message – Part 1 – Evidence of the Star

Let's discuss the star. There are all kinds of speculation and study about what that light in the sky was. A lot of Christians would say that they don't need any scientific basis for this. It was a miracle. The Magi thought the star was something God made appear and they just followed it. It was miraculous no matter what, but if through astronomy we can go back in time based on what we now know about the movement of the heavenly bodies and discover that there was something there about that time that these wise men would have seen – what corroboration! The fact that it may have been explainable scientifically does not take away from the fact that it is still miraculous.

A lot of the miracles in the Bible were miraculous by their timing, not by their event. Storms ceasing is not a miracle, but when it happens right after Jesus says, "Peace be still." That's a miracle!

There has been speculation that it was a meteor, but a meteor burns out within seconds, so it wasn't a meteor. Was it a comet? Possibly, but according to a study there were no comets before 11 B.C. Was it a supernova, an exploding star – they have no evidence of that. But they have found that as they go back to the movements of the planets there was a near convergence of the two brightest planets - Venus and Jupiter – and it goes back right about to the time that Jesus was born. (Video – *The Case for Christmas*)

### Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Christ

#### Candle Lighting:

**Leader:** Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (Revelation 1:3 NIV)

**Reader 1** **Prophecy** – I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a **scepter** will rise out of Israel. (Numbers 24:17)

**Reader 2:** **Fulfillment** - After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.” (Matthew 2:1-2)

**Leader:** **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God.**

**Reader 1:** **Prophecy** – The kings of Tarshish and of the isles will bring presents; the

kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts. (Psalm 72:10)

**Reader 2:** **Fulfillment** – Wise men from the East came to Jerusalem...and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him. (Matthew 2:1, 11)

**Leader:** **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophets.** (Matthew 1:22)

[Light the fourth candle]

<b>SB#101 – As with gladness men of old</b>	TB-276 – Dix	HTD11-T3
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#136 – We All Bow Down</b>	HC-136	HCD12-T16
<b>HC#139 – There is a Message</b>	HC-139	HCD12-T19
<b>HC#146 – Here I am to Worship</b>	HC-146	HCD13-T16
<b>HC#169 – Hallelujah</b>	HC-169	HCD15-T19
<b>HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah</b>	HC-187	HCD17-T17
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty</b>	HC-219	HCD20-T19
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	HC-220	HCD20-T20
<b>SB#117 – O come, O come, Immanuel</b>	TB-444 – same	TD11-T8 (3 vs.)
<b>SB#131 – When wise men came seeking for Jesus from far,</b>	TB-507 – Normandy Carol TB-497 – Away in a Manger	HTD11-T6 (3 vs.) HTD6-T3 (3 vs.)
<b>HC#168 – Offering - "Christmas Offering"</b>  (Christmas words on vs. 1)  Over the skies of Bethlehem appeared a star While angels sang to lowly shepherds Three wisemen seeking truth, they traveled from afar Hoping to find the Child from Heaven falling on their knees They bow before the humble Prince of peace  We bring an offering of worship to our King No one on earth deserves the praises that we sing Jesus, may You receive the honor that You're due O Lord, I bring an offering to You  [Song continues with original words]	HC#168	HCD15-T18

**Prayer:**

*[Piano continues to play chorus]*

Lord, I cannot comprehend that you, the creator of the universe, took on flesh and were born of a peasant girl. You, the one who spoke galaxies into existence became a speechless newborn baby. You, the one who gave the stars their light, veiled your own glory and slipped unnoticed into the human race. The miracle of your incarnation is all too unexpected, too mysterious, too holy for me to understand. I can only follow the kings to the manger and bow in astonishment and thanksgiving, glorifying and praising you for all that I have heard and seen. Amen.

*(The NIV Worship Bible, page 1374)*

***How then should we live?***

**Scripture Reading:**

**Leader:** No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

**Reader 2:** As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.

**Reader 1:** That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

**Leader:** **Therefore...keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.**

**Reader 1:** But understand this: if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.

**Leader:** **Therefore...you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**

**Reader 1:** Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

**Reader 2:** But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:36-51)

**Leader:** Therefore....**Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.** (Revelation 1:3 NIV)

**Message – Part 2 - Countdown to His Coming**

<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11–T13
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#120 – In the Manger</b>	HC-120	HCD10-T20
<b>HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for us</b>	HC-127	HCD11-T17
<b>HC#139 – There is a Message</b>	HC-139	HCD12-T19
<b>HC#156 – Enter In</b>	HC-156	HCD14-T16
<b>SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown</b>	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10 –T6 (4 vs.)

**Benediction:**

You are true to your name, Immanuel, God with us. This name proclaimed at your birth was also hailed at your ascension. You are with us always—with us, not against us; with us, not absent from us; with us, not oblivious to us.

And so we go forth in your authority to raise up a spiritual army, to build up your glorious church and to lift up your gracious church and to lift up your magnificent name among the nations. Amen.

*(The NIV Worship Bible, page 1338)*

<b>Vocal Benediction – HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful</b> <b>SB#85 – O come, all ye faithful</b>	HC-140 TB-552 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings</b>	HC-61	HCD5-T11
<b>HC#128 – My Tribute</b>	HC-128	HCD11-T18
<b>HC#141 – All Hail the Power</b>	HC-141	HCD13-T11
<b>HC#149 – In Christ Alone</b>	HC-149	HCD13-T19
<b>HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus</b>	HC-151	HCD14-T11
<b>SB#112 – It was on a starry night</b> <b>HC#180</b>	TB-535 – same HC-280	HCD16-T20
<b>HC#260 – Go, Tell it on the Mountain</b>	HC-260	HCD24-T20

<b>Week #3</b>	
<b>DRAMA</b>	
<b>Star Gazing</b>	
<b>By Martyn Scott Thomas</b>	
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<b>Scripture:</b>	Matthew 2:1-12
<b>Synopsis:</b>	Two people look at the night sky hoping for a sign.
<b>Characters:</b>	<b>Benjamin</b> – an avid star gazer <b>Derek</b> – his friend, also a star gazer
<b>Props/Costumes:</b>	Casual dress.
<b>Setting:</b>	Bare stage. If possible, a large sheet of plywood or other sturdy board could be propped up at an angle for Benjamin and Derek to “lie” on as they gaze up at the sky. This would give the impression that they are lying on the ground while still being visible to the congregation.
<b>Running Time:</b>	3:30 minutes.

*[Benjamin and Derek are standing (or lying) center stage looking up at the stars.]*

**Benjamin:** Didn't I tell you this was a great spot?

**Derek:** Yeah, it's amazing. I've never seen quite so many stars.

**Benjamin:** I know. And nobody else knows about it.

**Derek:** And you do this every night?

**Benjamin:** Well, almost every night. But I haven't missed one in the last four months.

**Derek:** So you must have the whole sky memorized.

**Benjamin:** Just about. But it seems like I find something new every night.

*[They pause for a moment, looking up at the stars.]*

**Derek:** *[breaking the silence]* So, why do you do it?

**Benjamin:** *[surprised]* Do what?

**Derek:** Why do you do this? Why do you lie here every night looking at the stars?

**Benjamin:** It's just a way of reminding me how small I am and how big God is.

**Derek:** Wow. I guess he's pretty big.

**Benjamin:** Yeah. And, I keep looking – hoping – that somehow, God is going to speak through the skies.

**Derek:** That would be pretty cool. So what are you looking for? A shooting star?

**Benjamin:** A shooting star, a comet – something like that. I'll know it when I see it.

**Derek:** I bet it'll be big.

**Benjamin:** And we'll be the first ones to see it.

*[They pause for a moment, looking up at the stars.]*

**Derek:** *[pointing off to the side]* Hey, what's that?

**Benjamin:** *[looking]* I'm not sure. I noticed it a couple of nights ago.

**Derek:** It's pretty bright. Maybe it's a planet.

**Benjamin:** No. It's not in a spot where any planets would be.

**Derek:** Maybe it's a comet.

**Benjamin:** I don't think so. It doesn't seem to move. It's always in the same spot.

**Derek:** Maybe it's your sign.

**Benjamin:** Yeah, right.

**Derek:** Hey, it may not be a shooting star, but it is pretty bright.

**Benjamin:** Yeah, but it's real low on the horizon. If God were going to speak, it would be high in the sky so everyone could see.

**Derek:** I don't know. I think most people could see that. Look how bright it is.

**Benjamin:** But it doesn't move. It's almost like a marker or something.

**Derek:** Maybe God's pointing to something.

**Benjamin:** Like what? A sale at Saul's House of Tents?

**Derek:** Well, what's over that way?

**Benjamin:** I don't know. It's too far south to be Jerusalem. Maybe Bethany or Bethlehem.

**Derek:** Do you want to go check it out?

**Benjamin:** Check what out?

**Derek:** The star. The marker.

**Benjamin:** And what do you expect to find? It'll take you at least a day to walk there.

**Derek:** I don't know. It could be fun. It beats lying around here looking up at the same old stars every night.

**Benjamin:** I thought you said this was cool.

**Derek:** It was – for about five minutes. [*turns or stands to exit*] So what do you say? Are you up for a walk?

**Benjamin:** And miss out on a sign from God. I think I'll pass.

**Derek:** Okay, but when I find out what's there, don't say I didn't invite you to come.

**Benjamin:** All you're going to find is that you've walked a long way for nothing.

**Derek:** Or maybe I'll find that you've been staring at the sky too long to realize when you've actually seen something important.

**Benjamin:** Like what, a sign from God?

**Derek:** Well, I guess there's only one way to find out. [*exits*]

**Benjamin:** [*looking back at the sky*] It does look pretty bright. But there's no way I'm walking all that way to Bethany or Bethlehem or wherever just to miss out on something really special.

[*Blackout*]

*The Case for Christmas*  
*God Speaks through Scripture, not Stars?*  
**Advent Worship Sermon - Week 3**

**Countdown to His Coming**

**Scripture:** Matthew 24:36-51

**Theme:** The time of his coming is unknown. The time is not as important as our preparation and labor until he comes. We need to be working when he comes.

**Introduction:**

It is interesting that at the first coming of Christ the message was given to people from a foreign nation in the form of a star. It was made clear to them, while the religious people did not heed the information they had been given.

In some sense today we have been given the information though the time of his coming is still unknown. We have no idea how long we have before the Lord breaks into our world in power and glory—but we know he is coming! During these few weeks of Advent we have been focusing our attention on the return of Christ to this world. We can be confident that he is coming because we can look back in history and know he came before, as he said he would.

I think there are a couple of responses to the idea of Jesus' return. Some people long for his coming and can hardly wait for him to come. Others want him to wait a little longer. There is an old gospel song that says, "Wait a little longer please, Jesus," because there are so many loved ones who have not yet come to faith. Yet there are others who would like a little warning so they can make the last-minute preparation. If Jesus were to come today, would you be ready? I remember reading a poem about the things that might need to be changed at our house if Jesus should come today. Are there magazines or books to be put away? Would the toys of life need to be set aside and the Bible dusted off to be put on the coffee table?

I am sure, like Herod's response, some world leaders would like to know exactly where to find him in order to put an end to any notion of another world leader.

While we may be confident that he is coming it is hard to keep waiting. I don't know about you, but waiting is not one of my strengths. Do you ever go into the grocery store and try to figure out which line is the better one to get into? How about in the doctor's or dentist's office, do you try to figure out how many of the people who are sitting there are waiting to see the same doctor you want to see? I sometimes hope that they don't have too much wrong with them and their visit will be quick. Certainly our culture wants everything instantly. Waiting in the traffic is another place of difficulty for some people. Then how are you doing waiting for the return of Christ? Is it possible that we are living

in such a way that we hardly give any thought to it?

Advent is a period of time in the year for us to say, “It is not enough to remember that he once came—am I ready for his return?” Over the past two weeks we have looked at the virgins who were waiting in anticipation for the bridegroom, and then the tenants who perhaps thought they could deny that the landowner had any claim on them. “Whoever he sends, we can handle.”

The scripture reading for today reminds us that we do not know when Jesus will return.

*Matthew 24:36—*

*No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*

Matthew indicates that until Jesus returns, we ought to be busy doing the things he has given to us to do.

*Matthew 24:45-46—*

*Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.*

### **What has God given us to do until he returns?**

In general terms, there are some things that God expects of his people today and at this Advent season, God gives yet another reminder to be ready.

**Call to Relationship.** We have looked at our hearts needing to be ready with the oil of the Holy Spirit filling us.

**Call to Produce Fruit in our lives.** God will look for the fruit of the Spirit when he comes.

**Call to Responsibility in the Body of Christ.** We are called to community. We are called to minister to one another and to encourage one another.

### **What are some of the responsibilities that God has placed on his people and church?**

#### **The mark of his people is Love:**

One of the things that is repeated in a variety of ways is the command to love one another. When Jesus was asked by an expert of the law what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus responded, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)

We have talked about the love which brings us into relationship with God, but love is to be the mark on our relationships with other believers as well. John, in recording the words of Jesus says, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” (John 15:12) Jesus repeats this to his followers, “This is my command: Love each other.” (John 15:17)

The relationship in the church will be something new... people who have nothing else in common will find themselves in relationships that the world will find puzzling. Barriers

of cultural norms will be broken by an all-surpassing love that originates in the love of God. Paul, in writing to the early church in Galatia says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

In 1 John 4:19-21, it is said even more clearly,

*We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

**Then the question is: How do we love our neighbor?**

How can we say we love, and let people go hungry and homeless and unclothed?

How can we say we love, and let injustice continue?

How can we say we love, and continue to allow people to be treated in ways we would not allow members of our own family to be treated?

God says they are your family....

Social involvement and concern is a natural outcome of loving God.

**Encourage One Another**

Not only are we to love one another, but we are called upon to build one another up.

1 Thessalonians 5:10,11 says,

*He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

Hebrews 10:25 says,

*Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

1 Thessalonians 5:14 says,

*And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

It is so much easier to see the faults in others than to look for the good and to build them up. How helpful it is for someone to come along and let you know that your efforts are appreciated and that your ministry is not taken for granted.

Look around at all of the things that get done in the church from week to week. How long has it been since you have taken the time to thank those who do many of the behind-the-scenes jobs? Who folds the bulletins? Who makes sure the doors are unlocked? Who changes the light bulbs and sweeps the floor? I am sure you can think of many people who do their jobs from week to week with little thanks, but today can we take the time to say thanks and encourage one another in ministry? We are all in this together.

**Evangelism**

Many of us are afraid of the word evangelism. For some of us we recall experiences of

going door-to-door to talk to people about the salvation God has to offer. For some, you almost begin to shrink in the pews just at the mention of this word. It seems so hard to share our faith. The church is the witness today to the resurrected Christ. For that reason our love for one another is essential.

Nothing is more damaging to the building of the kingdom than for those of us who are in it to talk badly about other members. We need to pray for one another and we need to build one another up and we need to stop gossip among us. The way to stop it is to stop listening. If there is no listening ear, there isn't anything to be said.

We have made evangelism a responsibility of the few who admit that they have the gift....We have reserved it for a couple of special times of the year, or special events, but evangelism is a way of life for the people of God.

Thessalonians records a number of things that the believers were charged to do as they waited for the Lord's return. Paul charges them to live holy lives, to avoid immorality of all kinds and to control their bodies and its desires. They were to live with love for one another and to do their work as pleasing to God.

1 Thessalonians 4:11, 12 is very plain:

*Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.*

Something very similar is said by Peter in 1 Peter 2:12—

*Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

The lifestyle we live ought to cause those around us to see that we are different. 'Different' does not mean 'odd.' Often times Christians are seen as so odd that no one can relate to them. We are not advocating for being odd, but for being Christ-like in all that we do, in our work, in our relationships both in and out of the fellowship of believers. By so doing you will win the respect of the unbelievers. This is a lifestyle-evangelism.

There is a place as well for speaking up and proclaiming the gospel. It may be that some are particularly called to that. But all of us are called to live our faith.

### **Witnesses**

In other words, we are all called to be witnesses wherever we are. The disciples had asked Christ if he was going to establish his kingdom right away. Acts records the conversation.

*Acts 1:6-8—*

*So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power*

*when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

### **Conclusion**

It will be a good thing when the master returns that he finds the servants doing what he left them to do. Perhaps the non-Christians are more expecting his return than those of us who claim to belong to him..

While we may not know the time of his coming we know that in his absence we have a job to do. Love one another, build one another up and witness to him in our lifestyle. “You will witness to me by the purity of your life and by the quality of your daily work.”

When did you last commit the day to the Lord as if it might be the last? There was a song on the radio that was quite popular. It spoke of what would happen if you learned today that you were terminally ill. The singer talks about how he lived with such knowledge and, in essence, he learned to enjoy every day to the full. Then in the song the singer wishes for all who are hearing him that they might experience what it is like to “live like you are dying.”

Perhaps the Church and fellowship of believers would be enlivened if we lived with the realization that Jesus could return at any time. If this were your last day to encourage someone, what would you say to them? If this were your last day to witness to someone, how would you do it? If this were your last day to express love to someone, how would you do that?

If this were your last day would the things you have fretted about this week, or this morning be of any concern? Have you spent enough time with a broken relationship and a lack of love for someone of the fellowship? If Jesus comes today will he find you doing the things we have been left here to do?

Make it right just now...Let's live like this is our last day to set things right.