



## Missed Christmas

Matthew 2:1 NIV

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem

### What Should You Expect of People?

I was substitute teaching in a sixth grade class and one of the students walked past me after recess and I could tell she was quite upset. In fact, nearly everyone in the class noticed it. I pulled her aside and asked what was wrong. At first, she wouldn't say, but then a tear or two trickled down her cheek and she told me what happened. She was playing in a four-square game and some of the kids told her she had gotten out. She told them she wasn't, and they made fun of her and yelled for her to leave the square and go to the end of the line. Humiliated and feeling wronged, she just quit the game and waited for recess to end. I didn't have any wise counsel for the child, now suggestions. Because I was not there, I could not even be certain her side of the story was accurate or not. What I did know was that the student was a bit heart-broken and I had no real strategy for consoling her.

It of course makes no sense for children to get upset while playing a game intended to be fun but there are many times when what is done isn't reasonable. The problem we face is that we do not live in a reasonable world. We see examples of this time and again. My son was recently in a car accident and his car was totaled when a car and a pickup truck collided on the freeway and the truck spun out and hit my son's car, sending his car into a guard rail. Now, the insurance companies for both drivers are refusing to pay for the damages to my son's car because each driver claims the other was at fault. This of course is not reasonable because now lawyers will have to be paid to help settle this. Elvis Presley was well-known for taking a gun and blasting TV sets when he didn't like the show he was watching. The shoe company Puma was formed because the two brothers who created the Adidas company had a violent falling out and one brother, Rudolf, left Adidas and formed Puma. For twenty-seven years, the two brothers battled over market share and did not talk to each other the rest of their lives. This is not reasonable. The cofounding brothers of Kellogg cereals became so angry with each other that they sued each other for more than a decade and did not talk to each other for thirty-three years. The world is not reasonable and much of what happens in your home and mine isn't either. We do things that don't make sense even though we know better.

When the shepherds Christmas Eve saw the angels up in the sky singing praise to God, they immediately, as soon as the angels left them, ran off to follow the instruction to go find the newborn baby Jesus lying in a manger. Like me and you would have been, they were amazed at the sight of the prophesied Messiah born in their town and it catapulted them to action. **When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.** (Luke 2:17-18 NIV) It is most interesting in this account what is not said here. No mention is made of anyone else going to see Jesus. There was no parade of worshippers heading down to

the stable to see the King of Kings. Everyone that heard the shepherds' story was amazed, but it does not seem that anyone followed the example of the shepherds and went to see the baby "lying in a manger". It was not that big of a deal for them to leave their homes, quit making dinner, stop doing their chores to make it out to the place where Jesus and Mary and Joseph rested.

Now the other Gospel writer who talks about the baby Jesus, Matthew, also makes it clear that no one made any sort of fuss about seeing the Lord Jesus. In fact, it seems that the birth of Jesus went completely unnoticed by the world at large. When the Magi from the east came to see the King of the Jews because they had been led to Israel by the great star, no one in Jerusalem, which is only a few miles from Bethlehem, knew anything about the miracle of Jesus. King Herod, who was paranoid about any threat to his rule immediately became alarmed when the Magi came to him wondering where the newborn King of the Jews was to be found. **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." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.** (Matthew 2:1-3 NIV)

Herod quickly called for the Bible scholars of Jerusalem to come and tell him what the Scriptures had to say about the birth of the Messiah. **"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."** (Matthew 2:5-6 NIV) What is astounding about this record of the birth of Jesus and the events surrounding it is that even after Herod and all those in court found out what the Bible said was the location of where the Messiah would be born, not one of them went themselves to see Him. Not a single scholar bothered to hike down with the Magi and go see what might have happened. Despite the star, despite the account of the shepherds, despite the coming of the Magi, not a solitary soul explored the possibility that the long awaited and anticipated Messiah was actually in their midst.

We have expectations of others and set standards that we think they should reach and they all too often fail us. They don't love us like we think they ought, they aren't honest with us, they don't work very hard or put the effort into their endeavors we hoped they would. Friends and family members do mean things, are selfish and get easily offended, they aren't faithful, they sin in ugly ways and embarrass us. I have good Christian friends who are sad because of what their children are doing. Some have cried when they told me about the awful choices their sons and daughters are making. The writer of Ecclesiastes wrote, **If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things;** (Ecclesiastes 5:8 NIV) We should never be surprised when someone we love falls into an immoral lifestyle, a politician lies to us or a close friend stops talking to us. This is a broken world and every person we know is corrupted by sin and damaged by it. Christian people have old habits of sinning that have not yet been turned around and many are emotionally and psychologically damaged by sin and its destructive force. Should anything evil in this world surprise us?

Each of us need Christ to save us. We need His perfect life worked into us so that we can be thoroughly transformed and made Christian. When salvation is typically described, it almost always is spoken of as getting to heaven. Salvation is much more than that. It is Christ becoming a part of you and working out of you all the sin and making you perfect in every way. That is why all people on this planet need Christ as Savior. Sin cannot be removed from them any other way.