

Visions and Revelations

Message 6: The Wise Men and the Star (Part 1)

Note: This is a lightly edited transcript meant to aid saints in personal and small group fellowship and pursuing.

Dear brothers and sisters, I am very thankful to the Lord for a gathering like this. This is the sixth message in this series for the church life of the Church in Cleveland or of wherever you are. Remember, this message is not just a message for you to hear, to receive some life, to get some life supply, to give you some truth to enjoy, or to give you a good time. No. This message is really for the church life. For the Church in Cleveland, every week, we have this short message, about thirty or forty minutes long. In this message, we have profound truth, we have clear utterance, we have the nourishing of life, we enjoy something of Christ. But remember, it is not just a message for us to listen to, then as a process we go through it and wait for another week. No. This is a fellowship for the whole church. While you are watching it, whether with brothers together or by yourself at another time, remember that this is a church gathering together, listening to the message, and then having fellowship in teams. More than that, in the coming six days, some brothers will prepare supplemental material for you to get into every day to study.

So eventually, this series will last about four months, and will include about fifteen messages. After that, I hope everything is clear and we can come together again. When the church can gather together again, we will stop this series. I think we will be able to finish. But anyways, this is part of the church life. So brother, please, remember while you are listening to it that there are hundreds of saints listening to this message with you in a church gathering, even though we do not see one another. So it is not a message for you to pursue just to gain extra knowledge or to be a little richer spiritually. This is a sharing for the church life in the church in Cleveland or the church where you are in. This is marvelous.

So brothers, let's continue. Now, we have covered five messages so far. Basically, we have stressed a change, a change of dispensation. Remember, we said it was a change from Law to life. From God outward to God inward. From outward services to a real life flow on the inside, together with many other Christian brothers. We are coming out of the Old Testament and are coming into the New Testament.

Let me ask you, what is the biggest difference between the Old and the New Testaments? You may say it is very different. The Old Testament is "outside," the New Testament is "inside." This is true. The Old Testament gives Law, the New Testament is of Christ. This is true. The Old Testament stresses behavior, the New Testament is of life. This is also true. And there is another thing we should be very clear about. In the Old Testament, God had a chosen people. This

chosen people were the Israelites. God cared for the Israelites. He was with the Israelites. God stood with them and rebuked them, encouraged them, uplifted them, and tried to help them to be the testimony of God. But eventually, remember, the Lord Jesus came to the fig tree and tried to find something on it (Mark 11:12–14). The fig tree represented the Jewish religion of the Old Testament Israelites. The Lord came to the fig tree and tried to find something to eat, but there was nothing! So the Lord declared, “You will have no more fruit!” and that tree withered. What does this mean? This means God says, “I tried. I have tried 1500 years with Moses, such a great servant. With the Law, I told you who I am. With the tabernacle, with the festivals, with the offerings, with the priesthood, with all these things...”

However, all of this was focused on one race. This was actually not very much God’s desire. Seemingly, God wanted to gain one group of people—the Israelites—hoping that through them, through these Israelites, God could gain something that magnifies Himself. God seemingly failed. So when God said, “I’m going to move from the Old Testament to the New Testament, from Law to grace, from commandments to life,” I tell you that the *biggest* change with all of these was, “I am no longer for the Jews alone. I am going to be for all the races, all the nations, and all the people. All educated, all uneducated, whether high or low, skin colors make no difference; I am for everyone on this earth!” Oh, this was a big change. It was way beyond the understanding of the Jews. But consider this carefully—when the Lord resurrected and went to His disciples, He should have said, “Grace be to you, don’t be sad, depressed, or grieved. Look at Me, I’m resurrected! I’m with you now! You have me all the time.” No. The Lord quickly said, “It’s not you. It’s not for you. It’s not your need. It’s My need. It’s not what you want, it’s what I want. You disciples feel so sorrowful because I died. But don’t you see I’m resurrected? In My resurrection, let Me tell you, *go ye therefore!* Go out! Don’t stay in Jerusalem! Don’t stay with just the Jews! Go ye therefore and disciple all the nations! Go ye therefore and disciple all the nations!”

You know, brothers, in resurrection Christ began to show what is really in His heart: “My heart is not for one race, not for one group of people. My heart is for the whole earth.” More than that, when the believers came together in Jerusalem after the resurrection of Christ, He was with them appearing and disappearing for forty days. At the end, the Lord declared to them, “The Spirit will be upon you. You shall have strength. You shall have power.” Our question is, “Have power to do what? So I can overcome my sickness? Will the virus not get me because of that power? Power to do miraculous things? Power to be a healer? Power to raise people from the dead?” No! He said “Have power.” What kind of power? To go from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and all the way to the uttermost part of the earth. Oh, what is God’s heart? Now, you see the big change. The big change from the Jewish religion to a living God, operating mightily with one desire—that He can be the Savior not for one race alone, not for one class alone, not for one age alone, not for one gender alone, not for one particular situation alone, but the Savior of the *whole globe*. Everyone on this earth needs to hear the gospel, needs salvation.

If you somewhat have this in view, you should be impressed and thankful that the Lord showed us five visions. First, Joseph. Then, Zechariah. Then, Mary. Then, the shepherds. Finally, the wise men. Do you realize that in every vision, God said something to tell them, “No, not the Jew alone, but the whole earth.” This is even though people would surely interpret God’s words as “for me.” For example, He told Joseph, “You shall name Him Jesus, He shall save His people from their sins.” To Joseph, wouldn’t “His people” mean the Jews? Today, we understand that “His people” means all believers from around the earth. Everyone is “His people.” He desires to save the whole earth! More than that, Zechariah was such a marvelous priest and went through a marvelous appearance; at the end of his testimony, he said “He shall give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.” Let me ask you, was this to Jews alone? Of course not. We Gentiles were not only two thousand years ago sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, we still are two thousand years later! The light comes, the morning light, daylight shining to those who are in darkness. What does this mean? It means God is not a God of the Jews alone. God is a God of the whole earth. Then, Mary was very simple. She was a simple, pure, lovely young woman to be honored. What did she hear? She heard that “He will fill those who are needy, hungry, with good things.” What are these good things? They are spiritual and physical things. Yet this is not the Jew alone, but the whole earth.

Do we see this? To Joseph, “whole earth.” To Zechariah, “whole earth.” To Mary, “whole earth.” Eventually, God had a declaration to the shepherds: “On earth, peace be with those with whom He is pleased.” Who is this? Who are such men? Brothers, you know clearly it would not just be the Jews. It refers to us *all*.

Do we see that these five visions were bringing in the change of dispensation? When the dispensation was changing, what was mainly expressed was God’s desire fully shining out at that time. This is why, in the fifth vision, we have the wise men. These are Gentiles. Joseph, Zechariah, Mary, even the shepherds—all were Jews. But the last vision shown belonged to Gentiles. Oh, this is very interesting. Gentiles.

Brother, who are these wise men? You know, it is very hard to have a word that portrays these men. Many English translations say “wise men.” The Greek word could indicate that they studied astronomy. They were those who saw things. What else? The Chinese translation is, “highly educated, fully equipped.” When they looked up, they saw things in the sky. As they lived on this earth, they saw the things of this earth. Those men were well equipped with the riches of human life, the riches of human knowledge, the riches of profound knowledge related to the existence of the universe and the existence of man. But I am happy, they were also pursuers. They were not professors. Professors in a university can teach a certain class, using the same book and teaching the same material for thirty years. They were not this way. They were profound people, so rich in knowledge, so rich in understanding, man of wisdom, and as men of

wisdom they pursued what was real in life. They were willing to pay a price to gain what was the top.

Then, do you know what happened? As they were studying the skies, they suddenly found a star had appeared that had not been there before! That star was shining! They said, “Oh, that star! That star!” Where was it? They were “from the east,” so the star was shining to the west of them. Toward the other side of the earth, there was a big star shining, a star that had never been there before. For some reason, they studied it. As they watched the skies, they found out that star appeared in the morning, before day came, a star that had never been there before. They said, “Oh, that star! That star must be something related to God!”

Oh, did you realize the Gentiles understood incarnation possibly much more than many of the Jews? Just by seeing that star, they saw what John later testified as “the Word became flesh.” When did that star appear? It appeared when the Lord Jesus became a man. When He became a man, that star appeared and shone. With the appearing of that star, they realized, “Wow, something great has happened in the universe! Listen, there is a new star that had never been there before! Now, it showed up!” They understood that, just as the Bible shows, stars indicate people.

In creation, God repaired the light bearers—the sun to govern the day and the moon to govern the night. Then, the verse adds that He also made the stars. What does this mean? Christ is the sun. The church is the moon. Christ is ever shining, while the church is reflecting the light of Christ at night. How does this become reality? The reality comes from many stars, which represent men. Remember? When God promised Abraham he would have descendants, God told him to look at the stars. “Your descendants will be as the stars.”

So eventually, we would be very surprised, a particular star came that was not there before. The wise men studied the stars, understood the stars, they knew so much, they were rich in that knowledge, but they would say, “Wow, something happened!” Something had happened in the western part of the sky from where they were at. There was a star that had never been there before. This star was shining. This star was glowing. This star came into being when the night was about gone, when the day was about to come. Something great had happened.

This was the wise men. They were not astronomers saying, “Oh, we study stars. There is this side and that side...” No, no, they said, “This star means something related to the universe! In this universe, on this earth, something great has happened! God has to have been related to this! We must find out!”

With their knowledge, they understood that there was one religion on earth that knew God, had God, and God was with them. All religions talk about “god.” Brother, Buddhists talk about god,

but they do not have God. Out of all the religions at that time, no matter where you were, only one had the true God, that was the Jewish religion. Two thousand years ago, they had God. They had God's speaking, they had God walking amongst them, they had God's doing amongst them. These wise men knew this. So when they saw the star, they realized, "God is coming, God is doing something. A man must have been born to be King of the Jews! Now, let's go see the King!" This shows the specialties of these wise men.

First, they're deep in philosophy and full of wisdom. They were very wise. Second, they were searching intensely for the purpose of human existence. They were not "teachers." Brothers, I'm sorry to say, they were not even "message givers." They were real seekers, seeking after the reality of human existence, seeking after the reality of the universe's existence. More than that, third, they had a profound pursuing of the meaning of the universe. They didn't just see something. They paid a price. They wanted to pay a price to get the reality. This is why they were really wise men. So they knew that at that time, the whole earth had only one religion with God, Judaism. So they were willing to pay whatever the price was in order to gain the truth. "Now, I see a star! I'd like to pay a price. Let's go!"

I tell you, if you are that well-educated, if you are that profound of a person, you must not be very young. You must have spent many years in knowledge, in pursuing knowledge, in pursuing the riches, even I would say, in the philosophy of human existence. Now, at their age, they may have been older, some of them would say, "Let's go." I think their group could be bigger. But in this big group, a few of them (we don't know how many, right?) would say, "Let's go. Let's see the star. Let's find out the star. Let's do something with the star." This is why they began their long journey from the East. We don't know what country they were from, but from wherever they were, the star was in the West. So they went all the way to where it should be. They went to Jerusalem, because they knew the only religion with God was Judaism, and they knew God was in Jerusalem. If the star was related to God's work, to what God was doing, and He was in Jerusalem, their feeling was, "Let's go to Jerusalem!" So, they went.

It's interesting, after so much suffering, they got there. And their question was very pure. They didn't care about politics. They didn't even care about religion. Their only care was for the facts. They asked, "The One who was born to be King of the Jews, where is He? We saw a star and we came all the way (perhaps close to a two-year walk). Now, tell us, where is He?" Do you know what happened? The Bible is very interesting. All the Jews were bothered. Weren't they waiting for Messiah? I don't know why they were so bothered! Of course, Herod was the one bothered the most: "What are you talking about? One is going to be born King of the Jews? That means I will be overthrown! I'm the ruler!" So he went to religion. He got the priests, he got the scribes, and he asked them where the King of Jews was to be born. Oh, listen to these terrible preachers, these terrible Bible scholars. Listen to these scribes. They said, "Oh, where? Oh, yeah, it's very

clear. It's in the city of Bethlehem. I can show you the verse. 'You, Bethlehem...are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler.'

Brothers, what is your feeling?

I am happy, with my poor disposition, that I am in this age. If I was in *that* age, I would have grabbed the scribes and shaken them real hard. "Wake up you stupid! You know all of this, but where are you actually?! You know the truth, you know the Bible, you studied it, you spent a lot of time in the truth, you read this book and that book, you pursued a lot, but eventually, where are you? What really counts? WHERE ARE YOU?" Listen to them! Doesn't it make you so sad? "Yeah yeah, I know...in Bethlehem!" Then you know, a further interesting thing, the wise men were sent to find Him and worship Him. This was from Herod. The scribes would say, "You go, you find Him, we will reconsider what we should do. Why? Because we are scribes, we are priests, we have our place in religion. If the Christ really comes, what should we do in religion?"

Well, eventually, it is surprising, even so marvelous, the star came down for the wise men. We don't know how many times the star had appeared to them, maybe every morning for two years, yet it was always high in the sky, far away, remote, leading them to Jerusalem. They knew that only the Jewish religion had God, that all the others were only superstitious religions. Now, when they found that place, they said, "Ok, we are going to Bethlehem." As they were on their way, the star descended to a place. The Bible says it "went ahead of them" (Matt. 2:9).

Brothers, if the star was so high in the heavenlies, how could it lead them to Bethlehem? How could it lead them to the specific house? It must have come lower and lower in their sight. But what does that mean? It means don't despise the vision that you see. If you are faithful in the vision you see, the vision will become more and more intimate. The vision will become close; it will become near to you. The vision can lead you; it can even become the reality of your footsteps. You're able to go step by step because of that vision. Faithfulness to a vision is not a small thing. Most people see a vision, they have a vision, but for some reason, "Oh, I saw something, hallelujah! Christ and the Church!" and then it ends right there. No. These wise men saw a vision and they paid a price for this vision, so this high and heavenly vision came closer and closer to them. Eventually, it was to a point they could see the star move, almost walk, right in front of them, and they could walk by following it. Until what? until the star stayed over a certain house.

Brothers, I like this part. I have seen so many brothers have visions. I have seen so few brothers want to pay a price to have the reality of those visions. That is why they can always declare a vision, but it is heavenly, far away. But when some brothers declare a vision, it feels so nearby. They can declare a vision by saying, "I know it, I see it, I'm with it, I enjoyed it, it is with me, it

leads me, it carries me, it takes me, my life is mingled with the visions I have.” What a marvelous thing is this!

Then, they saw the child. You know, the Bible doesn’t call Him a baby here. It calls Him a little child. This means He may have been old enough to be coming out of baby age; He may even be about two years old at this time. When they saw the child, they offered three things. The first gift offered was gold, which represents God Himself. So they are declaring with this gift, “Little child, You are the gold. Who are You? You are God-man. Who are You? you are God.” Gold typifies God Himself. So, “You are just God Himself.” Then more than that their gifts said, “Let me tell You, Your whole life will be so expensive. You have to pay a big price. You have to experience a lot of things to accomplish what the gold desires. So we also offer you myrrh, and we offer you frankincense.” Myrrh means His death, frankincense means His resurrection.

If you come to the outline, it is very simple. Here, it says they offered gold—Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Son of God. Jesus, Son of God. He is the first God-man, the first man of God. Marvelous, right? The offering of gold says, “Here, we see a boy, but do you know who this boy is? This boy is God! God Himself!” He was the first God-man. Outwardly, He was just a man, just a boy. But in reality, in Him there is God. He is gold. Then, the gifts testify, “This boy is going to grow. He will have a life with much more difficulty, yet much more glory, than anyone could expect.” He is going to go through the experience of myrrh and the experience of frankincense. These are spices, spices that have to go through a lot of process to be useful. They are not just beautiful; they don’t just grow a certain way. No, they have to go through a lot of processes to eventually become a kind of spice that can give an odor, a fragrance, for you to enjoy. So the wise men said, “Little boy, we see You, we worship You. Why? Because You are gold. You are a God-man. You are man, but with the golden life, a golden constitution. More than that, let us say, let us testify, You will have a hard life. Your life is a life of myrrh.” Today, we understand that eventually, Jesus died on the cross. But more than that, “You are also frankincense. You will not just have a hard life, but You will also have a glorious outpouring, a spreading, a fragrance to all the human race.” Eventually, He could declare, “Whosoever believe in Me shall be saved!”

What a myrrh! What a frankincense! But do you realize who were the first to declare such a thing? The Gentiles. The Gentiles! The Gentile wise men. They saw something and they pursued. The Jews didn’t. But eventually, what happened? The wise men went back through another route.

Herod said, “What? They went away? So who is that boy?” “We don’t know.” “Then let’s kill them all.”

Before Herod went to kill all the young boys, Joseph was inspired, led, by the angel's speaking all the way down to Egypt with his family. You know, brothers, this is a principle. All the boys were killed. I don't understand where the priests were. I don't understand where the scribes were. Just like today, I see so many Christians spoiled just by going to a Lord's Day morning meeting, seeking friends, having a Christian society, having a Christian social life. They don't realize how damaged they are, how hurt they are. They are not brought to the love of Christ, having the person of Christ as their enjoyment, as their substance, as their reality, as the meaning of their existence. On the contrary, they are just like the scribes. "We know what's going to happen." So many Christians... "That day, everything will be fine." Brother, be careful. That day, everything *will* be fine, but not according to what *you* think,

Brothers, you have to realize, He went down. The Lord Jesus went down to Egypt, persecuted by politics and religion. That even became a pattern. Remember how Jesus was crucified? Religion and politics. Remember, when the church was raised up, who killed James, John's brother? Religion and politics. Remember, eventually the gospel was preached out by the faithfulness of the apostles, but who persecuted them? Again, politics and religion joined together. Brothers, be very careful. Remember, eventually the apostle Paul said, "I will go to the Gentiles." He was so persecuted, the principle of going to Egypt came back again. Egypt was the Gentiles. Joseph said, "If Herod wants to kill us all, let's go to the Gentiles." The apostle Paul said, "If you Jews will not receive me, if you persecute me, let me go to the Gentiles."

Brothers, be very careful. We love the Lord, but we live in this world. Every time religion becomes overly exalted—qualified to talk with politics and politics has to honor religion—it attaches, affiliates, itself to politics. That's when the church, that's when Christians, are going to pay a big price and suffer a lot.

We need the Lord's mercy. Brothers, this short story tells you that God says, "No, I am not just for the Jews. I am for the whole earth. You know who the first ones to honor Me as God are? Gentiles. Who was the first to tell everyone I would die? Gentiles. Who were the first to tell Me there is resurrection? Gentiles. Who were the first ones to see "the Word became flesh," as that star? Gentiles." What does this mean? This means God is declaring to *all* of us, "I am not for Chinese. I am not for Americans. I am not for white. I am not for black. I am for *all*, the *whole globe* is for My salvation! I am waiting to save *everyone*." Whosoever believes in Jesus, whosoever calls on the name of the Lord, shall be saved! Hallelujah!

Today, we say, "Lord, we are thankful. We hope we are part of the wise men. We are not as equipped as them, but at least we want to pay the price they paid, until your testimony becomes real." May the Lord be merciful and be with us. We are thankful to Him. Amen, I stop here.