



THE GREATEST STORY OF ALL TIME

by Suzanne D. Williams

*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and **are come to worship him.** (Matthew 2:1-2)*

God sent a group of Gentile astronomers on a seven-month journey to testify of the birth of the Jewish Messiah. An unknown child, divinely conceived in an unwed girl, whose fiancé almost divorced her.

Amazing. Yet the story is greater than that.

These men were philosophers, historians say possible Medes (from Persia), living in a kingdom that had many false gods. Practicing magicians. Followers of astrology. But evidently well-read. They knew the prophecies, the Messiah is coming ... to a people that aren't yours, in a country you don't live in.

You'll know it when you see the star.

Not just any star. Not an aligning of the planets or some every-now-and-then comet that

coincidentally showed up on that date. Uh uh. The Scripture says the star **led** them. A supernatural evidence of the greatest event in the history of mankind presented in a manner only men who studied the sky would understand.

Phenomenal. Incredible. Yet the story is still greater.

*When they saw the star, **they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.** (Matthew 2:10)*

They came to worship. Not admire. Not coo-over. Not capture, kidnap, or destroy like Herod. They came to **worship**. Men from a place Mary and Joseph had never been, read words written hundreds of years before they lived, and trusted an unusual light to show them how to get there so they could worship.

With rejoicing. Do you get that? These men rejoiced to see a Savior, a deliverer, who wasn't theirs. With **exceedingly great joy**. They weren't just happy. They were "vehemently" happy. (G4970 Strong's Exhaustive Concordance)

Over a boy without a crown, without an army. Who had no followers. He'd done no miracles, at that point. Oh, a handful of shepherds had listened to a choir of angels sing over him, or so the story circulated. Clearly not loud-enough that Herod had paid it any mind. Until these "wise men" showed up, he had no idea anything miraculous had

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happened at all.

And that's a great part of the story.

God brought salvation to the earth right underneath the enemy's noses. They couldn't stop it, weren't aware of it. They didn't know what he looked like, who his parents were, just that he was Jewish and in Bethlehem. And they had to be told that by men from somewhere else.



Men who listened to their hearts and went home another way, enabling Joseph and Mary to escape. (Mt 2:12)

This is no small story—Oh, yeah, these wise men showed up.

No way. This wasn't a Sunday afternoon drive a few towns over to see the latest thing. This wasn't gazing, ho-hum, at some nice Jewish family because it seemed like the stars were brighter over them tonight.

Do you think the God who parted the Red Sea, enabling men to walk through on dry land, a God who later destroyed an entire nation to give God's chosen people a country would treat the birth of Christ as a secondhand event?

This was the greatest night in history, celebrated by those who listened and obeyed, so that the greatest act of all time could happen thirty-three years later, and give to "whosoever believes" the greatest love possible.

Extraordinary.

God Waits For Me

by Pamela Swinson Jenkins

I have been drawn to the book of Isaiah a lot recently in my devotions. This morning found me in Chapter 30, reading about how God will provide direction - Right where I need to be as I have felt, of late, like a compass that has lost its true north. In the middle of the chapter, I was struck by verse 18: "Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you...."

As I am reading, seeking guidance on waiting for God's direction in my life, He reminds me that He is waiting for ME to be still, so that He may shower me with His graciousness.

Ya'll, that just stopped me in my tracks for a few minutes.

I know about the graciousness and Grace of God - I couldn't survive a day without it. It sustains me on a moment-by-moment basis. And I know His Grace is freely given. But this reminder, that He waits for me for the sole purpose of bestowing His

graciousness - that has caused a hitch in my breath and the burning of tears to my eyes this morning.

As I have been praying for God's direction, verse 21 has been a lifeline for me: "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left."

Gloria Gaither wrote of that verse: "When I am totally unable to handle a situation and am so bewildered by it that I don't even know how to pray, my prayer becomes an opening up to the Spirit of God. Waiting is never an easy thing to do, but in these situations, waiting is all there is to do. In time there comes a strong impression, stronger than an audible voice, saying "This is what you must do." With that nudge of illumination comes a courage beyond any human bravery and an empowering to do what God is showing me to do."

Today, I wait for that impression and nudge, reminded that God is waiting with me and that He has already planned what marvelous things He will pour into my life when He believes the time is right.