



Christmas 2021

God became flesh, one of us, Immanuel!



Order of Worship

- Welcome, *Glory in the Darkest Place*
- Opening Prayer
- Reading #1: Isaiah 9:1-2
 - **89, Silent Night** (German, Russian, Korean then join in for V1 in English)
- Reading #2: Isaiah, 9:6-7
- Reading #3: The Annunciation, Luke 1: 26-35
 - **99, Angels we have Heard on High**
- Reading #4: Matthew 1:18-25
- Reading #5: Luke 2:1-7
 - **116, God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen**
- Reading #6: Galatians 4:4-7
 - **Who would've dreamed?**
- Reading #7: Luke 2:8-20
 - **125, While Shepherds Watched their Flocks**
- Reading #8, Micah 5:2
- Reading #9, Matthew 2:1-12
 - **140, We Three Kings**
- Message from the Word
 - **132, Go, Tell it on the Mountain!** (1,2,3)

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between His feet,
Until Shilo comes, and to Him shall be the
Obedience of the Peoples.
Genesis 49:10



This Christmas, take a moment to give someone the gift of the Christmas story. Tell them of the love of God in the giving of the Son of God, of the fulfillment of prophesy, tell the Good News of your redemption from sin and from condemnation by a holy God. Tell them, that we receive salvation as a free gift, by grace through faith in Christ.

There are some 630 years between the prophesy of Nahum, announcing the imminent judgment and collapse of Nineveh and the Assyrian empire, and the birth of our Savior, Jesus, being born of Mary in Bethlehem. Six long centuries, and many precipitous events, disasters and amazing recoveries for the nation of Israel. It seems a strange thing to try to connect the ominous prophesy of Nahum to the joy of Christmas, but that's because we look back through 2,000 years of Christian history and from a different culture and even from a different continent. If you were a devout and godly Jew living in Judah in the time of king Herod, the connection would have been more obvious. So today, lets try to put on our Judean thinking caps and trace at least one part of the path of God's wonderful hand guiding the stream of events and people over those six centuries to the first Christmas.

Nahum wrote near the peak of Assyrian Nineveh's power, around 630BC. As we know from our last few weeks in the book of Nahum, God orchestrated the fulfillment of Nahum's prophesy just a few short decades later, in 612BC, when the Medes and Babylonians, under Babylonian king Nabopolassar destroyed Nineveh and ended the wicked Assyrian empire. Nabopolassar ruled from 626 to 605BC, and was followed by the mighty Nebuchadnezzar who ascended the Babylonian throne in 605.

By this time good king Hezekiah had passed from the scene, the people of Judah had turned again from the Lord, which brings us to the sad series of judgments of Judah in **2 Chronicles 36:5-21**. Nebuchadnezzar's long-suffering with a rebellious Judah came to an end with his destruction of Jerusalem in 597. It is here that four young men, including the prophet Daniel enter our story. They were young noblemen carted off in captivity from Judah to the great city of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. **Daniel 1:1-7**. And it is here that we find that, despite the overall debauchery and evil in Judah, God had preserved for Himself a remnant of faithful people. They act as a reservoir of faith for truth, and a witness for the Living God to pagan Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans/Babylonians. Daniel chapters 1-4 are the record of that. Daniel rises to the top of government and serves for decades, under no less than 5 different Babylonian kings. The last, Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall, has his fall and the end of the Babylonian empire to the Persians in 539BC recorded by Daniel in chapter 5. Daniel is a man of such integrity, and is so indispensable, that his court service endures into the Persian empire under Cyrus the Great!

There is an additional, key assignment that impacts the Christmas story, recorded in **Daniel 2:48**.

While Daniel prophesied he foresaw the coming of the Messiah to Israel, along with God's timetable for the nation of Israel! **Daniel 9:24-27** Daniel also predicted to the week when Jesus would die! This occurred April 3rd, 33AD.

In the intervening centuries, Israel and Judah were taken over by Alexander the Great and later ruled by the Greeks, who brought the Greek language what would develop into common, Koine Greek. They were replaced by the Romans in 63BC. Herod the Idumean (Edomite) ruled in Jerusalem, under Roman jurisdiction, from 37BC-4BC. He died shortly after Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Let's return now to the topic of the wise men (*heb, Chakkim, Gk, Magi*).

Matthew 2:1-12. By this time (4BC) the Persians had morphed into the mighty Parthian empire. The Magi were the council of wise men there who established and deposed kings. Think of what terror it brought to Jerusalem, Herod and everyone in Judea when this council of king-makers arrived and asked, "Where is he who is BORN (not pretending) to be King of the Jews?"