

**Matthew in Biblical Perspective:
A Biography of Jesus of Nazareth the Christ –
Seeing Jesus: Wise Men And Wisdom From Above**

Matthew 2:1-12

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December 21, 2008 – Morning Sermon

Take your Bibles and open them to Matthew 2. We are going to look at several Scriptures in this study and walk through Matthew 2. I would like to invite you back this evening. We purposely use this evening's service to slow down. I know the challenge of this Christmas season keeps increasing the pace and we love to take the 4th Sunday night of Advent which is the service of Scripture Lessons and Carols where we reflect on God's Word, sing His glorious praise, spend time in prayer and reflection and focus as we anticipate Christmas Day in the celebration of the birth of our Savior. Our family celebration is Christmas Eve at 5pm concluding with the Christmas Eve candlelight service of praise to the Lord. We have a guest preacher then. Joseph is coming to preach to us that night. Meet Joseph up close and personal Christmas and bring all your family and friends. There will also be a Christmas Eve candlelight communion service at 11pm.

Now, look with me in Matthew 2:1-12;

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." 7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And

going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

This is the Word of God, it's the Truth. The grass withers, the flower fades but God's Word abides forever by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached to you. There is a question you might ask yourself, along with me, Matthew clearly is on a different track than Luke on the birth of Christ. It is very clear he is on a different track because he is highlighting and bringing before us people that we don't normally see. We sometimes miss them but Matthew of course, highlights Joseph. He has taken him out of the shadows of our nativity scenes and brought him right up front so that you might see him because there's a message in Joseph. Then, even more now, he brings before us the only one who gives an account of three wise men from the East that have arrived in Jerusalem after the birth of Jesus Christ. Now, why?

I want to fast-forward to the end of the study to tell you where we are going to end up. We will end up with Christ makes a difference. Has Christ made a difference in your life? Has He saved you? Is He with you? Is He going to take you to heaven? Here's what I want you to learn from the wise men in this study; Christ not only makes a difference, Christ makes different those in whom He makes a difference. So when Christ makes a difference He makes you different. Who knows that Christ makes a difference? There's an evidence. They are different. Are they perfect? No, they are different. "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). He's been born again. Something is different. That's how you know. It's not there difference that saves them. Jesus saves them but when Jesus saves He not only makes a difference, He makes you different. The wise men not only shout out the fulfillment that this is the Messiah through the fulfillment of Scripture, they also grab us around the shoulders, pull us tight, and say, "Look at what happened to us and it will happen to you!" We are going to walk through these verses together in Matthew 2. Matthew 2:1 starts "Now after the birth of Jesus" which are six words that introduce us to a verse that nails four historical stakes in the ground. These are real historical events that have occurred that are nailed into the ground right in this first verse. Here are the four historical stakes. The first stake is that this account of the wise men is *after* the birth of Jesus.

Now what did we do with Matthew 1:1-17? That was the pre-birth narrative. Matthew 1:1-17 gives us the genealogy of Jesus, His adopted line through His adopted father Joseph, His legal line. Luke 3 gives us His biological line through His mother Mary, also from David but not through Solomon like Joseph's line but through Nathan. The Solomon line is through Joseph, His adopted father. The biological line is through Mary so that He is fully God, fully Man and so Luke fascinates us with all of the accounts around Mary. However Matthew keeps bringing us back to this line, Joseph, and he starts by giving us, Son of Abraham,

Son of David and he gives us those generations all the way down to the birth of Jesus and His adopted father Joseph. When he brings us to the end of that he has basically said in that pre-birth narrative of Jesus that everything in the Old Testament was designed to bring us to this moment where God has come in the flesh to deliver His people from their sins.

In the last study we looked at the birth narrative in Matthew 1:18-25. The birth narrative focuses upon Mary, not the Virgin Mary, but upon Mary who is a virgin and the virgin birth. Praise to God for a faithful woman, a virgin. The focus is not the Virgin Mary but the virgin birth. Also Joseph is put front and center. Do you want to see a man of God? Do you want to see what grace does in a man of God? It changes his life and he is a man who holds to truth and holds to love. With truth and love he takes care of his wife and she knows she can depend upon him. His vows in a betrothal are not mere words designed to get somebody into his life. They are a commitment that by God's grace and humble reliance on the Holy Spirit, this man will be a man for his wife and for all whom the Lord brings into his life. God's grace makes a difference in Joseph. So he is out of the shadow of the nativity and put front and center. Behold, here is a man of God by the grace of God to the glory of God.

Now, out of that birth narrative with the virgin birth through Mary, this Joseph, this adopted father, this man of God who is willing to step forward and do that which he is called to do, and do as the Lord commanded him, we now come to the post-birth narrative. The clue is right there in Matthew 2:1, "*Now after the birth of Jesus...*" One may be thinking, "Harry, how long after the birth?" We don't know exactly but it is some where from 1 day to 2 years. That is what we know.

Here is the second historical stake in Matthew 2:1; Jesus has been born in Bethlehem. By the way, this is a very specific Bethlehem. It is Bethlehem of Judah. Why is that important? It is important because there are two Bethlehems in Israel. There is Bethlehem that belongs to the tribe of Zebulun which is the Bethlehem of Zebulun and there is the Bethlehem of Judah. This Bethlehem of Judah is the place where Ruth met Boaz. Remember in the genealogy how Ruth is mentioned? This is also where Jacob buried Rachel. This Bethlehem is six miles south of Jerusalem. This is where the ancestral line of the Messiah was born through David. This is David's home town.

The third historical stake is it is in the *days* of Herod. Herod was a real life king who lived. This is not a Jewish king. This guy is an Idumean. Herod's heritage traces all the back to Esau. Herod has now become king through conniving, treachery and other things that I don't have time to tell you about but it is a very interesting story. It is politics as usual it seems like. Rome has appointed him and he has taken over. Herod is called Herod the Great. He has building projects that you wouldn't believe. He restored the second temple so that it became what many call the eighth wonder of the world. He built the Herodian. Have you ever heard of a place called Masada? He built that. He was a man who was afflicted

with an ego and he was paranoid. Then he had sexual transmitted diseases that ultimately brought his mind to an even greater waste at the end. He was a man who was ruthless. Enslavement, taxation were all associated with him.

If he had a whiff of conspiracy he would take care of them pretty quickly and it wasn't through a process. Herod killed his wife when he had heard she had talked to somebody who had talked to somebody else that might be thinking about overthrowing him. Then he killed his two sons because they were close to her. Then he killed other relatives. In fact, he set up for people to be killed when he died so that he would be sure that people were crying in Jerusalem at his death. This is a ruthless man. Herod the Great was not a great man, he just had great building projects. He had an infrastructure program that was working throughout all of Israel. It was amazing. He was ruthless and a despot. He was another example of political tyranny of the kingdoms of this world against the Kingdom of God. Herod, like Pharaoh, will seek the work of the murderer, Satan, and we'll see in the next study of how he will even try to kill the Messiah like Pharaoh tried to kill a deliverer in the days when Israel was in bondage.

There's a fourth stake and it is that some wise men showed up. Now, they are not wise guys. They are wise men and this is a very special term. Do you remember the Egyptian magicians in the days of Moses? Do you remember in the days of Daniel the wise men that couldn't interpret the dreams but Daniel could? Do you remember in the days of Joseph the wise men that couldn't interpret the dreams of Pharaoh but Joseph could? These are wise men known as magi and it is what we would call a Persian term from the Persian empire referring to those who set aside their life, studying the revelation of the skies in which we call astrology and astronomy. They were also verbabores; they ate words. They would read anything and everything they could.

Now, how did these wise men get all the way to Jerusalem? Here's how they did it. They are from the East and we know from their name that they are from the area called Persia. Persia, was of course, an empire that took over the Babylonian empire and the Babylonian empire hundreds of years before brought into captivity from Jerusalem the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Israel was in the Babylonian captivity for how many years? They were in captivity for 70 years and then they were delivered. When they were taken up into captivity guess what many would have taken along with them? They would have taken their Bible. Now they wouldn't have the Bible we have today but they would have had the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). They would have had some of the books of the Prophets and a couple of books would be written while they were there like Daniel and Jeremiah. In these books there would be the declaration of a Messiah who would be Prophet, Priest and King of Jews who would deliver His people. So they would have studied that along with everything else.

Have you ever loved to be somewhere and read something that you knew somebody famous had read and you are holding it in your hands? Have you ever stood somewhere where you knew something famous had happened and you're just standing in that place? Folks, I just get chills when that happens to me. I want you to stand in a passage of Scripture that these wise men stood. Harry, how many wise men are there? I don't know. I just know there are two or more. We don't know that there were three. We have a donkey in the nativity and yet we don't know for sure that there was donkey.

Although I can't imagine Mary walking all the way from Nazareth expecting at any moment and the wise men didn't show up like in our nativity scene at the stable because we are going to see that they went to a house. We also don't know that there were three kings even though we sing about them. We do that because how many gifts were there? There were three gifts. So we have to give three jobs when we do the nativity. But I promise you that when they showed up it wasn't just two, it wasn't just three, because there would have been a retinue with them. These wise men would have had body servants and all kinds of people with them. When they showed up in Jerusalem everybody would have known it.

Now what is it that they would have read? They would have read Daniel and the 70 weeks. They would have heard about Prince who would come and the Son of Man. There were all kinds of prophecies that they would have read but there is one in particular that I know that they read. At least I think they did. I'm pretty sure they did. In fact, it is a Scripture in one of the first five books of Moses which would have been in Babylon and then in Persia and even when the people went back I'm sure some people left some Bibles behind that they would have read. Numbers 24 is something they would have read. This is a Messianic prophecy through a prophet with a checkered past and his name was Balaam. We won't read everything that Balaam said but he gave a prophecy in Number 24 which was his final prophecy where he gets back on track. His prophecy is about God coming as the Messiah.

Numbers 24:15-17 says,

15 And he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, 16 the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: 17 I see him (the Living God), but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter (a King has a scepter) shall rise out of Israel.

He goes on to describe the delivering power of this Redeemer. So the wise men would have read that and one day they see this star rise up and move from east to west. It was one they had never seen before. This star brings them all the way to Jerusalem. When they arrive there they immediately make known their past, where they have come from, their presence, "we're here," and their purpose, "we

have come to see this King of the Jews.” His star has risen and we have followed Him here.

Now, go back to Matthew 2:2 where the wise men say; *“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”* The star rose so it made an appearance. Harry, what can you tell me about the star? I have an opinion on this and I think you deserve to hear it. Some people say the star was a supernova which was a star that just blasted into brilliance and burned itself out because we don’t have any sight of such a star today. A supernova sounds pretty reasonable. Some say it was a comet. We have accounts that around that period of time a Haley’s comet was tracked around the earth. Some say it was a confluence particularly when they go back and do the work again of Jupiter and Saturn so that it looked like a star brightness. I think it could have been any one of those three but I just don’t think it’s that. When I read this text it seems to me that I don’t need to find a natural explanation for this. I just think this is a miracle. It’s His star. God put this light in the sky to guide them there. It rose. It caught their attention. It started them. Sometimes they didn’t see it. For instance, when they got to Jerusalem they didn’t see it and after they got pointed out of Jerusalem they would see it. They would say, “Wow” and with great joy they saw the star again. It brought them right to Bethlehem. It seems to be a star that moves without a fixation yet moves to a certain fixed place. It is this glorious brilliance.

Do you remember when God decided Jonah was going to have ministry whether he wanted it or not and he got swallowed by what? I knew someone would say whale. We don’t know that it was a whale. The Bible just says it was a great fish prepared by the Lord. I don’t need to go find a fish that can swallow a man to believe that. I think God made that fish to swallow Jonah, not just any man. So it was star? Yes, but I think it was a star of brilliance to light the way and bring these Gentile wise men from today what we would call Iraq and Iran, all the way, which would have taken 40 days, to arrive in Jerusalem. But now, they don’t know where to go. So they say, “Let’s go see King Herod to find out about the King of the Jews.” That is reasonable, but in this case, it was not a very good idea.

So let’s look at this matter about King Herod in the next verse. Matthew 2:3 says, *“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”* Let me explain something to you. The reason Jerusalem got troubled was not because “Oh no, we have king Herod, this man who taxes us, kills us and is ruthless and we may have another King who would come to deliver us, Oh we’re fearful of that.” No, they weren’t troubled about the news that they might get another king other than Herod. They were troubled because when King Herod got troubled it was bad news in Jerusalem. So when they heard Herod was troubled, they got troubled and they were concerned about it. So what Herod does when he hears about the wise men’s past, present and their purpose to go worship this King, Herod puts together the chief priests and the scribes and says,

“Now, this King of the Jews and this star they are wanting to know where He will be and where He was born so can you tell me? They said, “Certainly it’s in the Prophets that He will be born in Bethlehem of Judah, not Bethlehem of Zebulun.” So Herod then calls the wise men back together and he gives them the news.

Matthew 2:4-6 says, *4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”* So now what does he do? Herod calls the wise men to himself. I want to tell you something. As a preacher I am always fearful of getting invited to a political center of power because power is so corrupting. Here is a political despot with flattering words about to deceive these wise men and to draw them into his web of deceit. Watch now how easily it is for him to lie.

Matthew 2:7 says, *Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.* Why does Herod want to know that? He wants to find out how old this Jesus is, this Messiah is. He has got another plan. What is it? We will study that further but he is going to try to kill Him. That’s what he wants to do. Matthew 2:8 says, *And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”* Look how easily Herod’s lie comes out. Yet what he wants to do is kill Him. Matthew 2:9 starts out, *“After listening to the king...”* Be careful who you listen to! These wise men get drawn into the malicious deceit of homicide and they leave after listening to the king.

Matthew 2:9b-11a says, *“they(the wise men) went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced (here’s God’s light to guide them to Christ) exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house...”* Notice how they are out of the stable and in a house. Let me try to explain this. Here is probably the way it was. When Joseph and Mary got there it wasn’t a hotel they were going to. They were going to the hospitality of a relative and because of God’s providential provision of a taxation to get Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem to pay their taxes, as they get there now the Scriptures can be fulfilled for the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem. But there is not a place for them to stay because their relatives are full so here’s probably what happened. The house would have been built where underneath was the cave where you would put the animals and the animals were nearby for numerous reasons not the least of which is heat. Then you slept on the first floor and then there was an open second floor that you could sleep on at different times based on the weather. But every space is covered so there is no space for them so that night of the birth of Jesus they are down in the stable. After everything is cleared out, taxes are paid, they move upstairs into the house now.

So when the wise men get there after the birth of Jesus they go into the house, not the stable which is contrary to our nativity scene.

Matthew 2:11-12 says, *11 And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.* So the star guides them and they get there. With the light of God bringing them, they see Christ and they fall down and worship Him, not Mary. As they worship Him and lift Him up they give three appropriate gifts because they are sacrificial. You couldn't get more expensive than gold, the metal, frankincense, the perfume and myrrh, the alloy or spice. I think they brought these gifts because they were coming to a King so they brought something expensive but God providentially is giving us another message in these gifts.

Jesus has laid aside all of His majestic privileges to humble Himself to come and save us from our sins but even in the birth of the King God brings those from a court of a king, to give Him the gift of a King; an inauguration gift of gold. There are two other sacrificial gifts; frankincense, the perfume and myrrh, the spice. These two are use primarily not for inaugurations but for funerals. Again, our Lord is reminding us, He was born to die. The very anointments of a funeral are brought to His birth. They are certainly appropriate because they are expensive. I don't think the wise men knew the symbolism of these gifts but God in His providence is reminding us He is born to die for our sins. Then the wise men are warned and they get freed from the conspiracy trap of the King Herod and they now having come to Jesus, leave a *different way*.

So the takeaway for this study is very simple. There is just one and I have already mentioned it. Matthew is writing a biographical tract to tell the Jews that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah and He is going to bring all these fulfillments, all of these "Behold" statements, all of these "in order to be fulfilled" statements, and this is the second prophecy fulfilled and we are just in the first part of Matthew 2. We have got a glorious statement that "This is the Messiah who has come and because He has come He has come to save His people from their sins." Isaiah 61 will say that He will reach the nations even as the Lord had promised Abraham, in You, all the families of the nations of the earth shall be blessed. There is not only Gentiles in the genealogy of Jesus but there are Gentiles who are brought to Jesus after the birth of Jesus and this Jesus is going to make a difference to the whole world. He is the Savior of the world.

There is something else and the wise men become exhibit A that this One who has come to make a difference in the world to save His people from their sins, when He save them they are different. When they meet Him, they go a different way. I think this is so crucial. I know I am a Gospel minister and I have been entrusted with something in the Gospel message. That Gospel message is this. It is not the way you live that saves you. Jesus saves you but the Gospel message

not only calls upon bearers of the Gospel to let people know you're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But grace and faith are never alone. While what they produce by God's grace through the Holy Spirit, is not added to the merits of our salvation and doesn't become a reason for God to love us more or to keep loving us, the fact remains that when Jesus makes a difference by grace alone through faith alone, He makes different in those whom He has called and saved. It is those whom He has redeemed. There is something different about them. That equally must be maintained. The Gospel message that it is of Christ, from Christ, by Christ alone must be declared but the Gospel call of *walk in a manner worthy of your calling* must be pressed to the home of the heart.

In this phrase "a different way" this word *way* will become a title of Christians. It will be associated with people who are people who live "the Way." I want to show you a concluding thought here about this from the Bible. I'm going to show you three passages in the book of Acts around this phrase "the Way." First we will look at the passage that talks about the conversion of a man named Apollos. Acts 18:24, 25 says, *24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord.* He didn't come to the Lord for a momentary experience. He came to the Lord for life, his life. When we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, a saving relationship with Christ is not the act of a moment. It is the acquisition of a life. It is not the act of a moment where one goes forward, although the Lord can certainly call us forward to declare our commitment to Christ. It is not the act of a moment in baptism although the Lord calls us to the sign and seal of baptism. It is not the act of a moment when I join a church. A saving relationship with Christ is not the act of a moment. It is the acquisition of a life. Jesus makes a difference and He makes you different.

Now, let's go a different way. I want to show you a guy who loved to kill people of "the Way." Let's see what happens to him. What was the name of the Apostle Paul before became known as Paul? It was Saul. What was his occupation as Saul? He was a religious terrorist, in the business of killing Christians. Acts 9:1, 2 says, *1 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.* He would imprison them, kill, murder, and threaten them. What were the Christians called? They were people who lived "the Way."

Now, let's get to the end of Paul's life when he is under a life sentence and he is standing before a royal tribunal. In Acts 24 Paul is defending the faith before Felix. Acts 24:14-16 says, *14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, 15 having a hope in God, which*

these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. 16 So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. This man who killed people who had claimed Christ, walking “the Way,” now he has become apart of them and is ready to die. Why? It is because he has come to Christ and who is Christ? “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” Jesus is not only the Life, and the Truth but when you come to Christ, Jesus is the Way. It is a different way from the way that you came to Him. It is a narrow way with your eyes fixed upon Him. It is a life way and it takes you to everlasting life because the way is Jesus Himself. We love Him. We follow Him. We have been brought to Him and now we are willing to walk a different way with Him and for Him.

Here’s one more thought. You can’t get the different way until you come to Christ. It’s not the different way that brings you to Christ. It’s Christ that gives you a different way. But to get to Christ God has to intervene. You don’t find your way to Christ unless the light of God leads you. Harry, do you mean I have to see a star like the wise men did? Yes and no. You don’t have to see that star but you have to see a Star. That’s why in January we are going to be talking about equipping 4200 people to be able to share their faith effectively and simply with other people in Christ. Do you know why? It is because you are the light of the world. People don’t get to Christ by stumbling in the darkness. They get there by the Holy Spirit moving them to the Light that we are called to shine. You are the light of the world. Don’t put your light under a bushel basket but set it up that it may give light to all men.

In the book of Revelation there are seven preachers and seven churches. What are the seven preachers described as? They are described as seven stars, who from the pulpit give light to send people to Christ. What are the churches called in the book of Revelation? They are called seven lampstands. We’re here to give light to lead people to Christ and when Christ brings them to Himself, the way they came now leads them to a different way because Christ has made a difference in them. We are different men. We are different women. We are men of God, women of God. Pastor, will we be perfect? No, absolutely not. But I have great news also of this Gospel. When you and I falter, fail, get detoured, fall down, get distracted, even turn our backs on the Lord for a season of time, the Lord is faithful, gracious, persistent and will keep tracking us down.

As God’s grace in Christ by the Holy Spirit is persistent, gracious and faithful when we are frail and falter, Jesus will not negotiate your life. When you come to Him He says, “Follow Me.” He doesn’t say, “I’ll come to you on Sunday mornings at 11.” No, He is there 24/7, 365 days, 12 months a year, “I’m Yours and You’re Mine.” You have been bought with a price. He says, “I’ve got a different way for you.” This is no burden. On this way we get men of God like Joseph. On this way we get Godly women like Mary. On this way we get fishermen who will leave their nets and leave everything to follow Jesus Christ. On this way we rise up and see men of God who grab hold of their wives, their families and they fight with the

Gospel of Jesus Christ, with the sword of the Spirit, and the armor of the Lord and say to Satan, "You can't have my family and I'm going to be here for my family." Wives will say, "God, by Your grace you have me here. This is my husband, these are my children, raise up a standard in this home for Jesus Christ." Churches will say, "By God's grace we are filled with members who don't just do membership vows. We are really members of one another in Jesus Christ." It's God's grace that gives a different way. God's grace gives a different way in your life and in your family. This salvation is a free gift but salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone costs you everything. It costs you everything. You're His and He is yours. It costs you your sins. It costs you, you. We die to ourselves that we may know the glory and majesty of living unto Christ.

I have more thing I want to say. When I lived in Miami I got a call from Frank Barker asking me to go plant a church in Charlotte, North Carolina. I struggled with that for a year. There were a lot of reasons why I struggled with that. Not the least of which it was 82 degrees in January with no humidity and a golf course in Miami. But one of the reasons I struggled was I loved where I was serving. One of things I loved was there was "them" and there was "us." "Them" didn't try to pass themselves off as "us." Once you became one of us it usually cost you in Miami. There was something different about you. You could tell it. I knew when I got up into Charlotte, and it's also in Birmingham, there's a lot of "them" that say they are "us." Sometimes I wonder because there are a lot of "us" that act a lot more like "them." First of all, I don't want "them" to be "them" I want "them" to be "us." But I know one of the things that wins "them" to "us" is the "us" are different. There is something different.

It is not because we can come up with 56 rules that you have to do. It's because God's grace takes a hold of your life and when that Light of Gospel has brought you to Christ He'll lead you back a different way. When people see that they want to hear who did that to you. Let me tell you, the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). Come to Him, He's the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for putting these men who testified that the Lord of grace has come by fulfilling Scripture and who also testified that the Lord of grace makes a difference in those whom He brings to Himself. O God, we think of their message when they got back to their country and may I ask You O God, that as we have gathered here to see the glory of our Savior may we go from here a different way to our home, our country, our friends, our business, our school and Lord, with humility and clarity may people see the Christ who makes a difference by making us different, with brokenness and confidence, with conviction and with compassion. May they see it in our lives, our families, our words, our speech, our decisions and God why our life never earns our salvation

may our life exalt our Savior that people can see “He makes a difference.” He changes prostitutes, adulterers, liars, self-righteous, and religionists. He is the Savior of sinners. Father, if there is someone reading this who has not put their trust in Him alone may they do so today. May they come to Him that leads them a new way, all the way to glory by simply turning from themselves and their sins. Dear friend if you have not done it just now, trust Jesus alone and you will never be alone. He will be with you always on the way, to the end of the age which is the beginning of glory. Father, thank You for these moments, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

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