

Battleground: Nativity

The War on Christmas and the Full Armor of God

SERMON STUDY GUIDE | PART 4: FALL OUT! 12.3.17 | FOLLOW ON FB @PASTORERICHUFFMAN TW @ERICTHESTORY

YOUR MISSION

1. To forget everything you thought you knew about the Christmas story - all the sappy, sentimental fluff - and to revisit the biblical Christmas narrative with a fresh perspective.
2. To deepen your understanding of spiritual warfare by familiarizing yourself with the Enemy's tactics against you and taking stock of the spiritual weapons God has put at your disposal.
3. To better prepare you for the spiritual battles you're facing.

FOREIGN EMISSARIES

Before equipping you for spiritual warfare, allow me to outfit you with a seasonal joke for this year's office Christmas party: "Why couldn't Texas A&M (or UT, OU, or BAMA - pick your rival) put on a nativity scene this year? They couldn't find three wise men and a virgin." #Heyooo

We've all this we know the story of the "three wise men" pretty well: three kings from the east bring gifts to honor Jesus as an act of international diplomacy. But the real story is much different.

KEY TEXT: MATTHEW 2:1-12

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 when it rose and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied...

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another road.

Who were these magi, really? Can you identify all the inconsistencies in the title: *We Three Kings of Orient Are?*

DOUBLE AGENTS

How did the magi follow protocol as foreign dignitaries in the beginning of this story? Why and how did they willfully deceive a sitting king (Herod) by the end of this story?

The most fascinating facet of this story might be that the God of Israel spoke to foreign sorcerers, letting them in on His plans. How did God speak to these pagan stargazers, and what does that tell you about God?

GOT YOUR SIX

How did God use the magi as a human shield against evil? How did the magi's gifts make Joseph, Mary, and Jesus' journey to Egypt possible?

Sometimes God resorts to some pretty creative ways of providing for our needs. Can you think of a time when God really looked out for you to make your journey possible or to shield you from evil?

KEY TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:10-15

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

THE SHIELD

What is faith? How is it more than mere belief?

How can faith in Jesus shield us from our Enemy's "flaming arrows"?

God uses faithful people to defend and protect people who may be susceptible to attack. How are you using the resources God has given you to be a shield of faith for someone who's vulnerable right now?

KEY TEXTS:

Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

Psalm 82:3-4 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Matthew 7:12 "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 18:14 So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.