

“Be Imitators of Me, As I Am of Christ, Part 2”

Sermon Notes

- **Having observed the life of the Apostle Paul up close for one calendar year, let’s follow him as he follows Christ**

1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 4:9

**7 compelling features of the faith of Paul the Apostle...*

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| 1. Pauline Christianity has a <u>thick skin</u> (24:1-9) |
| 2. Pauline Christianity has a <u>clear conscience</u> (24:10-21) |
| 3. Pauline Christianity has a <u>tender heart</u> (24:22-27) |

4. Pauline Christianity has a sovereign God (25:1-5; 23:11; Ephesians 1:11)
5. Pauline Christianity has a moral fiber (25:6-12)
6. Pauline Christianity has a resurrected Christ (25:13-22; 9:1-19; 23:16; 24:21; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20)
7. Pauline Christianity has a captive audience (25:23-27)

Next Week: Acts 26:1-32 - “Paul Stretched Out His Hand and Made His Defense”

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of December 15th - 21st

Over these next couple of weeks, we come to the home stretch of our 2025 Vision. We can summarize it in three words: prayer, care, share. Over these last five years, we have aimed to cultivate dependance on Christ through prayer, to demonstrate the mercy of Christ in practical ministries of care, and to communicate the gospel of Christ as we seek to share him with those on our ‘List of 5’. For this week’s community group study, we look to combine our 2025 Vision with the spirit of the season as we turn to an article from Patrick Schriener titled: “Advent Prepares Us For Mission”.¹ Enjoy this resource as a part of your own personal habits of grace, in your family worship time, or alongside your community group!

“Advent Prepares Us For Mission”

By Patrick Schriener

Advent is a time when Christians gather. However, Advent can also remind us how we’ve been called to scatter. In the Great Commission, Jesus sends his followers to make disciples of all nations ([Matt. 28:19](#)). We sometimes neglect to see that this mission is foreshadowed in Jesus’s birth narrative ([Matt. 1–2](#)). Mission didn’t begin at the end of Christ’s earthly work; instead, Jesus’s birth foreshadows that a mission to the nations was the purpose of his coming.

All Nations

The nations are present at Jesus’s birth. In [Matthew 2](#), we read of an unlikely group coming to worship Jesus as King. It’s not Jerusalem that’s ready to receive her king (v. 3). Rather, magi come to worship Jesus.

Matthew specifically states these wise men come from the “east” (v. 1). This could refer to several places, and some surmise they’re from

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/advent-prepares-mission/> .
Accessed 12/13/24 @ 7pm.

Babylon. But in their coming, the magi prefigure all nations bowing the knee before the Son. Yet the question arises: How will he draw them? The Great Commission tells us how—it's by Jesus's kingly authority.

Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” *therefore* go into all nations (28:18). This claim to authority hails from Daniel's vision of the Son of Man who ascends to the heavens and is given “dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him” ([Dan. 7:14](#)). Since Jesus is exalted to the highest throne, we have a mission to all peoples.

The Star and the Allotment of Nations

The supernatural background is hinted at with the reference to a mobile star that led the magi to Jesus ([Matt. 2:2, 7, 9, 10](#); [Num. 24:17](#)). Interpreters debate the nature of this star. One option is that the star is an angel. Ancient people viewed stars as supernatural beings—the heavenly host ([Gen. 2:1](#); [Neh. 9:6](#); [Judg. 5:20](#); [Job 38:7](#)). Angels are said to descend ([Gen. 28:12](#); [Luke 10:18](#); [Rev. 18:1](#)) and to guide people ([Ex. 14:19](#); [23:20](#)), and they're often associated with brightness ([Acts 10:30](#); [12:7](#); [2 Cor. 11:14](#); [Matt. 28:1–2](#)).

Additionally, a biblical theology of spiritual authorities reveals this text could be a reversal of the nations' allotment under angelic powers ([Deut. 32:8–9](#); [Ps. 82](#)). Now that *the* Son of Man is born, an obedient angel leads the nations to their true King. If the star in [Matthew 2](#) is an angel who leads the nations to worship Jesus, it foreshadows the church's mission. Only through Jesus will the nations stream to Yahweh because their wicked guardians have been defeated in him ([Col. 1:13](#); [Eph. 1:20–21](#)). As the disciples go out on their mission in Acts, they encounter much spiritual warfare; the fallen guardians of the nations will not give up their prey without a fight.

Spirit's Power

Because there'll be a supernatural battle, the disciples will need supernatural power. Therefore Jesus commands his disciples to baptize the nations in the “name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit.” Then he promises them his presence ([Matt. 28:19–20](#)). While many have noted the link between Immanuel (God with us) at the beginning of Matthew’s Gospel and Christ’s presence at the end (1:23; 28:20), fewer have connected this to the presence of the Spirit and the war of the cosmos.

Though Matthew isn’t prolific in his references to the Spirit, he does explicitly note the Spirit’s presence in the events surrounding Jesus’s birth (1:18, 20) and in the Great Commission (28:19). What we learn if we connect these texts—and tie them to the analysis above—is that through the Spirit’s presence, the nations will be freed from their *spiritual* bondage. In Jesus’s earthly ministry, he repeatedly casts out demons by the power of the Spirit (4:24; 8:16, 28, 31; 9:33; 12:24; 17:18; 15:22). As he explains in the Beelzebul controversy, if Jesus drives out demons (fallen angels) by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come (12:28). Appropriately, Matthew connects demon possession with Gentiles in a couple of places (8:29; 15:22). In one episode, a Canaanite woman (a Gentile) comes to Jesus because her daughter is severely tormented by a demon (15:22). It confuses us when Jesus says it’s not her time yet. But we must remember that Jesus hasn’t yet died and been enthroned. Nevertheless, he heals this Gentile’s daughter because the time was both now and not yet.

Advent and Mission

The advent of Jesus is likewise now and not yet. The nations are present at Jesus’s birth, having been led by a shining star showing they’ll be freed from the domain of darkness. They’ll be released by being baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Perhaps this is partly why in early baptismal traditions, converts would declare, “I renounce thee, Satan, and all thy servants and all thy works.” Advent is a time when we’re reminded of our mission to go to the nations. Jesus is first worshiped by pagans who follow a star. Today, the nations are brought to faith in Jesus through his messengers who proclaim his name in the power of the Spirit. As we go into all the world, we do so in hope of Jesus’s promise recorded by Matthew (8:11). Like the magi, *many* will come from east and west, joining Abraham and his greater Son in his heavenly kingdom.