

Because Christmas time is reserved for very special greetings—we want to take this opportunity to thank our many patrons for their continued friendship and good-will... and add, too, in a great big measure—our sincere wishes that the spirit of the season may remain a lasting joy for you and yours throughout the coming New Year.

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THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

WISE MEN SEEK JESUS
Golden Text. — Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.—Jer. 29:13
THE LESSON AS A WHOLE
Approach to the Lesson
This last lesson of the year finds us with thoughts of Christmas still in our minds — tender memories of friends seldom seen except at that time, happy recollections of many kindnesses, but, above all, thoughts of a Saviour who stooped to our flesh in order to give Himself to the death of the

cross for our salvation. Perhaps we have begun to use some of the gifts we received, but every one of these gifts has reminded us of the greater Gift, and we have exclaimed, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"
Our lesson today reminds us that there is another direction for the bestowal of gifts. Christ is God's gift to us, and we give gifts to each other in celebration of that, but surely we have something to lay at the feet of the Lord. The fact is, we are bound to give Him something, good or ill, even as in the days of His flesh gifts of various sorts were brought to Him, from the gold, frankincense, and myrrh of the Magi to the nails and the crown of thorns, the gifts of hate. Of those who

thus gave to Him, in whose company are we? Let these little verses help us answer:
They brought their gifts, those sages from afar, Of frankincense, and myrrh, and purest gold, To grace the King whose birth, so long foretold, Was heralded at last by yonder star.
She brought her perfume, liquid nard so rare In alabaster cruse: the house was filled With fragrance, as with lavish love she spilled Her sweet oblation on His temples fair.
They brought their offering: thorns

to, wreath His brow, Nails for His hands and feet, a spear to pierce His heart with sorrow torn, as loud and fierce They raised their cry, "This man we disavow."

They bring their tribute in the courts above, Ascribing to the Lamb who once was slain Salvation, honor, laud, and vast domain.

Wide as the reaches of His boundless love I bring my gift today: a heart subdued By love divine; a life laid at His feet In consecration joyous and complete; A soul redeemed by blood, by grace renewed.

Verse by Verse
Matt. 2:1.—"There came wise men from the east to Jerusalem." The Wise Men, or Magi, were probably priests of the monotheistic faith of Zoroaster. True seekers after God, they were led to the true Light.

Verse 2.—"Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star." There were those in the Gentile world also looking, not for a king of the Jews, but for the King of the Jews, and God put this sign in the heavens for the guidance of these men of faith. See Genesis 1:14; Numbers 24:17.

Verse 3.—"Herod... was troubled." Not only because he feared a rival to the throne; but because the arrival of God's anointed, the Messiah, heralded judgment, and his sin cried out to heaven. But why should "all Jerusalem" be troubled at the news of the birth of their King? They were already preparing to cry, "Away with him!"

Verse 4.—"He demanded of them where Christ should be born." He was not mistaking the message of the Magi. Herod was not a Jew, so turned to those who knew the Scripture for his information.

Verse 5.—"In Bethlehem of Judaea." Apparently they answered right off. They knew their Scriptures well enough to answer without looking up a Bible dictionary or concordance. The designation is clear, to distinguish this Bethlehem from its namesake in Zebulun, only seven miles from Nazareth.

Verse 6.—"Out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people, Israel." The quotation is from Micah 5:2. But turn to the prophecy and see what is declared of this Governor. He is the Everlasting One!

Verse 7.—"Then Herod... inquired... what time the star appeared." He was leaving no stone unturned in his inquiry. Time and place were both important.

Verse 8.—"Go and search... and... bring me word again, that I may worship him." What subtle hypocrisy! The Magi now went under royal warrant as well as by the urge of the Spirit.

Verse 9.—"The star... went before them, till it... stood over where the young child was." Reason directed them to Jerusalem, and they were wrong. Revelation directed them unerringly. It is better to follow the light from Heaven than the sparks of our own wisdom.

Verse 10.—"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." It gave them assurance that they were "in the way," and that they had not traversed the weary miles in vain.

Verse 11.—"Into the house... worshipped... gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." Notice, it was not the stable. That only served till better quarters could be found. Even so, the scene must have been a humble one, but that did not deter the Eastern sages from bestowing royal and divine honors on the child.

Verse 12.—"And being warned of God in a dream... they departed... another way." These men were open to God's leading, and God, who had graciously led them to the Light, would not permit them to be the unconscious instruments of Satan.

The Heart of the Lesson
When Peter saw God's dealings with Cornelius, he exclaimed, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35). The Magi are just such another case. They were obedient to the light they had and searched for more light. They might be likened to Melchizedek and Job, men who were not of the Chosen people, but whose hearts God had stirred to seek after Him. But, just as in the case of Cornelius, God did not leave the seeker groping in half-light, so with the Magi. God saw the reaching-out faith of Cornelius and brought the word of Christ upon which to rest it. So God saw the seeking faith of the Eastern sages, and turned it into a resting faith—resting on the person of the Lord Jesus.

Many believe that Balaam's ancient prophecy (Num. 24:17) was the basis of the expectation of these men. God did not fall their expectation, but threw a star into the sky to herald the coming of the one so long foretold.

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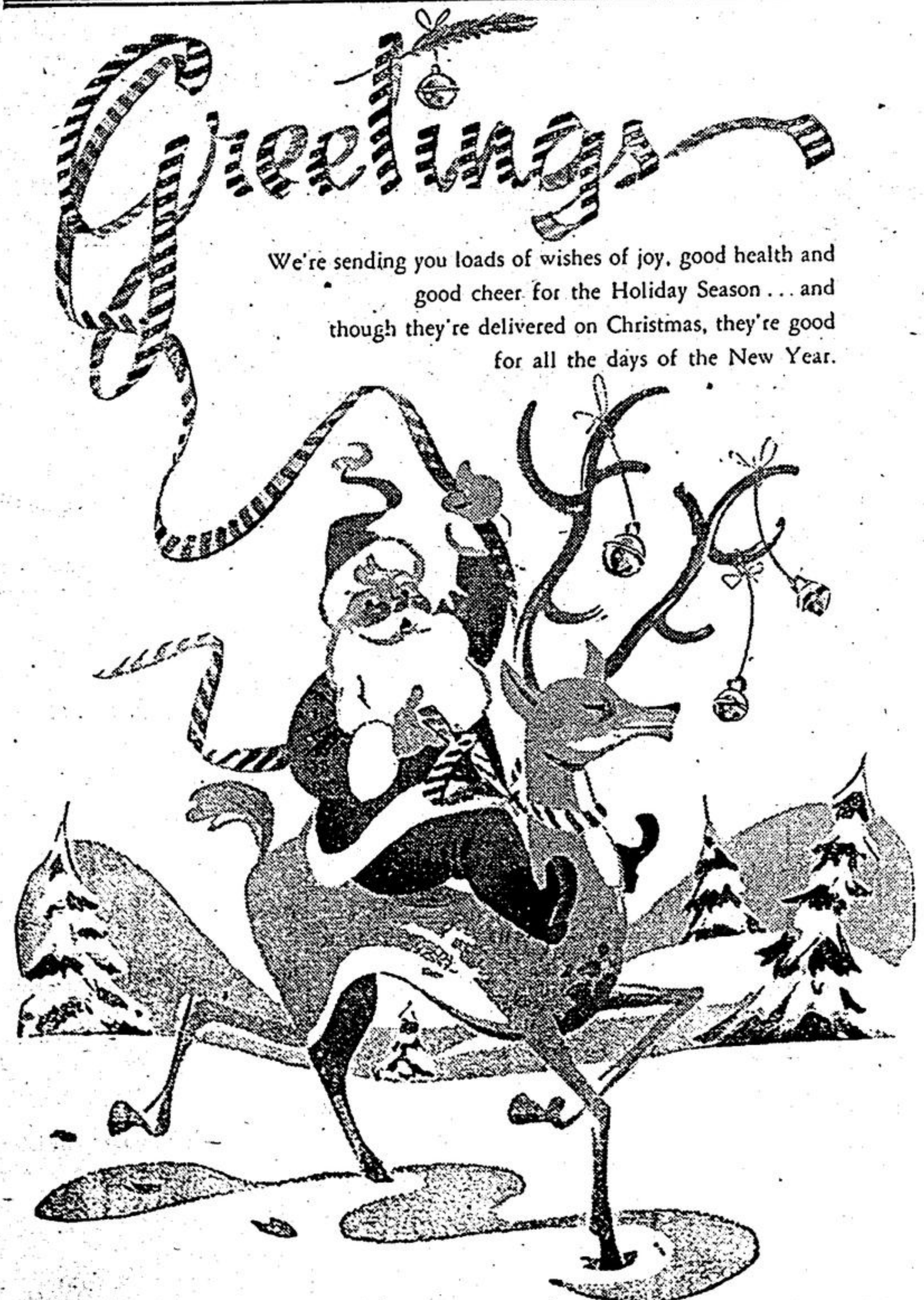
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We're sending you loads of wishes of joy, good health and good cheer for the Holiday Season... and though they're delivered on Christmas, they're good for all the days of the New Year.

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