

THIS SHALL BE A

Sign unto You

“All the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began—have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?” (Mosiah 13:33).

By Whitney Hinckley

Christmas is a time filled with anticipation—anticipation of presents, good food, and celebrations. Sometimes it seems that the first 24 days in December are just too long to wait. Imagine if you had to wait for 1,000 years!

The first Christmas—the Savior’s birth—had been prophesied for hundreds of years, from Isaiah in the Old Testament to Samuel the Lamanite in the Book of Mormon. The prophets of old knew and anticipated the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ, and they waited patiently for those signs. They prophesied of His coming so others would be able to recognize the signs and share in the joy of knowing He had come! The fulfillment of those prophecies was a testimony of His divine calling as Savior and Redeemer.

Read the following prophecies of the birth of Jesus Christ and the miraculous circumstances surrounding it and learn how these prophecies were fulfilled.

Born of Mary, a Virgin

Prophecies: Seven hundred years before she was born, Mary was prophesied to be the mother of Christ. Isaiah wrote, “The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

Alma the Younger also identified Mary as the Savior’s mother about 80 years before Jesus’s birth and halfway across the world from Isaiah: “He shall be born of Mary,

. . . she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God” (Alma 7:10).

Fulfillment: Eight decades later, the angel Gabriel appeared “to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, . . . and the virgin’s name was Mary” (Luke 1:27). Mary was the mother of Jesus, who was the Son of God.

Unto Us a Child Is Born

Prophecy: Isaiah prophesied the birth of the Messiah: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Fulfillment: The Savior’s ministry fulfilled all that Isaiah prophesied, yet Christ was born in humble circumstances: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. . . . Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (Luke 2:11–12).

Born in Bethlehem

Prophecy: The prophet Micah lived about the same time as Isaiah. He prophesied of the Lord being born in the village of Bethlehem: “But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet



out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be a ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

Fulfillment: Seven hundred years later, Herod commanded that his scribes tell him where the new ruler could be found: “He demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea” (Matthew 2:4–5).

Of the Seed of David

Prophecy: The Lord told Jeremiah six centuries before the birth of Christ that He would come from the lineage of David: “In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land” (Jeremiah 33:15).

Fulfillment: Matthew gives us Christ’s genealogy, showing how the Lord is descended from that king of long ago: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. . . . So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen

generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations” (Matthew 1:1, 17).

Visited by Kings

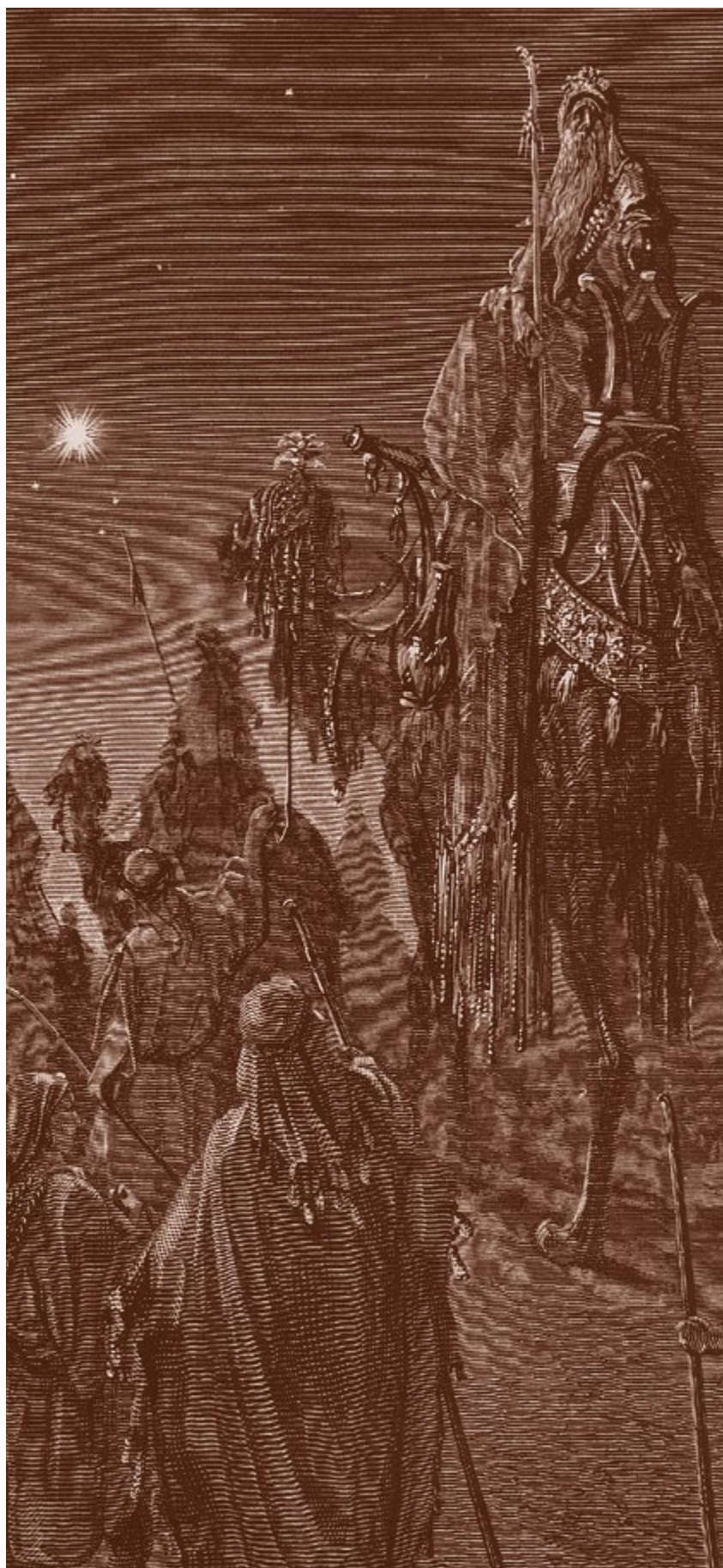
Prophecies: Despite the humble circumstances of His birth, prophets declared that kings would come to see Christ: “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isaiah 60:3).

Samuel the Lamanite told the Nephites five years before Christ’s birth of the signs that would herald His coming. One of these signs was the star the Wise Men followed: “There shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you” (Helaman 14:5).

Fulfillment: The Wise Men knew what sign to look for because they must have looked for the fulfillment of prophecies. They said, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him” (Matthew 2:2).

In the New World, the Nephites also recognized the signs and knew the prophecies were fulfilled: “And it had come to pass, yea, all things, every whit, according to the words of the prophets. And it came to pass also that a new star did appear, according to the word” (3 Nephi 1:20–21).

Think of how you rejoice when you finally get to open your Christmas presents. How would that compare if you had been waiting for the signs of Christ’s birth and finally saw them fulfilled? Our Heavenly Father prepared these signs in advance not only to let the faithful around the world rejoice together at His Son’s birth but to testify of Christ’s divine calling. ■



THE WISE MEN GUIDED BY THE STAR, BY GUSTAVE DORÉ