THEY AREN’T THERE
“(N)ativity scenes … are still one of my favorite things…. The problem is most of them are inaccurate…. It’s the wise men. We portray them all wrong.”

“First of all, we know there were three gifts, but we don’t know how many wise men there were… The bigger issue is this, they weren’t there. The wise men did not show up at the birth of Christ and did not visit at the manger. They visited Christ at a house and he was described as a child or toddler. Yes, this means that for years all over this country we have been misplacing the Magi. They have been present at the birth of Christ in musical presentations for generations, yet they didn’t belong. Woops? (sic)”
MATTHEW 2:1–11 (ESV)

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.” … 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. … 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.
“(The) most vocal response I have ever received when I discussed this ... came from an elderly (Bible) class member who told me later she was dumbfounded at the notion that the wise men weren’t there. She had never paid attention to the passage to notice. I would guess that most folks ... have been in the same category.”

SOME QUESTIONS

• If mistaken ideas about the wise men don’t come from the Bible, where do they come from?
• What would Christianity be like if all we knew about it was what we could read about in the New Testament?
• What would happen if we based our religious faith and practice on the Bible and nothing else?
THE “BIBLE ALONE” PRINCIPLE

Nothing should be taught or practiced as a matter of Christian faith or duty except those things for which there can be produced a “thus saith the Lord” either in express terms or by approved precedent.
“We were not, indeed, at first apprised of the havoc which our principles would soon make upon our opinions. We soon, however, found our principles and opinions at war on some points; and the question immediately arose ... shall we sacrifice our principles to our opinions, or our opinions to our principles? We need not say that we were compelled to the latter; judging that our principles were better than our opinions. Hence, ... we have been compelled to throw overboard some opinions once as dear to us as they are now to those who never thought of the difference between principle and opinion.”
“Some of those opinions … withered and died under the first application of our principles. Infant baptism and infant sprinkling … immediately expired in our minds, as soon as the Bible alone was made the only standard of faith and duty.”
WHY FOLLOW THE “BIBLE ALONE”?  

- It provides assurance of God’s acceptance
… you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. 7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 8 'THese people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 9 And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'
WHY FOLLOW THE “BIBLE ALONE”? 

• It provides assurance of God’s acceptance 
• It provides a real basis for Christian unity
“that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You…” - John 17:21 (NKJV)

“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” - 1 Corinthians 1:10 (NKJV)
WHY FOLLOW THE “BIBLE ALONE”?  

• It provides assurance of God’s acceptance  
• It provides a real basis for Christian unity  

For both of these reasons, the “Bible alone” principle is better than any of our opinions, or all of them put together!
WHAT ELSE ISN’T THERE?

- Wise men at the Jesus’ birth
- Infant Baptism
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• Wise men at the Jesus’ birth
• Infant Baptism
• Christmas or Easter observed as a religious holiday
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• Wise men at the Jesus’ birth
• Infant Baptism
• Christmas or Easter observed as a religious holiday
• Musical instruments used in Christian worship
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- Wise men at the Jesus’ birth
- Infant Baptism
- Christmas or Easter observed as a religious holiday
- Musical instruments used in Christian worship
- Hierarchies of church officials, boards and counsels
WHAT ELSE ISN’T THERE?

- Wise men at the Jesus’ birth
- Infant Baptism
- Christmas or Easter observed as a religious holiday
- Musical instruments used in Christian worship
- Hierarchies of church officials, boards and counsels
- A multitude of denominations dividing followers of Christ
WE MUST EXAMINE OUR BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

2 Corinthians 13:5 (ESV) — 5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

Acts 17:11 (ESV) — 11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.