

Wise Men and a Star

Scripture Reference: [Matthew 2:1-15](#)



Suggested Emphasis: Give honour to Jesus.

Memory Verse: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” [John 3:16](#)



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Story Overview:

Wise men from the East knew because of His star that something significant had taken place. They made a long journey bringing precious, valuable gifts to this special baby. Wanting to do harm to Jesus, King Herod tried to use the wise men to lead him to the baby but the wise men left no trail. Instead, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to safety in Egypt.

Background Study:

The wise men were probably members of the order of priests and philosophers called Magi that had existed east of the Euphrates River since ancient times. As “the Levites of the East,” they performed public religious rites, mediated between God and men, interpreted doctrine, and educated the royal family. They were also very skilful astronomers. A star was in their line of speciality.

We often hear about three wise men. The bible does not say the number but does mention three gifts specifically. Frankincense is a kind of gum that is burned for its aroma. Myrrh is an expensive perfume.

The star they followed was probably no ordinary star, or comet, or conjunction of planets, or eclipse. The magi studied the night sky and those things would have been more common. This star was special and it was provided by God. It behaved as not other star had, and led the wise men right to Jesus’ house. Evidently, God, for His own purpose, chose to reveal himself through a star and a dream to people who ordinarily were not His followers.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were very conspicuous. They seemed to think that everyone in the Jewish capital city would know about the newborn king of the Jews. However, their questions upset Herod. There was a widespread expectation that an important person was about to appear in Judea. Herod the Great had some good qualities - courage, executive ability - but he was excessively jealous and inhumanly cruel. If Herod thought the important person was a child who would someday take his throne, he would eliminate Him. His subjects feared his cruelty.

Herod asked the religious leaders where the long expected Messiah would be born. In [Matthew 2:6](#) they quoted [Micah 5:2](#), informing Herod that Bethlehem was the place. Then, so as not to call too much attention to the child, Herod met with the wise men secretly ([Matthew 2:7-8](#)). He asked questions to try to determine the age of the child. With pretence of wanting to worship, he sent the wise men to find the child.

Many depictions of the visit of the magi show them presenting gifts to a baby Jesus in a stable at the same time as the shepherds were visiting. In actual fact, many




months had passed since Jesus' birth. Joseph and Mary now lived in a house in Bethlehem. We know that Joseph and Mary travelled the 9 kilometres (6 miles) to Jerusalem to follow the custom of presenting Jesus when he was eight days old ([Luke 2:21-40](#)). Just after the events in today's story, Herod had all Jewish boys under the age of two killed to try to wipe out the chance of a new king replacing him ([Matthew 2:16-18](#)). This might indicate that Jesus was about two years old at the time of the Magi visit.

Evidently the wise men travelled by night to the very house where baby Jesus lived. Heeding God's warning, they went home another way. The text reads as though the wise men came, worshiped Jesus, left; and Joseph, Mary and Jesus left all in the same night.

Egypt was the country where Jesus' ancestors were slaves. Now, Egypt was the place where Jesus would be kept safe from King Herod. He probably wasn't there very long but His stay there fulfilled [Hosea 11:1](#).

The name "King Herod" appears a few times in the New Testament. Here are descriptions of three of them:

1. Herod the Great- (37-4BC) King at the time of Jesus' birth. Visited by the wise men. In an attempt to kill baby Jesus he ordered Jewish boys under the age of two to be killed. [Matthew 2:1-15](#)
2. Herod Antipas- (4BC-AD39) He put John the Baptist to death ([Matthew 14:1-12](#)). Pilate sent Jesus to him before his crucifixion ([Luke 23:7-12](#)).
3. Herod Agrippa I- (AD 37-44) He killed James and had Peter thrown in prison. Struck down by an angel and eaten by worms ([Acts 12:1-24](#)).

-  [What happened before this story?](#)
-  [What happens after this story?](#)
-  [List of all Bible stories and themes on this website.](#)

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Way to Introduce the Story:

Before class gather together some items that could be given to a baby at his/her birth (nappies, rattle, baby powder, soap, etc.) Let the children talk about gifts they would give to a baby. "In today's story we are going to talk about some gifts that Jesus received. One of the people who gave Jesus gifts was a very wise man. Today we are going to let him tell us about what happened." (Cover your head with a sheet or blanket and put on some "expensive" jewellery or scarves. Lower your voice into a man's voice and tell the story as if you are one of the wise men. Another option is to ask a man of the congregation to dress up and tell the story in first person.)

If you have a visual aid then you might just say that you have some nice photos of everything that happened. Ask if they would like to see the photos. Show the visual aid as you tell the story.

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The Story:

People consider me to be a very wise man. In my country they call me a Magi. I study stars and science. I have to tell you something very sad about my country. In my country we do not believe in God. I did not believe in God but something so amazing happened to me that now I think that there really must be something to this God thing.

Anyway, here's what happened. You see, I always studied the stars, so I know all about them. One night I saw something very new in the sky that had never been there before. There was one bright star. After looking at the star, I knew that I should travel to the town of Bethlehem. I do not know exactly how I knew, but I knew that I would find the new king of the Jews in Bethlehem. I wonder if God put that in my mind. Anyway, I could hardly wait to see the new king. I wanted to give him gifts and praise like a king deserved.

Other magi travelled with me. When we came to Jerusalem we came to the palace where the king of the Jews lived. His name was Herod. We asked King Herod where the new king was. He seemed puzzled and said he would have to answer us later. We

didn't know it at the time but, while we waited, King Herod went and asked his advisors what they knew about this. They told him that the prophets said long ago that the Messiah, the real King of the Jews, would be born in Bethlehem. When the Messiah came, he would be more important than King Herod.

King Herod did not want anyone to be more important than him! He was king and he liked himself a lot. He knew he had to find out where this new king was. He had to get rid of him.

So Herod came back to us and tried to trick us. He told us to go and find the newborn king so he could go and worship him and give him honour like we were doing. King Herod didn't really want to worship the new king - he wanted to kill him! He just wanted to follow us so he would know where the new king was.

The star shone again so we followed it to a house. We found Joseph and Mary along with Mary's little boy, Jesus. They told us how Jesus had been born in a stable. They told us all about the angels singing to the shepherds when they announced his birth. The other magi and I were amazed! We knew that this little boy was truly the new King of the Jews. We gave him very expensive gifts from our country. The gifts were gold, incense and myrrh. We chose those gifts because those are the kinds of gifts that people give to a king. We wanted to give Jesus special honour.

When the other magi and I went to sleep we all had a dream. In the dream we were warned not to go back to Herod's palace. Do you think I listened to my dream? Well, I'm not called a wise man for nothing! I knew that King Herod would try to hurt this little boy if we told him where to find him. So we did not go back to the palace. We travelled back to our home a different way.

Joseph also had a dream. An angel appeared to him and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you. If you don't go then Herod will search and find your son. Then he will kill him."

So Joseph got up at that very moment. In the middle of the night he took his family on the long trip to Egypt. They were safe.

It was a good thing that Joseph did act quickly. When the other Magi and I did not

return to King Herod he got very angry. King Herod ordered his soldiers to kill every single little Jewish boy under the age of two. He did not know that Jesus was already gone so he thought that he could kill him this way. What a sad day.

But God kept Jesus safe! Jesus was God's special gift to the world. We wise men knew that Jesus was special so we wanted to give him special honour. You can give Jesus special honour by obeying him and telling him how much you love him. Have you given Jesus honour today?

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. Where did the wise men that brought gifts to Jesus come from? The East
2. What is another name for wise men from the east? Magi
3. Who was the King who wanted to kill young Jesus? Herod
4. What led the Magi to Jesus? A star
5. Name the three gifts that the Magi gave Jesus: gold, incense (or frankincense), and myrrh.

Song Suggestions:

- Sing appropriate Christmas Carols (We Three Kings)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Make a trail of stars for the children to follow. Have the children follow the star trail to Herod's palace in Jerusalem. This might be a road sign or picture of a palace. Tell the first part of the story in this place. Then have the students follow another trail to Jesus' house and tell the next part of the story. Finally, have the children "sneak" back to the classroom a different way like the Magi did when they went back home.
- Gift wrap a few different boxes in several sizes. Inside each box you should have one gift. Some gifts should be good and some funny (a lolly, one unmatched sock, a small toy, an empty toilet paper roll, etc.) Children can open the gift if they answer a question correctly (today's review questions would be good). Let the children take turns opening the gifts until all are opened. Finish with one last box that contains a picture of Jesus. Discuss how that God gave the best gift.

Crafts:

- Teach younger children how to draw a star.
- Make any "star" craft. One idea is to have children cut slices of bread with star-shaped cookie cutters. Spread with soft margarine or butter and sprinkle with "hundreds and thousands" or shiny biscuit decorations.
- Write "Jesus is Special" on a star shape. Let the children write words about Jesus on the star: Son of God, born in Bethlehem, birth prophesied, shepherds visited, angels announced, etc.
- [Make a scroll. Click here for instructions.](#) Write this verse on it: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16, NIV

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "Wise Men and a Star" printables to print on A4 size paper](#)

[Click here for "Wise Men and a Star" printables to print on Letter size paper \(USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and worksheets about Simeon and Anna \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and worksheets about the visit of the wise men \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and worksheets about Jesus' escape to Egypt \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page of Mary, Jesus and wise men from christiananswers.net](#)
- [Various activities and puzzles specifically about Mary \(covers more than one story\) from gardenpraise.com](#)
- [A good selection of both online and printable puzzles, activities and story words covering the birth of Jesus through to his visit to the temple at the age of twelve from gardentofpraise.com](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/jesus-birth-youth/>

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