

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Date: 12.20.26 | Jesus And The Wisemen
Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

CENTRAL TRUTHS



PRESCHOOL:

Jesus is our Savior and King, and we can worship Him.

YOUNGER KIDS (K5-2ND GRADE):

Jesus is the promised Savior and King who came for us. We can trust Him and worship Him.

OLDER KIDS (3RD-5TH GRADE):

Jesus is the promised Savior and King who came to save us from sin. We respond by trusting, obeying, and worshiping Him.

STUDENTS:

Jesus is the promised Savior and King who humbly came to save sinners. Because He is worthy of all authority and worship, we respond to Him with faith, obedience, and lives devoted to Him.

ADULTS:

Jesus is the promised Savior and King who came in humility to save sinners and reign over all creation. His birth, death, and resurrection call people of every nation to trust Him, submit to His authority, and worship Him as King.

MEMORY VERSE

"Don't be afraid! I bring you good news that will be great joy to all people. The Savior- yes, the Messiah, the Lord- has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!" - Luke 2:10-11



BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS



Jesus' birth in Bethlehem of Judea, a small village about six miles south of Jerusalem, was no accident. Bethlehem was the city associated with David and the place Scripture foretold as the birthplace of the coming Messiah (*Micah 5:2; John 7:42*). Jesus was born in humility, but He was the promised Son of David and the true King God sent to save His people.

Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great, who ruled from around 37–4 B.C. Herod was a powerful builder and ruler. He was also jealous, ruthless, and fiercely protective of his throne. He even murdered members of his own family whom he considered threats to his power. Matthew intentionally places the earthly king Herod alongside Jesus, the true King. Herod held political power for a time, but Jesus was born as the promised, eternal King.

Sometime after Jesus' birth, wise men, or Magi, from the East arrived in Jerusalem asking, "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him" (*Matthew 2:1–2*). Traditional nativity scenes often picture three kings visiting Jesus at the manger, but Scripture does not tell us there were three men—the number comes from the three gifts they presented. Matthew also says they found Jesus in a house, indicating their visit occurred after His birth (*Matthew 2:11*).

The Magi were likely learned men from Persia or Babylon who studied sacred writings, dreams, astrology, and other mysteries. Because of the Jewish presence in Babylon, they may have been familiar with Old Testament prophecy, including Balaam's words: "A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel" (*Numbers 24:17*). God used the star to lead these Gentile men to His Son. Its unusual movement in *Matthew 2:9* suggests something supernatural—a specially created heavenly phenomenon or other miraculous means by which God directed them to Jesus.

When Herod heard that the Magi were searching for someone who had been "born King of the Jews," he was deeply troubled (*Matthew 2:2–3*). Herod had fought to gain and preserve his throne; Jesus was born King. The arrival of the true King threatened Herod and disturbed Jerusalem's political and religious establishment.

Herod gathered the chief priests and teachers of the law and asked where the Messiah was supposed to be born. They knew the Scriptures and immediately answered Bethlehem, quoting *Micah*

5:2 (Matthew 2:4–6). Yet a striking contrast emerges: the religious leaders knew where the Messiah should be born, but Matthew does not tell us they went to worship Him. The Gentile Magi, however, traveled a great distance seeking the King. Knowing facts about Jesus is not the same as recognizing Him, trusting Him, and worshiping Him as King.

Herod secretly questioned the Magi about when the star had appeared and sent them to Bethlehem. He told them, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find Him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship Him” **(Matthew 2:7–8)**. But Herod did not truly intend to worship Jesus. He saw Jesus as a rival and would soon attempt to destroy Him.

As the Magi continued toward Bethlehem, the star went before them until it stopped over the place where Jesus was. When they saw it, “they were overjoyed” **(Matthew 2:9–10)**. God had faithfully led them to the One they had traveled so far to find.

When the Magi entered the house, they saw Jesus with His mother, Mary. Their response reveals the true purpose of their journey: “They bowed down and worshiped Him” **(Matthew 2:11)**. These Gentile visitors recognized something that Herod and many of Israel’s religious leaders did not—this child was worthy of worship. Their arrival also points toward the worldwide reach of Jesus’ kingdom. The promised Messiah had come through Israel, but He came as Savior and King for people from every nation. As the prophets had anticipated, the nations were coming to the light of God’s promised King **(Isaiah 60:1–6)**.

The Magi opened their treasures and presented Jesus with gold, frankincense, and myrrh **(Matthew 2:11)**. These costly gifts were appropriate for royalty **(Isaiah 60:6)**. Gold symbolized wealth and kingship. Frankincense was a valuable resin used in worship and incense **(Exodus 30:34–38)**, and myrrh was an expensive substance used in perfume, incense, and eventually burial preparations. Matthew does not say each gift was meant to symbolize something about Jesus, but together they show the honor and worship these men offered Him.

The contrast in **Matthew 2** is powerful. Herod heard about Jesus and wanted to destroy Him. The religious leaders knew the Scriptures concerning Jesus but did not go to Him. The Magi heard about the King, sought Him, rejoiced when they found Him, bowed before Him,

and worshiped Him. Matthew invites us to consider how we respond to Jesus.

God also protected His Son. After worshiping Jesus, the Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went home by another route (*Matthew 2:12*). Herod would soon attempt to kill Jesus, forcing Joseph to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt (*Matthew 2:13–15*). Yet no earthly ruler could stop God's salvation plan. From Jesus' earliest days, God sovereignly carried out His promises and preserved the Savior who had come to rescue His people.

Matthew 2 ultimately asks us to see who Jesus truly is. He is not simply a special child in a familiar Christmas story. He is the promised Messiah, the Son of David, and the true King. The Magi traveled from afar to find Him, but the Gospel's greater truth is that God came to find us. Jesus left the glory of heaven and entered our broken world. Unlike Herod, who used his power to protect himself and destroy his enemies, Jesus used His authority to save His enemies. The King who deserved to be served came to serve and ultimately give His life as a ransom for sinners (*Matthew 20:28*).

The child whom the Magi bowed before would grow up to willingly go to the cross, die for our sins, and rise again in victory. At the end of Matthew's Gospel, the King born in Bethlehem declares, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (*Matthew 28:18*). Jesus is not merely King of the Jews—He is King of all creation, and His salvation extends to the nations. The proper response to this King is the same response the Magi showed: seek Him, rejoice in Him, bow before Him, and worship Him.

TELL THE STORY

Matthew 2:1-12

The Jesus Storybook Bible - The King of All Kings

Hey-O! Stories of the Bible - The Story of Christmas

The Biggest Storybook Bible - Wise Men, Smart Move

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a small town about six miles from Jerusalem. Bethlehem might not have seemed very important, but hundreds of years earlier, God had promised that a ruler would come from Bethlehem (*Micah 5:2*). Jesus' birth there was part of God's



plan. He was the promised Messiah and King! At that time, Herod was king. Herod was powerful, wealthy, and determined to protect his throne. But while Herod had become king, Jesus was born King.

Sometime after Jesus was born, wise men called Magi traveled from the East to Jerusalem. They studied many things, including the stars and ancient writings. They had seen an unusual star and believed it announced the arrival of a new king. When they reached Jerusalem, they began asking an important question: "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?" They explained, "We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him" (*Matthew 2:1-2*).

When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed (*Matthew 2:3*). Herod did not want another king! He wanted to keep his own power and throne. Herod gathered the chief priests and teachers of the law and asked them where the promised Messiah was supposed to be born. They knew exactly what the Scriptures said. Bethlehem!

They quoted the prophet Micah, who had written hundreds of years earlier that a ruler would come from Bethlehem (*Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:4-6*). The religious leaders knew what God's Word said, but the Bible does not say they went looking for Jesus. The wise men, however, had traveled a great distance because they wanted to find and worship Him.

Herod secretly met with the wise men and asked when the star had first appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem and told them, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find Him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship Him" (*Matthew 2:7-8*). But Herod wasn't telling the truth. He didn't want to worship Jesus. He wanted to get rid of anyone who might threaten his throne.

The wise men left Jerusalem and continued toward Bethlehem. Then they saw the star again! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where Jesus was. When the wise men saw the star, they were overjoyed (*Matthew 2:9-10*). Their long journey had finally brought them to the King they were searching for!

When the wise men entered the house, they saw Jesus with His mother, Mary. Immediately, they bowed down and worshiped Him (*Matthew 2:11*). These men had traveled from a distant country, and now they bowed before a child. They understood that Jesus was no ordinary child. He was worthy of their worship.

Then the wise men opened their treasures and gave Jesus expensive gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh (*Matthew 2:11*). These were valuable gifts fit for a king. Their arrival also revealed something wonderful about God's plan: Jesus came not only for Israel but for people from every nation. Long before this, the prophet Isaiah described nations coming to God's light and bringing gifts of gold and frankincense (*Isaiah 60:1–6*).

Before the wise men left, God warned them in a dream not to return to Herod. So instead of going back to Jerusalem and telling Herod where Jesus was, they returned home by another route (*Matthew 2:12*).

Matthew shows us three very different responses to Jesus. Herod heard about Jesus and wanted to destroy Him. The religious leaders knew what Scripture said about the Messiah but did not go to Him. The wise men searched for Jesus, rejoiced when they found Him, bowed before Him, and worshiped Him. But something even greater is happening in this story. The wise men traveled a long way to find Jesus, but Jesus came into the world to seek and save us.

Herod was a king who used his power to protect himself. Jesus is the King who would use His power to save others. Jesus grew up, lived a perfect life, and eventually gave His life on the cross for sinners. He rose again, defeating sin and death. Jesus later declared, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (*Matthew 28:18*).

The little child the wise men worshiped really is the King of all kings. Like the wise men, when we understand who Jesus truly is, our right response is to trust Him, rejoice in Him, and worship Him!

REBUILD THE STORY

1. Where was Jesus born, and why was it significant?
(*Matthew 2:1, 5–6; Micah 5:2*)

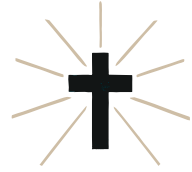
2. Who came looking for Jesus, and what did they call Him?
(*Matthew 2:1–2*)



3. What sign did the wise men see, and why did they come to find Jesus? (*Matthew 2:2*)
4. How did King Herod react when he heard about Jesus, and why? (*Matthew 2:2–3*)
5. How did the chief priests and teachers know where the Messiah would be born? (*Matthew 2:4–6; Micah 5:2*)
6. What happened as the wise men traveled toward Jesus? (*Matthew 2:9–10*)
7. What did the wise men do when they found Jesus, and what gifts did they give Him? (*Matthew 2:11*)
8. Why didn't the wise men return to Herod after finding Jesus? (*Matthew 2:12*)
9. The religious leaders knew the Scriptures said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but the wise men actually went to find Jesus. What does this teach us about the difference between knowing about Jesus and truly following Him?
10. Herod and the wise men both heard that Jesus was a King, but they responded very differently. Why do you think Herod was threatened by Jesus while the wise men wanted to worship Him?
11. The wise men traveled a long distance, rejoiced when they found Jesus, bowed before Him, and gave Him valuable gifts. What do their actions show us about what they believed about Jesus?
12. Jesus is described as a King, but He was very different from King Herod. What does this story teach us about the kind of King Jesus is, and how should knowing that change the way we

respond to Him?

GOSPEL EMPHASIS



Throughout this Christmas unit, we have seen God faithfully fulfill His promises by sending His Son into the world. The angel told Mary that her child would be the Son of God (*Luke 1:26–35*), and Joseph learned that His name would be Jesus—“Yahweh saves”—because He would save His people from their sins (*Matthew 1:21*). He would also be called Immanuel, “God with us” (*Matthew 1:23*). The eternal Word through whom all things were made truly became flesh and lived among us (*John 1:1–3, 14*).

God then used Caesar’s census to bring Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, exactly where Scripture had promised the Messiah would be born (*Micah 5:2; Luke 2:1–7*). Yet the promised King did not enter the world in an earthly palace. Jesus came humbly, was wrapped in cloths, and was laid in a manger. Heaven announced His arrival to ordinary shepherds with “good news of great joy”: “A Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord” (*Luke 2:10–11*). The angels praised God, and after seeing Jesus for themselves, the shepherds spread the good news and returned glorifying and praising God (*Luke 2:13–20*).

Now, in *Matthew 2*, the good news begins reaching beyond Israel. Wise men from the East come searching for the One “born King of the Jews” (*Matthew 2:2*). When they find Jesus, they bow down and worship Him (*Matthew 2:11*). Their worship points toward the greater truth that Jesus did not come only for one group of people—He is the promised Savior and King for people from every nation.

Matthew also gives us a powerful contrast between Herod and Jesus. Herod was a king who used his power to protect himself and destroy anyone he considered an enemy. Jesus is the true King who came humbly to save His enemies—sinners like us. The baby born in Bethlehem came to live the perfect life we could never live, die on the cross for our sins, and rise again in victory. The King lying in a manger would one day declare, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (*Matthew 28:18*).

From Mary and Joseph, to the shepherds, to the wise men, the Christmas story continually calls people to respond to Jesus with faith, obedience, joy, praise, and worship. We do not have to search for a Savior because God has already come to us. Jesus is Immanuel,

God with us; the Savior, Messiah, and Lord; and the King of kings who came to seek and save the lost. The good news announced at His birth leads all the way to the cross and the empty tomb—and the right response to our Savior and King is to trust Him, worship Him, and make His good news known

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT GOD?

Use the attributes of God list and determine the characteristics of God that we see in today's story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true change the way we live in Christ?

PRAYER PROMPTS

King of Kings, we worship You! We know that You are not like any other earthly king! Thank You for coming so humbly to seek and save the lost! We will adore You this Christmas season and live each day as a gift to our Savior! Thank You for the Good News of Salvation!



THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

Psalm 147

