

The Story of CHRISTMAS

Date: 12.21.25 | Jesus and the Wisemen
Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL

- The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus.
- God deserves respect, obedience, and honor.
- God wants us to live for His glory.
- God is a righteous judge.
- God sent Jesus to be the atonement for our sins.
- Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies and promises.



**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 6 miles south of Jerusalem, marks him as being from the tribe of Judah and from the city that produced the Davidic kings. Hebrew scholars in Jesus' day expected Bethlehem to be the Messiah's birthplace (*Micah 5:2 and John 7:42*).

Jesus was born during the time of King Herod. Herod the King or Herod the Great ruled Israel and Judah from 37-4 B.C. He was cunning and ruled firmly and at times ruthlessly, murdering his own wife, several sons, and other relatives. He was a master builder who restored the temple in Jerusalem and also built many theaters, cities, palaces, and fortresses.

Joseph and Mary decided to remain in Bethlehem after Jesus was born. Faithful to the Law of Moses, they had Jesus circumcised when he was eight days old. There, the new family was greeted by two older saints, Simeon and Anna, who God allowed to see and recognize the Messiah before the end of their days. These wouldn't be the last individuals to discern the special nature of the child Jesus.

Sometime after Jesus was born, wise men from the East came looking for him. Although our traditional nativity scenes include three kings, scripture makes it clear that the Magi arrive up to two years later, when the family is living in a house (*Matthew 2:11*). The Bible also doesn't mention three men; it only says there are three gifts.

"Wise men" refers to experts in mysteries, magicians or astrologers, dream interpreters, and studiers of sacred writings who are in the pursuit of wisdom and magic in Persia and Babylon.

The magi continually asked, "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." The wise men would likely have been familiar with OT prophecy through their interactions with Jews in Babylon. They may have remembered Balaam's prophecy that "A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel" (*Num. 24:17*). The star was understood by Jews to point to a Messianic deliverer. The movement of the star (*2:9*) suggests it is not natural (a comet, supernova, or conjunction of planets) but supernatural, perhaps a guiding angel that appeared as a star, or a specially created heavenly phenomenon with the brightness of a star. The wise men likely traveled with a large number of attendants and guards for the long journey, which would have taken several weeks.

When King Herod heard the news of the magi, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. Herod began planning, plotting, and scheming. Herod was a jealous king, and he wanted to get rid of any rivals to his throne. The arrival of this true King of the

Jews presents a threat to Herod the Great's throne and to Israel's corrupt religious and political leadership in Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests who oversaw temple activities, the teachers of the law, the scribes, and asked them where the Messiah was to be born. These men were primarily Pharisees and Sadducees, professional scholars. They knew exactly where the Messiah was to be born, but lacked the faith to accompany the magi to the place where He was. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied as they quoted *Micah 5:2*. Herod asked the wise men when exactly the star had appeared, and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "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."

After the magi had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

They found Jesus with His mother, Mary, and they fell to their knees and worshipped Him. It was just like the prophets had foretold: nations would come to his light, and nations would bow down before Him. They opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were gifts suitable for a king (*Isaiah 60:6*). Frankincense is a resin used ceremonially for the only incense permitted on the altar. (*Exodus 30:9, 34-38*). Myrrh is a sap used in incense, perfume, and as a stimulant tonic. The real irony is that pagan astrologers came to worship King Jesus. In addition to the shepherds and the magi, all of heaven erupts in celebration at the birth of Christ (*Luke 2:12-14*).

Herod said he wanted to meet the baby so he could worship Him, but the magi weren't so sure. Herod didn't seem like the kind of guy to worship anyone but himself. The wise men were warned in a dream to skip their meeting with Herod and head back home by another way.

The wise men's recognition of a new king troubled King Herod and the ruling establishment in Jerusalem, and Herod sought to kill Jesus. Joseph and his family escaped to Egypt and remained there until Herod died. The gifts the magi gave were likely used providentially to support the family in their flight to Egypt (*Matthew 2:13-15*).

LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY

Locate the scripture in the Bible: *Matthew 2:1-12*

Tell the story: Use the background info for leaders to help tell the story.

Re-tell the Bible Story: Have students re-tell the story as best they

Attributes of 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?

Share the GOSPEL: Three times in *Matthew 2*, Herod is called "king." This is because Herod ruled over part of Israel. Jesus is called a "king" too. The wise men come to find the one "who has been born king of the Jews" (*2:2*). Of course, Jesus is more than the king of the Jewish people; he is King of all creation. At the end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (*28:18*). That's a lot of authority. Total power! Many influential people, like Herod, are not good people, but Jesus is perfectly good. Unlike Herod, who lived in a stately palace, Jesus was born in a lowly stall. Unlike Herod, who sought to kill all his enemies, Jesus was born to die for his enemies—sinners like us. This is the good news of our good Savior: He is humble and gentle, yet significant and influential; He is King of kings, yet He came to seek and save the lost. The best news is that we don't have to search for King Jesus. He has already come to us. When we meet Him, if we are wise men and women too, we will bow down and worship Him.

QUESTIONS TO REBUILD THE STORY

1. Where was Jesus born? Why is this significant?
2. Who was the king? What was he like?
3. What do we know about the wise men?
4. What symbol did the wise men follow?

5. How did Herod feel about the news of the messiah? Why?
6. What did Herod tell the men to do?
7. Where did the wise men find Jesus?
8. How did they react to Him?
9. What three gifts did they bring?
10. What did the wise men do to avoid Herod? Why?
11. What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
12. What does this story teach me about myself?
13. Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
14. Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
15. How does this story help me to live on mission better?

PRAYER PROMPTS

King of Kings, we worship You! We know that You are not like any other earthly king! Thank you for coming in such a humble way 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!

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

ATTENTIVE - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

COMPASSIONATE - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

CREATOR - God made everything. He is uncreated.

DELIVERER - God rescues and saves his children.

ETERNAL - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

FAITHFUL - God always keeps his promises.

GENEROUS - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

GLORIOUS - God displays His greatness and worth.

GOOD - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

HOLY - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

INFINITE - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

JEALOUS - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

JUST - god is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

LOVING - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

MERCIFUL - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

OMNISCIENT - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING - God is untiring and bears with His children.

PROVIDER - God meets the needs of his children.

REFUGE - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

RIGHTEOUS - God is always good and right.

SELF-EXISTENT - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

SELF-SUFFICIENT - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

SOVEREIGN - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

TRANSCENDENT - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

TRUTHFUL - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

WISE - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

WORTHY - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

WRATHFUL - God hates all unrighteousness.

Application Questions

LOOK UPWARD

- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?

LOOK INWARD

- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself?

LOOK AROUND

- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is God inviting you to do differently in your relationships?

LOOK OUTWARD

- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD

- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?