

The Story of

CHRISTMAS

Date: 12.22.24 | Title: Jesus and the Wiseman | Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

Middle School Students

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 sent Jesus to be the atonement for our sins.

Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies and promises.

High School Students

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.

Jesus gave His life for us on the cross and He is the only way for salvation.



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

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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 birthplace of the Messiah (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, to whom God gave the opportunity 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 actually living in a house (Matthew 2:11). The Bible also doesn't mention three men, only that there are three gifts.

"Wise men" refers to experts in mysteries, magicians or astrologers, dream interpreters, 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 the OT prophecy through interaction with Jews in Babylon, and 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 that it is not natural (a comet, supernova, or conjunction of planets) but was supernatural, perhaps a guiding angel that appeared as a star, or a specially created heavenly phenomenon that had 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.

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When King Herod heard the news of the magi, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. Herod started to plan and plot and scheme. 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 gave oversight to the temple activities and 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 and 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.

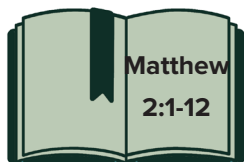
They found Jesus with His mother, Mary, and they fell down and worshipped Him. It was just like the prophets had foretold: nations would come to his light, and nations would bow down before Him. They opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were gifts suitable for a king (Isaiah 60:6). Frankincense is resin used ceremonially for the only incense permitted on the altar. (Exodus 30:9, 34-38). Myrrh is 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).

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LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY



**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 can.

Read directly from Scripture, use the message, or the summary provided in the lesson


Attributes of God: 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 powerful 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 great and powerful; 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.

Re-Tell
The Bible Story

Put the events in order, draw a comic strip, build it with blocks or playdough, act it out, etc...



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“Storying” Questions: As you ask these questions, have your students find the answers in the actual verses of scripture instead of recalling them from your re-telling of the story. We always want to encourage all of our students to go directly to God’s Word over a commentary on or summary of scripture. Use the Bible Study Bookmark Questions as well as these questions to help students understand the text:

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?

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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.

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ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

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

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.

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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 in a way that is a gift to our Savior! Thank you for the Good News of Salvation!

IF TIME ALLOWS:

Help the students in your group practice memorizing the books of the Bible:

- Torah: Genesis-Deuteronomy
- History: Joshua-Esther
- Poetry: Job-Song of Solomon
- Major Prophets: Isaiah-Daniel
- Minor Prophets: Hosea-Malachi
- Gospels: Matthew-John
- Paul's Letters: Romans-Philemon
- General Letters: Hebrews-Revelation

Or play a game of Bible Trivia!

MISSIONS EMPHASIS:

For the month of December, we will be collecting money for the Lottie Moon Christmas offering. Students can put their donations in the giving funnel in the top of the lobby.

REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

Work on memorizing this weeks verse with the students in your group. You can use the first letter of each word in the verse to help with this. For example, the unit verse would look like this:

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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?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

LOOK INWARD

- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

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?

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Application Questions

LOOK OUTWARD

- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and in the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD

- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?