

STORY

The Wise Men - Matthew 2:1-23

TEACHER PRAYER

O Lord, You led the wise men with Your Word and a star to find and worship the Savior of the world. Help me to use Your word as a guiding star for the students entrusted to my guidance. Give all of us a desire to seek You as our Savior and King and to worship you with our gifts. Guide us. Protect us from evil. And let Your light shine to and through us all. I come to you in the name of the Light of the World, my savior, Jesus. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Wise Men or Magi - a certain group of priests or advisers to rulers of eastern countries. They studied philosophy, the sciences, astrology, and astronomy. Daniel was such, but did not practice the wicked art of astrology or sorcery. (See Rupprecht, page 46)

Frankincense - a dry resin with a strong smell and white or yellowish color valued because it burns long with a sweet odor. Like incense today.

Myrrh - a scented gum from thickened sap of a low thorny tree which grows chiefly in Arabia. It was used for precious ointments, embalming, and perfume.

Ramah - a small town near Jerusalem, near the later city of Bethlehem.

Gentiles - all the non-Jewish people of the earth.

OUTER AIM

God led the wise men to Jesus.

INNER AIM

God reveals the Savior of all people.

BACKGROUND

(*Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 2, pp. 45-54*)

This story stresses that the salvation which God prepared in Jesus was not only for His people Israel (the Jews) but also for the Gentiles (non-Jews). God revealed the birth of the Savior to these Gentile astronomers through a special star. He has also revealed this Jesus to us (Gentiles) through His Word. Below are notes on each verse of the account:

Matthew 1:1

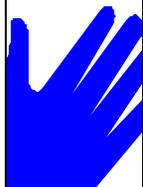
- ▶ The event took place probably within two years of Jesus' birth.
- ▶ We do not know the country where the wise men came from (the East), nor how many there were (there were three gifts).
- ▶ Jerusalem was the capital city and seemed a likely birthplace for a king.

v. 2:

- ▶ His Star: Numbers 24:17 speaks of the Star of Jacob.
- ▶ Evidently these wise men learned the scriptures from Jews (Daniel, others) who had been carried away captive to Babylon and perhaps beyond.
- ▶ The wise men traveled a long journey to find and worship this King.

v. 3:

- ▶ Herod was paranoid, constantly afraid that someone was going to take his throne and power away from him.
- ▶ To hear that a new king was born who might take his power deeply worried Herod and also people of Jerusalem, who knew Herod's ruthless reputation.
- ▶ Fear to lose what he treasured caused Herod and others to miss out on a far greater treasure.



v. 4 :

- ▶ Herod, “The Great,” did not know the scriptures well enough to know the answer and had to ask his advisers about the scriptures.

vs. 5-6:

- ▶ Herod's advisers searched the scriptures and found the answer.
- ▶ Micah 5:2(-5) names the birthplace of the Ruler King who would shepherd the wayward flock of Israel.

v. 7:

- ▶ In private he questioned the wise men from the east to learn important details

v. 8:

- ▶ Herod's words sounded good, but we find his heart plotted evil. So Herod in his selfishness misses a great opportunity to find salvation.

v. 9:

- ▶ The wise men heard the information and continued their search, but God still led them so they wouldn't make a mistake.
- ▶ Many have fruitlessly speculated about the star.
- ▶ What was it and how could it lead them to the very house where the Christ Child lived?
- ▶ God's miracles, always used with good purpose, humble us before His greatness.

v. 10:

- ▶ They were exceedingly joyful that God was leading them to their goal.

v. 11:

- ▶ God led them right to their goal.
- ▶ Notice that Jesus and family were now living in a house.
- ▶ The wise men were not too proud to fall down in humble worship before God, giving Him their hearts and their precious gifts.
- ▶ Gold would immediately prove useful to Mary and Joseph as they served the Lord by traveling to Egypt.
- ▶ The frankincense and myrrh also were expensive materials that could be sold, if not used.
- ▶ Note Isaiah's prophecy of these gifts (60:6).
- ▶ Many have seen symbolism in these gifts: frankincense of pure faith and prayers ascending to heaven, myrrh to be used to bury Jesus after His crucifixion, and gold for the exalted king.

v. 12:

- ▶ God again guided the wise men who willingly obeyed and served God as He protected Jesus from Herod.

v. 13:

- ▶ Jesus needed further protection.
- ▶ God also instructed Joseph through a dream to flee to Egypt because Herod, blinded by sin, would seek to destroy the innocent child.

v. 14:

- ▶ Without questioning the need for the long journey, Joseph immediately left in secret for the safety of Egypt.

v. 15:

- ▶ Details, yet God announced them over 500 years before through Hosea 11:1 that all might know their Savior when He was revealed. v. 16: although Herod tried to deceive the wise men and God, Herod got angry when the tables were turned.

- ▶ Misusing the information of the wise men, Herod's horrible, evil anger was thorough as he destroyed all the children two years or younger, not only in Bethlehem but all the surrounding areas as well.

vs. 17-18

- ▶ Although God knew about the evil that would come He did not cause it.
- ▶ His messenger, Jeremiah (31:15) warned of the great misery caused by the crime.
- ▶ Rachel, one of Jacob's wives, died at the site of Bethlehem giving birth to Benjamin.

vs. 19-20

- ▶ Herod died, (despite his attempts to remain on the throne) and God called for His Son through a dream to Joseph.
- ▶ The one who ordered the "search to destroy mission" against Jesus was dead, so the whole family could return to Israel.

v. 21:

- ▶ Again, Joseph obediently traveled at God's instruction to God's goal.

v. 22:

- ▶ Archelaus, Herod's son, was just as wicked and dangerous as his father.
- ▶ So God directed the family to the safety of Galilee.

v. 23:

- ▶ And yet God's plans were not thwarted by the schemes of men, rather they were fulfilled despite the wicked people of the world.
- ▶ This prophecy is more subtle and not actually a direct quotation.
- ▶ "The name Nazareth is derived from a Hebrew word meaning a branch or tender offshoot. Thus the Messiah is called in Isaiah 11:1" (Rupprecht. p.54)

STUDENT PRAYER

O Lord, You used a star and Your Word to lead the wise men to worship before Jesus. You made known that Your Son is the Savior for all peoples. We thank and praise you for leading us also by Your Word to worship our Savior Jesus. Continue to enable Your Word to lead people to their Savior and to protect your Church from the attacks of all evil. Bless each of us with joyous, generous hearts, willing to give our gifts for Your work in the world. In the name of the Light of the World, our Savior Jesus, we pray. Amen

PRESENTATION

How could people from a far country find the house where the Child Jesus was so that they could worship Him? God helped lead them, not only with a star, but with His Word, so they went right to Jesus.

{Some illustrations of the events might help present it (e.g the throne room of the wicked king Herod whom God continually thwarted; The wise men traveling far to then bow with their gifts before the Lord Jesus; The parents of Jesus carrying Him to and from Egypt.). God's hand is seen throughout, guiding the wise men to Jesus and protecting Jesus from Herod.}

Briefly review previous story as time allows. Make links to the new story when possible.

Tell the story: Teachers, be encouraged to tell the story in your own words while remaining faithful to the scriptural account. When scripture records the story in more than one place, you may want to harmonize the accounts (including extra details found in each account.) Let the students know where they can find the additional details in the Bible.

Discuss the story: While reviewing the major events of the story, discuss the possible applications to the students' lives. Ask questions that make them think about the story and show that they understand the story

APPLICATIONS

1. As God led the wise men to Jesus, so God has led us to find Jesus. He uses different ways to lead us to Jesus but always the same means or tool does the work - God's Word. Where in the story did God use His Word to point people to Jesus? (God's Word told about the star, locations, and events in connection with Jesus; other people shared His Word). We seldom have a star guiding us to find Jesus; but, parents, family, friends, personal study, teachers, pastors, and others bring God's Word to us, revealing where we may find Jesus to worship Him.
2. We also can help others find Jesus in God's Word and show them that Jesus is everyone's Savior. We can even help people far away, across the world, find Jesus when we send them Bibles or missionaries to carry God's Word to them.
3. With joy in their hearts, the wise men gave of their best! They gave expensive gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Giving any gift to God is to be done with joy and love for our Savior and then no gift is too great or too small when given in faith. Some have said that we should give to our Lord the "gold" of faith, the "frankincense" of prayer, and the "myrrh" of repentance.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Psalms 37:5 - Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

Isaiah 49:6 - Indeed He says, "I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth."

Middle any of the above and...

Isaiah 60:2-3 - For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.

Upper any of the above and...

Micah 5:2 - But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

Psalms 2:2-4 - The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision.

HYMN CHOICES

"Hail, Thou Source of Every Blessing" (TLH 129 1-3)

"As with Gladness Men of Old" (TLH 127 any or all)

"O Jesus, King of Glory" (TLH 130 1-4,6)