

General Church Education



Christmas: Wise Men Follow the Star

Matthew 2:1-12

Lesson 31

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 2: The Lord Is Our Shepherd

For ages 7-8 years

Christmas: Wise Men Follow the Star

Matthew 2:1-12

Ideas for Parents & Teachers

The Lord came on earth to live among people and show them how to live a heavenly life at a time when spiritual darkness covered the earth because people who wanted to know what was true and live a good life did not have that knowledge any more. The Lord also came to restore balance in the spiritual world. Evil cannot come near the Divine Itself so the Lord took on a mind and body through Mary His mother to meet and overcome the forces of hell. His Father was the eternal God and Creator.

At this dark time of the Lord's first coming not many people could be told the wonderful news, and they did not see the glorious heavenly light. Evil people, like Herod, tried to destroy Him. Most people were only concerned with themselves and had no interest in hearing the good news. But simple good people, like the shepherds, believed and found Him right away. And truly wise people who cherished the prophecies of His coming and looked for Him also found and worshiped Him. They brought Him gifts that represented all goodness which is at the source of all worship.

Ideas for Children

- The Lord came on earth as Baby Jesus.
- Jesus Christ is our Good Shepherd, who came on earth to lead people to heaven.
- Christmas prophecies are the Lord's promise to people that He will save them.
- We can bring gifts of goodness to the Lord as the wise men did long ago.

From the Writings

The fact that the science of correspondences was preserved among eastern peoples until the Lord's coming can be established by the wise men from the east who came to visit the Lord at His birth. The star which went before them meant knowledge learned from heaven, gold meant celestial good, frankincense meant spiritual good, and myrrh meant natural good. These three kinds of good are the source of all worship. See *True Christian Religion* 205

Gifts offered to the Lord bear witness to things offered from the heart, which are those of faith and charity. The reason why 'wise men from the east' offered gifts was that there remained from ancient times the knowledge and wisdom of the people of old, which consisted in their understanding and seeing heavenly and Divine realities within things in the world and on earth. It was well known to the ancients that all things had a correspondence, and therefore had a spiritual meaning. This was how they knew that gold, frankincense, and myrrh meant the forms of good that should be offered to God. They knew also from their prophecies, which were those of the Ancient Church, that the Lord would come into the world, at which time a star would appear to them, about which also Balaam, who likewise was one of 'the sons of the east,' prophesied (Numbers 24:17). 'A star' furthermore means knowledge of internal goodness and truth, which come from the Lord. See *Arcana Coelestia* 9293

Christmas: Wise Men Follow the Star

In our last story we learned why the Lord was born in Bethlehem and about the first people to be told about this very special birth. Do you remember who these people were and what they did after they visited the Baby Lord? (The shepherds were the first to learn about the Lord's birth. They told everyone they saw about this remarkable happening.) Yes, the shepherds saw a glorious heavenly light and angels told them the good news of the Savior's birth. We know the shepherds were good people and that they were looking for the Lord because they believed right away and hurried to find the Baby. Now we will learn about some others who saw a great light that brought them to the Baby Jesus.

A Special Star Appears

At the time of the Lord's birth a beautiful star appeared in the night sky. Not everyone saw it, though. It was a star of heavenly light and only those people whose spiritual eyes had been opened could see it. Far away from Bethlehem, in a land to the east, this special star was seen by some wise men. Their spiritual eyes could be opened to see it because they, too, had been

looking for the Lord. They did not know much about Him. But they did know some of the prophecies foretelling His birth, like this from Numbers 24:17 that mentions the Star:

I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near: A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel.

A scepter is a staff or rod, often made of gold and decorated with precious stones. It is a symbol of the power of a king. These wise men knew this unusual star in the sky was a sign that the King in this prophecy had been born. They immediately began the long journey to the home of the Israelites or Hebrews in order to find Him. It may have taken them as much as two years to make such a journey. Let's read now and find out why they traveled to Jerusalem.



Read Matthew 2:1-6. King Herod ruled the country for the Romans at this time. Did Herod know where the “King of the Jews” would be born? (No.) How did Herod find out the location? (He asked the chief priests and scribes.) Do you think Herod was happy to hear this news? (No, he was jealous of another king.)

The prophecy that the chief priests and scribes quoted is found in Micah 5:2. Herod ruled Israel and he was not happy to hear about another ruler who would shepherd the people of Israel. Herod secretly asked the wise men when the star had appeared because he wanted to destroy this new King.

Now another marvelous thing happened. As the wise men left Jerusalem to go on to Bethlehem, the special star appeared again and led them right to the place where they would find the Lord. As you read this part of the story, listen for the gifts that they brought.

Read Matthew 2:7-12. How many gifts were there? (Three.) What did the wise men bring to the Baby Lord? (Gold, frankincense and myrrh.)

These men were wise because they were looking for the Lord. They knew that stars stand for knowledge of heavenly things. This special Star meant that the Lord had come to earth, and they knew the best gifts to bring to Him. Gold is a precious metal and beautiful things are made from it. Gold stands for love. With the gift of gold they were giving Him their love.

Frankincense is a kind of tree sap that comes when the bark is cut with a sharp object. When it dries the sap is hard and glittery. It is burned as incense and has a pleasant fragrance. Frankincense was also precious to people at this time and it stands for faith. With this gift the wise men were showing that they believed Jesus was a very special King.

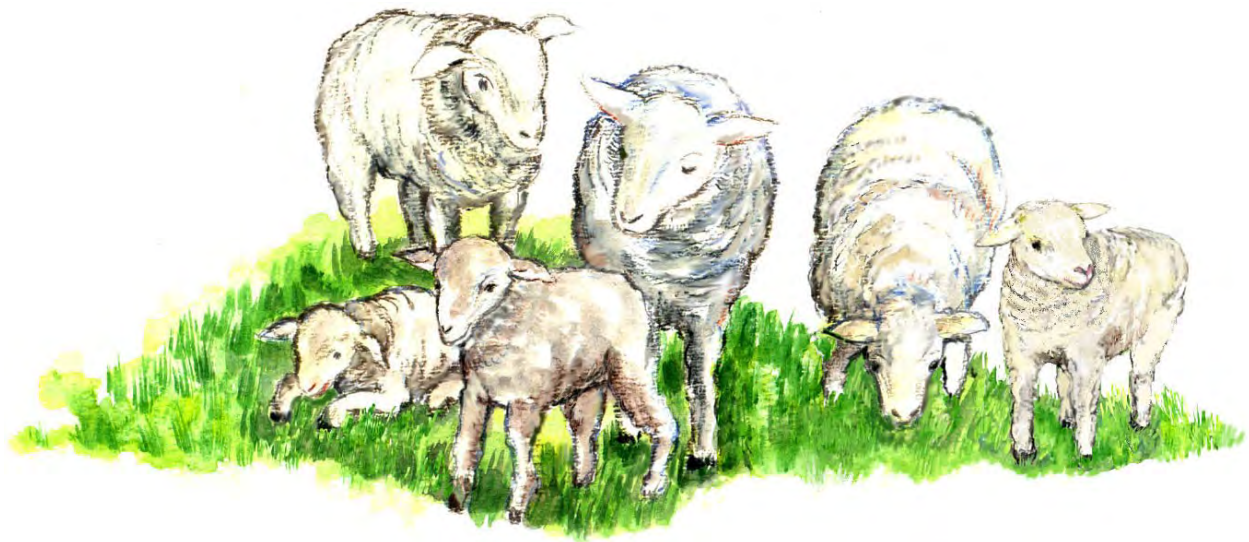
Myrrh is an oily substance. It was a precious thing used in ceremonies and as a healing ointment. It stands for obedience. When the wise men gave this gift, they were showing that they wanted to obey this new King.



Knowledge of Heavenly Things

When the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem long ago, He gave us the greatest gift of all. He came into the world to live among people and to teach us how to live a good life. His life story and many of His teachings are recorded in the four gospels of the New Testament.

We need to remember that He is always with us and has the power to help us do what is right even though He no longer lives on earth. His truth is written in the Word, which contains knowledge of heavenly things. It tells us about heaven, about what is good and true. It helps us understand when we are confused. Every time we go to the Word to learn about heavenly things, we are following the star of truth like the wise men. And, like the wise men, we can also bring good gifts to the Lord. By the good things we say and do each day we can show that we love Him, we believe in Him, and we want to do our best to obey His commandments.



Discussion Questions

- Stars picture knowledge about heaven. What knowledge have you learned from some of the stories of the Word? Do you have a favorite story in the Word?
- What do you think made the wise men so wise? (They studied the Word and treasured the prophecies about the Lord coming on earth. They looked for Him to come and they wanted to bring Him gifts.)
- What can you do today to show that you love the Lord as King in your life? (Answers may include ideas such as to obey His commandments, obey parents and read His Word.)

Activity Overview | Christmas: Wise Men Follow the Star

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will *be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

Luke 2:8-14

Song

We Three Kings

Listen or watch at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-we-three-kings/>

Activities

Choose one or two.

- Activity 1 | Eggshell Ornaments
- Activity 2 | Accordion Star Decoration
- Picture to color

Additional Activity Ideas

- Watch *The Wise Men*, a video telling the story of the wise men visiting baby Jesus at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-the-wise-men/>
- Hear the song *Bethlehem Lay Sleeping* and sing along with a video at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-bethlehem-lay-sleeping-song/>
- Act out the story using figures from a Nativity set.
- Look at the night sky. Identify stars using a chart or app. Talk about what the wise men saw.

Activity 1 | Eggshell Ornaments

Make an eggshell tree or standing ornament to celebrate Christmas. These elegant ornaments are much easier to make than they look and are well worth the effort. See how to make the ornaments online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-making-easy-egg-ornaments/>

Materials

- 1 egg
- sharp scissors with a pointed end
- hot glue gun
- gold spray paint
- 1 button (for a standing ornament choose a button with one flat side)
- blue poster or acrylic paint and paintbrush (for interior of shell)
- Decoration such as a picture, ornament, gold painted rock, frankincense, myrrh, etc.
- plasticine or play dough to secure contents of eggshell
- 2-3 inches $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide or narrower (bias friendly, e.g. braided)
- gold thread for hanging



Preparing the Eggshell

1. Rest a raw egg in one hand. Use a small sharp pointed pair of scissors to pierce the side of the shell and cut an oval-shaped hole in one side. Start by poking the scissors into the center of the area you want to cut and trim off any messiness in the cutting. This is a lot easier than it sounds. Pour out the egg. Wash out the shell and let it dry overnight.
2. Use a hot glue gun to attach a button to the pointed end of the egg. (Use a small button if you plan to hang the ornament and a larger one if the ornament will sit on a shelf.) Allow glue to harden.
3. Spray paint the outside of the egg gold. It may take several sessions to paint the entire surface evenly.
4. Measure trim to fit the opening in the side of the egg. Use a glue gun to attach the trim.

Project Directions

1. Paint the inside of the shell blue. Allow to dry.
2. Fill the egg with your choice of decoration. Use playdough or clay to anchor advent calendar pictures to the bottom of the shell, or “gold”, frankincense and myrrh. Hot glue small ornaments to the roof of the shell.
3. Fasten gold hanging thread around the button to hang on a Christmas tree, or simply stand the ornament on a shelf.

Activity 2 | Accordion Star Decoration

Create a star decoration that tells the story of the wise men visiting the baby Lord.

Materials

Accordion Star Template

markers or colored pencils

tape

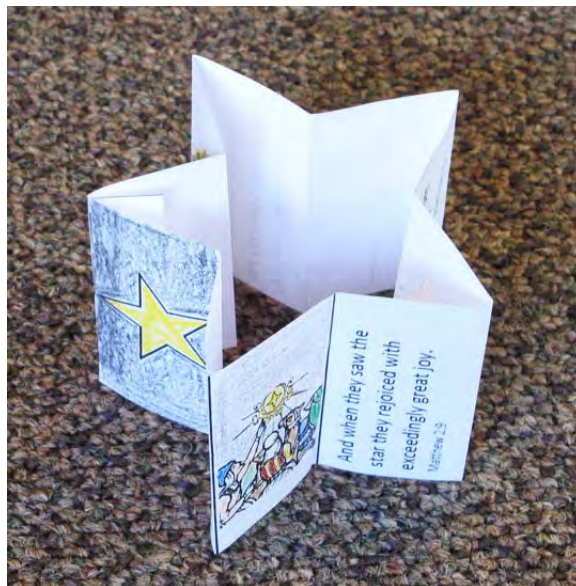
scissors

optional: glitter and glue

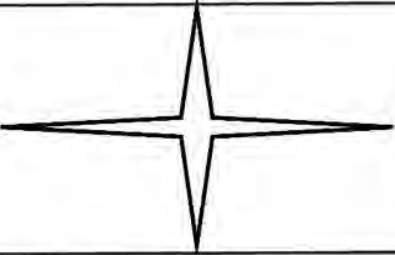
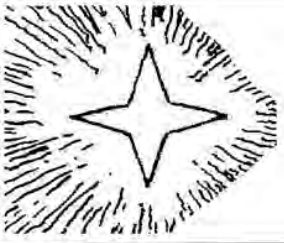
optional: thread for hanging as an ornament


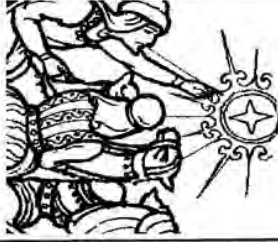
Directions

1. Color the pictures on the *Accordion Star Template*.
2. *Optional:* Decorate the star with glue and glitter.
3. Cut out the two star panels. Do not cut off the tabs that will be used to connect both halves of the star.
4. Tape the two sections of the star together to form one long strip.
5. Fold the star sections back and forth—accordion style—on the lines.
6. Use tape to attach the ends of the star. Tape the tabs on the inside as well as the outside of the star.
7. Display on a table. *Suggestion:* Put star around the base of a candlestick so that the decoration is well away from the flames.
8. *Optional:* Attach thread to hang as a Christmas tree ornament.



Accordion Star Template

<p>Behold...wise men from the East came to Jerusalem. Matthew 2:1</p>

<p>"We have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him. Matthew 2:2</p>

<p>Then Herod...determined from them what time the star appeared. Matthew 2:7</p>


<p>When they departed...the star went before them, till it stood over where the young child was. Matthew 2:9</p>

<p>And when they saw the star they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. Matthew 2:9</p>