

General Church Education



Wise Men Follow the Star

Matthew 2:1-12

Lesson 30

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 3: The Lord Is Our Lawgiver

For ages 8-9 years

Wise Men Follow the Star

Matthew 2:1-12

For Parents and Teachers

This lesson shows the vivid contrast Herod, the ruler of the Jews, and Jesus, our heavenly King. Herod ruled with an iron hand and wanted only power and glory for himself. He stands for the power of false ideas and a love of dominating others. Herod's intention to kill the Christ Child is exactly how the devils in hell wish to treat the Lord and everything good from Him. This gruesome desire pervaded the world of spirits at the time of the Lord's birth. It obstructed the Lord's inflowing love and wisdom into people on earth. The infant King of the Jews was Divine Love and Wisdom coming to earth in a form people could approach. His life was dedicated to saving the whole human race from the power of the hells. His mission was to free people from the dominion of evil and to restore freedom of choice for all time. His goal was not the rewards of worldly power and glory but bringing people the happiness of heaven.

The story of the wise men emphasizes the difference between these two kingships. Their long journey ended in the opportunity to see the new King with their own eyes. Their knowledge of ancient wisdom led them to bring gifts that signified their love for the Lord, their faith in Him, and their willing obedience to His laws in their lives.

Ideas for Children

- More ancient prophecies were fulfilled when the Wise Men saw the special star and brought gifts to Baby Jesus.
- Herod lied to the Wise Men. He wanted to kill the Baby Jesus.
- The Wise Men's gifts symbolize three spiritual gifts we can bring to the Lord.

From the Writings

In ancient times the church existed in Canaan, Syria and Assyria, Arabia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Chaldea and in other places. It was a church based on symbolism. Every detail of their worship and statutes represented spiritual and celestial things which are the interior things of the church, and in the highest sense the Lord Himself. The symbolism of remained with many even up to the time of the Lord's coming. From these symbols they possessed a knowledge of His coming. This is evident from the predictions of Balaam, who was from Syria and who prophesied concerning the Lord in these words: 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." Numbers 24:17

This can be seen from the fact that certain wise ones from the east saw a star in the east when the Lord was born and followed it. See *Apocalypse Explained* 422

Wise Men Follow the Star

Matthew 2:1-12

Words to Understand

inquired—asked about something

diligently—done with steady, serious effort

exceedingly—extremely

Prophecies Fulfilled

The Jewish people ruled by King Herod and by the empire of Rome were not the only ones who knew the prophecies and looked for the Lord. Outside of the Holy Land others in faraway lands watched and waited for the Lord's birth on earth. He was to be a Savior to all people everywhere. In this lesson we will read about some men from a distant country who knew ancient truths about a Savior and which signs would tell of His coming. **Read Matthew 2:1-12.**

From the East

The Word says that some who sought the Lord were wise and lived in a distant eastern land. A few people had kept the prophecies alive by passing them down to their children and their children's children. People become wise when they love the Lord. Wise people know that life true happiness comes from knowing the Lord and living according to His Word. The wise men eagerly searched for signs of the Lord's arrival.

The prophecy in Genesis 49:10 says that a king (scepter, lawgiver) would be born from the tribe of Judah. This told the wise men they must first go to Judah. Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24:17 told the wise men to look for a star. So they carefully watched the night sky. When a new, special star appeared they knew that the King had been born in Israel. They knew that this was a special King.



The Journey to Jerusalem

What would you do if you knew that the Lord had been born on earth? Would you want to worship Him and bring gifts to Him? This is how the wise men felt. They traveled for a long time to get to Judah. The thought of seeing the Christ Child must have kept them going even though the journey must have been difficult.

The wise men went to Jerusalem, the main city in Judah. They found their way to the ruler to ask where the new king had been born. Surely in this center of the Jewish kingdom they would find the one who was born king of the Jews.

Herod

Herod was the king of Judah. Although he was not purely Jewish, the Roman emperor put him in charge of the nation. Do you think the wise men were surprised that King Herod did not know about the new king?

As we read the story we can see that Herod was disturbed and worried. He had no wish to lose his own power to this new king. However, Herod did know how to find out where He was. He called the chief priests and scribes and asked them where the Christ was to be born. But the religious leaders of the Jews were not eager to have any other authority over them. They were not looking for the Lord and had not paid attention to the prophecies. They had to search the Scripture to find the answer. In the book of the Old Testament prophet Micah came the clue they needed, which they then told Herod, who told the wise men. It prophesied that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem. “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.” Micah 5:2

The Star Reappears

As the wise men started traveling toward Bethlehem, the special star reappeared in the sky. It guided them right to the place where the young Child was. They were filled with joy, fell down and worshiped Him. Then they presented their gifts. The gifts brought to the Lord are also found in prophecy. “They shall bring gold and incense, And they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord.” Isaiah 60:6

The wise men brought things that were very precious: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Besides being mentioned in the prophecy, the wise men selected these gifts because of what they stand for. Gold is a precious metal used for jewelry and decoration. It is valuable today as it was then. Gold is even more valuable to us when we realize that it stands for love.

Frankincense is a fragrant gum from a tree. When the tree bark is cut the sap runs out. The sap hardens into little beads. It is collected and burned as incense. Frankincense was used in



worship and burned during times of prayer. Its sweet smell rose up toward heaven just as prayers rise up to the Lord. Frankincense stands for our faith and trust in the Lord.

Myrrh is a fragrant gum from a smaller shrub-like plant. It was used as an ingredient for ointment. This substance was used in worship and for healing wounds. Myrrh represents obedience. Bringing this gift is a sign that bringing the Lord's ways into our lives will bring goodness and healing.

Wisdom Today

We can be like the wise men of old. We can learn about the Lord and look for Him in our lives. We know that the Lord and His angels are always near. We will feel His presence more when we bring Him the gifts of our love, our trust and our obedience. Because the wise men brought gifts to the Lord, it has become a tradition for people to give gifts to each other when celebrating His birth. On that first Christmas Day the Lord gave us the greatest gift of all, the gift of Himself.



Discussion Ideas

- Some tasks are easy. Others take diligent effort. The wise men persevered to find the Lord. Talk about the need to persevere for worthy goals and the rewards of doing so.
- There are different kinds of rules and laws in our lives. Natural rules, such as good manners and crossing the street at the right place support spiritual laws because they show care, respect and love for others.
- What are the spiritual gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh we bring to the Lord?

Activity Overview | Wise Men Follow the Star

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel. Matthew 2:1-6

Songs

Children Can You Truly Tell?

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-children-can-you-truly-tell/>

O Holy Night

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-o-holy-night/>

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Activity 1 | Make a Crystal Star Ornament
- Activity 2 | Match Prophecies with their Fulfillment
- Picture to Color—Wise Men Present Gifts to the Lord (Matthew 2)

Additional Activity Ideas

- Watch GCED’s HeartFelt Bible video, *The Wise Men*, at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-the-wise-men/>
- Gift giving is a Christmas custom that comes from the wise men bringing gift to the Baby Jesus. What other customs do we have that are based on the Christmas story? Can you think of new ideas for ways to celebrate Christmas?
- The wise men made a long journey to find the Lord. How might they have felt when they actually saw Him? What might Mary and Joseph have thought when these important travelers arrived with their gifts.

Activity 1 | Make a Crystal Star Ornament

Make a salt crystal star to hang in a window or on a Christmas tree.

Materials Needed

heat-proof glass jar (*hint*: to transport the project, use a jar with a tight fitting lid)

1-2 pipe cleaners

borax or table salt

pencil

thread

gold or silver metallic ribbon for hanging ornament

warm or hot water (*optional*: microwave to heat crystal solution)



Directions

1. Make a saturated salt solution by dissolving borax or table salt in warm to hot water. Continue adding salt until it stops dissolving. (Hot water can hold more salt than cold water. Using hot water speeds up crystal formation.) Put the solution into a heat-proof glass jar.
2. Bend a pipe cleaner into a star shape. You will need to make 10 evenly-spaced sections, and one shorter section to fasten it together. (For larger stars, use more than one pipe cleaner and attach.)
3. Tie a loop of thread to one of the points of the star. Insert a pencil in the loop. Place the pencil on top of the mouth of the jar so the star hangs down in the solution. It should not touch the bottom.
4. Cover the top. Leave the pipe cleaner in the salt solution overnight or longer. Check to see how the crystals are growing. When the crystals are big enough, take the ornament out of the solution and hang up to dry.
5. When the ornament is dry, put a piece of gold or silver ribbon on it. Hang in a window or on a Christmas tree.



Activity 2 | Match Prophecies with Their Fulfillment

Cut apart and scramble the cards. Then match the prophecies (in italics) with their fulfillment.

<p><i>Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.</i></p> <p>Isaiah 7:14</p>	<p>Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>Matthew 1:18</p>
<p><i>"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."</i></p> <p>Numbers 24:17</p>	<p>The star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.</p> <p>Matthew 2:9-10</p>
<p><i>"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah...out of you shall come... the One to be ruler in Israel...."</i></p> <p>Micah 5:2</p>	<p>"Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"</p> <p>John 7:42</p>



Activity 2 | Match Prophecies with Their Fulfillment

<p><i>There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might....”</i></p> <p>Isaiah 11:1-2</p>	<p>So all the generations...from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.</p> <p>Matthew 1:17</p>
<p><i>Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple.... Behold, He is coming.”</i></p> <p>Malachi 3:1</p>	<p>John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.</p> <p>Mark 1:4</p>
<p><i>He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.”</i></p> <p>Isaiah 40:11</p>	<p>“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep and am known by My own.... [A]nd there will be one flock and one shepherd.”</p> <p>John 10:14,16</p>

