

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

3rd - 5th Grade

## Christmas Eve

*The Wise Men*

# The Wise Men

The Objective is the key concept for this weeks lesson. It should be the main focus of the study

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The “Main passage” is the basis of the study, where the other verse support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the “reward box” found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God’s Word

**Objective** To portray the two responses to found to Jesus’ birth in Matthew 2. The wise men chose to worship, Herod chose to oppose Him.

## Key Verses

Matthew 2:1-18—Main Teaching Passage

## Memory Verse - John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

## Hook

Briefly tell the kids the story of Christmas from Mary being told about the birth of Jesus to the shepherds lying in the field at night.

Tell the students that tonight we are going to look at what happened right after the birth of Jesus. Then begin from Matthew 2:1.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

# BOOK

Matthew 2 begins at the very end of the incarnation story. Jesus was born to Mary in Bethlehem and the angels appeared to the shepherds in the fields at night, who then went to see the birth of promised Messiah. While these events happened in Judea, in the East, wise men saw a sign: a new star appeared in the sky signifying the birth of the new King of Israel. Prompted by this sign the wise men departed from their homes to go and pay homage to the new King. Travelling for months, and potentially even longer, the wise men assumed quite naturally that the new King would be found at the palace. Arriving in Jerusalem they entered King Herod's palace and ask to see the new boy King. Upon hearing the news of the sign of a new King, Herod began to plot this Child's death. He was unwilling to see the signs and unwilling to bend his knee and call anyone else Lord. The wise men were told by the scribes and experts in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. It was there, in a small house that they finally found Jesus, now a small boy perhaps almost two years old, and they fell at His feet and worshiped Him, presenting costly gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. The Lord warned them in a dream not to tell Herod where Jesus was and they returned to their country via a different route. Meanwhile Herod, incensed by the news of a new king, ordered that all male children under the age of 2 should be put to death. Jesus and His parents, however, were warned in a dream that this would happen and fled to Egypt to be kept safe.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

# LOOK

One of the most important decisions that everyone in the world will at some point have to make is this: When you have learned the truth about Jesus, will you accept Him, bow down, and worship Him as Lord, or will you reject Him and oppose Him?

In Matthew 2 we see both of those responses clearly portrayed. Jesus had been born. The Messiah (Savior) that everyone has been waiting for had finally arrived. Wise men in the East had been looking and waiting for the sign of His arrival, and when it finally came, they left everything, taking with them precious and valuable gifts to give to this new King. They traveled for many, many days over a great distance to see, worship, and bow down to the Lord of lords and King of kings. They knew the truth, they knew what is right, and they responded accordingly.

Meanwhile, Herod hears about this new King's birth and responded in a very different way. Even though Herod heard that this new King's

# LOOK (Continued)

birth had been foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) and he had been given as a sign in the heavens themselves, something only God could do, Herod wanted to rule. He did not want to bend his knee to anybody, not even God. He wanted to be the King over everything that he saw and he wouldn't allow even God Himself to say otherwise.

It was clear that God was at work and that Jesus was the promised one from prophecy. The wise men from the East accepted that and acknowledged Jesus as Lord. Herod, the one who had the Scriptures, who should have known the truth, refused to accept Jesus as Lord and even began to fight against Him. Herod became an enemy to God's plan, going so far as to kill many young boys, just in case they might be the new King the wise men were talking about.

This is a choice that we too need to make. Will we become worshipers of God, who surrender ourselves to Him and allow Him to guide and oversee our lives? Or will we oppose Him, rejecting who He is and what He has done? The wise men were able to worship Him even though He was only a small child. All they needed was a star in the sky. We have so many more reasons to worship Jesus than they did. They did not know that Jesus would grow up to live a sinless life, but we do. They did not know that Jesus would heal the sick and raise the dead. We do. They did not know that Jesus would die a sacrificial death on a cross, pouring out His blood so that we could be forgiven of our sins, but we do. Finally, they did not know that Jesus would rise from the dead, conquering sin and death, opening the door for eternal life for whoever believe in Him, but we do. If you have never wrestled with that choice, if you have never set your life before Jesus like the wise men did, now is the time to decide. Will you commit your life to Jesus and give Him the best that you have?

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life.

# TOOK

As a class, memorize John 3:16.

Present the Gospel to the students. Give them an opportunity to respond to Him. Record the names of anyone who gives their life to the Lord and turn them in to the Children's Ministry Office at the end of service.

**Pray:** Worship Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Pray a prayer that offers yourselves and your best to Him.

**Parent Question:** How did the wise men worship Jesus?

# FURTHER STUDY

## Commentary on Matthew 2 by David Guzik

### MATTHEW 2 – WISE MEN FROM THE EAST, ESCAPE TO EGYPT AND BACK AGAIN

A. Wise men from the East come to honor Jesus.

1. (1-2) The wise men arrive in Jerusalem.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea 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.”

a. After Jesus was born in Bethlehem: Matthew actually tells us little about the birth of Jesus; Luke 2 records these familiar details. What Matthew tells us regards something that happened after Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

i. Bethlehem was the ancestral home of David, the great king of Israel and founder of their royal dynasty; however, it was not a large or significant town. “Bethlehem was quite a little town six miles to the south of Jerusalem. In the olden days it had been called Ephrath or Ephratah.” (Barclay)

ii. “A stir begins as soon as Christ is born. He has not spoken a word; he has not wrought a miracle; he has not proclaimed a single doctrine; but ‘when Jesus was born,’ at the very first, while as yet you hear nothing but infant cries, and can see nothing but infant weakness, still his influence upon the world is manifest. ‘When Jesus was born, there came wise men from the east,’ and so on. There is infinite power even in an infant Savior.” (Spurgeon)

b. In the days of Herod the king: This was the one known as Herod the Great. Herod was indeed great; in some ways great as a ruler, builder and administrator; in other ways great in politics and cruelty.

i. “He was wealthy, politically gifted, intensely loyal, an excellent administrator, and clever enough to remain in the good graces of successive Roman emperors. His famine relief was superb and his building projects (including the temple, begun 20 b.c.) were admired even by his foes. But he loved power, inflicted incredibly heavy taxes on the people, and resented the fact that many Jews considered him a usurper. In his last years, suffering an illness that compounded his paranoia, he turned to cruelty and in fits of rage and jealousy killed close associates.” (Carson)

ii. “Augustus, the Roman Emperor, had said, bitterly, that it was safer to be Herod’s pig than Herod’s son. (The saying is even more epigrammatic in Greek, for in Greek *hus* is the word for a pig, and *huios* is the word for a son).” (Barclay)

iii. The reign of Herod also gives us a chronological marking point. “Jesus was born before the death of Herod the Great, which is probably to be dated in 4 bc; the exact date of Jesus’ birth is unknown.” (France)

c. Wise men from the East came: These travelers are called wise men, which in the ancient Greek is *magoi*. Misconceptions and legends abound about these wise men. They were not kings but wise men, which means they were astronomers. There were not only three, but probably a great company. They seem to have come not on the birth night, but probably several months later.

- i. "In later centuries down to New Testament times, the term [magoi] loosely covered a wide variety of men interested in dreams, astrology, magic, books thought to contain mysterious references to the future, and the like." (Carson)
  - ii. Being from the East, they would have been among Jews who were exiled from Judah and Israel centuries before. "That many Jews were mixed with this people there is little doubt; and that these eastern magi, or philosophers, astrologers, or whatever else they were, might have been originally of that class, there is room to believe. These, knowing the promise of the Messiah, were now, probably, like other believing Jews, waiting for the consolation of Israel." (Clarke)
  - iii. There was a general expectation of a messiah or great man from Judea. Not very long after Jesus was born, the Roman historian Seutonius wrote: "There had spread over all the Orient an old and established belief, that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judea to rule the world." Tacitus, another Roman historian of the general period, wrote: "There was a firm persuasion...that at this very time the East was to grow powerful, and rulers coming from Judea were to acquire universal empire." (Cited in Barclay)
  - iv. "The tradition that the Magi were kings can be traced as far back as Tertullian (died c. 225). It probably developed under the influence of Old Testament passages that say kings will come and worship the Messiah (cf. Psalms 68:29, 31; 72:10-11; Isaiah 49:7; 60:1-6)." (Carson)
  - v. Church traditions even tell us their names – supposedly Melchior, Caspar, and Balthasar. You can see their supposed skulls in the great cathedral at Cologne, Germany.
- d. Came to Jerusalem: Guided by the astronomical phenomenon mentioned following, they came to the area and expected to find answers in Jerusalem. They expected that the leaders and people of this capital city of the Jews would be even more interested than they were. Matthew does not tell us specifically that the star guided them to Jerusalem.
- i. "A comparable visit by eastern Magi to Nero in ad 66 vouches for the probability of this story." (France) "There is not the slightest need to think that the story of the coming of the Magi to the cradle of Christ is only a lovely legend. It is exactly the kind of thing that could easily have happened in the ancient world." (Barclay)
  - ii. "It has been truly remarked that the shepherds did not miss their way; they came to Christ at once, while the wise men, even with a star to guide them, yet missed their way, and went to Jerusalem instead of to Bethlehem, and enquired at the palace of Herod, instead of at the stable where the Christ was born." (Spurgeon)
- e. Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? They traveled this great distance to honor a King; yet there is a little irony in their great effort to honor the King of the Jews. At that time the Jewish people were often despised and dishonored because of their unique customs and beliefs, and also often because of their success and prosperity. They were often thought of as a low, troublesome, and conquered race. It was remarkable that they would trouble themselves so much to honor an infant King, but even more so a King of the Jews.
- i. "They said, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?' 'Jews?' Who cared for Jews? Even in those days, Jews were the subject of contempt, for they had aforetime been carried captive into the east. Although they are the very aristocracy of God, his chosen people, yet the nations looked down upon the Jews." (Spurgeon)
  - ii. Significantly, they say this one has been born King of the Jews. It is a strange thing for a baby to be born a king. Usually they are princes for a long time before they are kings. "His kingly status was not conferred on him later on; it was from birth." (Carson)
- f. For we have seen His star in the East: There are many different suggestions for the natural origin of this remarkable star. Some say it was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn; some, other planetary conjunctions; others suggest a supernova; and some think of comets or a specifically created unique star or sign.
- i. Whatever it was, it is significant that God met them in their own medium: He guided the astronomers by a star. This was also in fulfillment of Numbers 24:17: A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel. This was widely regarded by ancient Jewish scholars as a Messianic prediction.

ii. Notice, it was His star: “The star was Christ’s star itself, but it also led others to Christ. It did this very much because it moved in that direction. It is a sad thing when a preacher is like a sign-post pointing the way but never following it, on his own account. Such were those chief priests at Jerusalem: they could tell where Christ was born, but they never went to worship him; they were indifferent altogether to him and to his birth.” (Spurgeon)

g. And have come to worship Him: The wise men came first to Jerusalem, assuming that the leaders of the Jews would be aware and excited about the birth of their Messiah. The wise men are about to find that this wasn’t the case at all.

2. (3) Herod is troubled at the news brought by the wise men.

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

a. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled: Herod was constantly on guard against threats to his rule, especially from his own family. He assassinated many family members whom he suspected of disloyalty. His being troubled is completely in character.

i. Herod, who wanted to be accepted by the Jews whom he ruled, was not a Jew at all but an Edomite, and Rome recognized him as a vassal king over Judea. The Jews tempered their great hatred of him with admiration for his building projects, such as the magnificent improvements made to the second temple.

ii. Barclay reminds us of what a bloody, violent ruler Herod was: “He had no sooner come to the throne than he began by annihilating the Sanhedrin...he slaughtered three hundred court officers...he murdered his wife Mariamne, and her mother Alexandra, his eldest son Antipater, and two other sons, Alexander and Arisobulus.”

b. He was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him: The fact that all Jerusalem was troubled with Herod is significant. This was due either to the fact that the people of Jerusalem rightly feared what sort of paranoid outburst might come from Herod upon hearing of a rival king being born, or because of the size and dignity of this caravan from the East.

i. This trouble is again testimony to the greatness of Jesus, even as a young child. “Jesus of Nazareth is so potent a factor in the world of mind that, no sooner is he there in his utmost weakness, a now-born King, than he begins to reign. Before he mounts the throne, friends bring him presents, and his enemies compass his death.” (Spurgeon)

3. (4-6) Herod is instructed regarding the Messiah’s coming by the chief priests and scribes.

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.’”

a. All the chief priests and the scribes: This was the first contact the religious leaders had with Jesus. They understood the Biblical information correctly, but failed in application to their lives.

i. Chief priests would especially include those who once held the office of High Priest; Herod changed the High Priest often because it was largely a political appointment.

ii. Scribes: “The ‘teachers of the law,’ or ‘scribes’ as other English versions call them, were experts in the Old Testament and in its copious oral tradition. Their work was not so much copying out Old Testament manuscripts (as the word ‘scribes’ suggests) as teaching the Old Testament.” (Carson)

b. So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea”: Quoting Micah 5:2, the chief priests and scribes understood that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea, distinguishing it from another town of the same name further north.

i. From this passage in Micah, they understood not only that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but also that He would be a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.

ii. Sadly, these experts had the right information but seem personally uninterested in meeting the Messiah for themselves.

iii. "Had they met with the shepherds of Bethlehem, they had received better intelligence than they could from the learned scribes of Jerusalem." (Trapp)

4. (7-8) True to character, Herod attempts to use wise men to find the child that he may kill Him.

Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

a. Determined from them what time the star appeared: Because Herod later commanded that all boys two and younger be killed in the area, we can assume that the wise men first saw the star a year or so previously (on the night Jesus was born). Their journey from the East to Judea was not quick, and they may have left as soon as logistics allowed.

i. Herod heard a good Bible study about the birthplace of the Messiah, but it did him no good. "When the earth-king dabbles in theology, it bodes no good to truth. Herod among the priests and scribes is Herod still. Some men may be well instructed in their Bibles and yet be all the worse for what they have discovered." (Spurgeon)

b. Bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also: The irony is strong. Herod claimed a desire to worship Jesus, when he really wanted to kill Him.

i. "Mark that the wise men never promised to return to Herod; they probably guessed that all this eager zeal was not quite so pure as it seemed to be, and their silence did not mean consent." (Spurgeon)

5. (9-12) The wise men present gifts to Jesus and leave without informing Herod.

When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, 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. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

a. Behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them: The star continued to guide them, apparently re-appearing. We can surmise that the star appeared some months before, guiding them to the general area, and then they visited Jerusalem to gain more information. Then the star appeared again to specifically guide them. This was an obviously supernatural phenomenon.

i. "We believe it to have been a luminous appearance in mid-air; probably akin to that which led the children of Israel through the wilderness, which was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Whether it was seen in the daylight or not we cannot tell." (Spurgeon)

ii. And stood over where the young Child was: Adam Clarke says that this is more literally, stood over the head of the child. In his thinking, it was some kind of meteor that guided them to the very house where Jesus was. He goes on to say that this idea of a star-like shine associated with the head of Jesus gave rise to the idea of the halo in ancient and medieval art.

iii. "The words came to rest mean literally 'came and stood', and can mean only that the star itself moved to guide the Magi." (France)

b. They saw the young Child with Mary His mother: We notice that Jesus here is called a young Child, likely being between 6 and 18 months old. We also notice that (against custom) the Child is mentioned before the mother.

i. "Joseph haply was at work, or otherwise absent, lest the wise men should mistake him for the true father of the child." (Trapp)

c. When they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh: It was common – especially in the East – that one would never appear before royalty or a person of importance without bringing gifts. Considering who these wise men believed the young Child to be, it is not surprising that they gave such lavish gifts.

i. The idea that there were three wise men comes from the fact that there were three gifts. We may say that gold speaks of royalty, incense speaks of divinity, and myrrh speaks of death. Yet it is almost certain that the Magi did this unawares; they simply wanted to honor the King of the Jews.

d. They presented gifts to Him: The precious gifts were not presented to Mary or Joseph, but to Jesus Himself. Yet undeniably, the infant Jesus did not use or spend any of these precious gifts, but His parents used them, hopefully wisely, on His behalf and benefit.

i. In the same way, when we give to Jesus today, we do not give to Him directly, but to His people, who use those gifts on His behalf and benefit – and hopefully wisely.

ii. "How useful this gold was to Joseph in the following months! It helped him to defray the cost of the journey into Egypt and back, and to maintain his precious charges there. The Heavenly Father knew what those needs would be, and met them by anticipation." (Meyer)

e. Fell down and worshipped Him: More important than their gifts is the fact that they worshipped Jesus. It must have been a curious sight to see these impressive dignitaries bowing before a young child.

i. We see here three different responses to Jesus; one may say that all people respond in one of these three ways.

- Herod displayed an open hatred and hostility toward Jesus.
- The chief priests and the scribes were indifferent toward Jesus, all the while retaining their religious respectability.
- The wise men sought out Jesus and worshipped Him – even at great cost.

ii. In comparing the visit of the wise men to the earlier visit of the shepherds (Luke 2:15-20), we see:

- Jesus came to the Jew first, then to the Gentile.
- Jesus came to the humble and ignorant first, then the honorable and learned.
- Jesus came to the poor first, then the rich.

iii. We should learn from the wisdom of these wise men.

- They were not satisfied with looking at the star and admiring it; they did something about the star, and set out and followed it.
- They persevered in their search and in following after the star.
- They were not discouraged in the search by clergy and doubtful religious leaders.
- They rejoiced at the star.
- When they arrived at the destination the star led them to, they entered in.
- When they entered in, they worshipped.
- They sensed an urgency to worship Him now and not wait until later.

· When they worshipped, it was to give something – not empty-handed adoration.

iv. We see a wonderful pattern: “Those who look for Jesus will see him: those who truly see him will worship him: those who worship him will consecrate their substance to him.” (Spurgeon)

f. Being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way: Their worship is also manifested in obedience. They are obedient to the heavenly dream and leave without serving as Herod’s informants.

B. The flight to Egypt and the return to Nazareth.

1. (13-15) Joseph, Mary, and Jesus find refuge in Egypt.

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.” When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

a. Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt: The command was urgent, and came right when the wise men had departed. It would not have sounded completely strange to Joseph that they should find refuge in Egypt. There was a large Jewish community in Egypt. It wasn’t strange that the Holy Spirit would guide Joseph to take the family there.

i. “Egypt was a natural place to which to flee. It was nearby, a well-ordered Roman province outside Herod’s jurisdiction; and, according to Philo (writing circa a.d. 40), its population included about a million Jews.” (Carson)

b. Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him: This response is consistent with both the character of Herod and humanity in general. It doesn’t speak well of humanity to notice that when God added humanity to His deity and came to earth – in the most non-threatening manner possible – the almost immediate reaction of one section of humanity was to try as hard as they could to murder Him.

c. When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night: Joseph’s rapid (leaving the very night of the dream) and complete obedience is impressive. It is unlikely that Joseph ever imagined such events when he first was betrothed to Mary of Nazareth.

i. “We are not told into what part of Egypt Joseph went, nor how long he stayed there: some say six or seven years; others but three or four months.” (Poole)

d. Out of Egypt I called My Son: In the process, another prophecy was fulfilled. At first glance, we might wonder how this prophecy from Hosea 11:1 is fulfilled in Jesus. But Matthew makes it clear that even as Israel as a nation came out from Egypt, so would the Son of God.

2. (16-18) The Massacre of the Innocents.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: “A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more.”

a. He sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts: Though there are no exact descriptions of this event in secular history, it is entirely in character with Herod’s well-known ruthlessness.

- i. "Incredible? Anything is credible of the man who murdered his own wife and sons. This deed shocks Christians; but it was a small affair in Herod's career, and in contemporary history." (Bruce)
  - ii. Especially in his last years Herod was cruel and suspicious. When he knew that his death was approaching, Herod had many Jewish leaders of Jerusalem arrested on false charges. He ordered that as soon as he died, they should all be killed – he knew well no one would mourn his own death, so he was determined that some tears be shed when he died.
  - iii. "Actually, the story is in perfect harmony with what we know of Herod's character in his last years...The death of a few children (perhaps a dozen or so; Bethlehem's total population was not large) would hardly have been recorded in such violent times." (Carson)
- b. A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning: This quotation from Jeremiah 31:15 originally referred to the mourning of Israel's mothers during the conquest and captivity of the nation. Here Rachel is a representation of Bethlehem's mothers.
- i. "This prophecy was literally fulfilled when Judah was carried into captivity; there was then a great mourning in the tribes of Benjamin and Judah, for their children that were slain and carried away into captivity. It was now fulfilled, that is, verified, a second time." (Poole)
  - ii. "Rachel was to the Hebrew fancy a mother for Israel in all time, sympathetic in all her children's misfortunes." (Bruce)