





From the East

Matthew 2

Birth of Jesus

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judaea in the days when Herod was the king. After Jesus was born, wise men came from the east to Jerusalem. They saw his star in the east, and came to worship him. They must have been studied in the stars to notice a difference in the night sky, and somehow they knew that this star was the star of the newborn king.

Discuss: These men were believed to be kings, or dignitaries.
They were definitely of great importance as they came with very expensive gifts.
It would have been known that they were in town; they likely came with a great caravan.
They had traveled a great distance, and had to have carried many supplies for the journey.
Men of this great status most likely would have servants that accompanied them on this long journey.
There were probably multiple camels, animals, and people with them.
People would have seen them come into town, and were probably talking about these men.

We do not know the number of wise men. Tradition holds that there were three, possibly because of the number of gifts. Scripture says the wise men came from the east; many believe that they are a New Testament parallel of the Queen of Sheba. Just as she came to Solomon bringing gifts and seeking his wisdom, these wise men came bringing gifts to the newborn king. It is believed that Sheba may have been located in what is now modern day Yemen, or possibly Ethiopia. Isaiah seems to indicate that the wise men came from this same area. (Isaiah 60:6) The Bible does not speak specifically to these details, nor does it mention how many wise men there were.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they began asking questions. Where is the new king?

There was a birth, and they were looking for a new baby that that will grow up to be the King of the Jews. They would have to be of some importance to get the attention, and get an audience with the king.

Herod is the presiding king. Usually, kings are chosen from family lineage. Herod would have expected that his son would be the next king. If people are coming looking for a new king, this would be very disturbing news to an existing king. It seems that someone has been born that will grow up to lay claim to his crown. Herod, and everyone in Jerusalem, was troubled with this news.

Herod got all the scribes and chief priests together. They would know the prophecies of the coming Messiah.

Herod demanded them to tell him where the Christ would be born.

It says "demanded." Herod is upset. He is the king, and he is very angry, as well as scared, and feels very threatened. He is demanding to know where to find this "**King of the Jews.**"

The priests and scribes told him that the prophet wrote that he would come out of Bethlehem of Judaea. (Micah 5:2)





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Once Herod heard this information, he called the wise men privately and asked them *when* the star appeared. Then he told them to go to Bethlehem and look for the baby. He told them to come back and tell him after they found him, so he could go and worship him too.

Does Herod really want to worship this new king? No, he wants to kill him.

After speaking with the king, the wise men left.

This star they saw in the east went before them, and came and stood over where Jesus was. That is an amazing thing! They rejoiced when they saw the star, and they went into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother. They fell down and worshipped him.

Then they opened their treasures and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were very expensive presents, ones that would be gifts for a king.

It is believed that Mary and Joseph were not wealthy. What we know is that Joseph was a carpenter, so they seemingly lived a very humble lifestyle. It is speculated that these gifts helped them in their travels to Egypt and setting up a life in Nazareth, but the Bible does not say.

God appeared to the wise men in a dream and told them not to go back to Herod. Bethlehem is located approximately nine kilometers (5.6 miles) from Jerusalem. But the wise men went back home a different way.

After the wise men left, the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to get up and flee, or run away, into Egypt. The Lord told Joseph that Herod was going to try to kill Jesus, so to stay in Egypt until God gave him word to leave. They left in the middle of the night and fled to Egypt and stayed there until they heard that Herod had died. This fulfilled an Old Testament prophecy where it says the Lord called his son out of Egypt. (Hosea 11:1)

After Herod figured out that the wise men were not going to come back, he knew he had been deceived and he was *very* angry. He had all the babies in Bethlehem and surrounding areas killed that were two years old and younger. He wasn't sure exactly when the Messiah had been born, but the wise men had told him when the star appeared.

This was a horrific tragedy, and a sad time to be living in this region. It is not necessary to elaborate on this with the students. Some translations say Herod only killed the boy babies, other translations are vague.

This fulfilled the prophecy spoken of in Jeremiah 31:15 where it speaks of a great weeping and deep sadness for the loss of children.

After Herod was dead, the Lord appeared to Joseph in Egypt in a dream. **He told Joseph to go back to Israel, because everyone who was trying to kill Jesus was dead.**

Joseph took Mary and Jesus and went back to Israel. But he heard that Herod's son, Archelaus, was the king instead of Herod, and he was afraid to go near. He was warned of God in a dream and went into the region of Galilee, and came to live in a city called Nazareth. This was actually the city where Mary was living when Gabriel appeared to her, and the city that Joseph and Mary left when they went to Bethlehem to be taxed. Apparently this was their home town.

This fulfilled another prophecy that Jesus would be called a Nazarene.



Jesus in the Story



There are many prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament, and many things in the Old Testament are also foretold and patterned in the New Testament.

Numbers 24:17 says that a Star will come out of Jacob.

Micah 5:2 says that a ruler will come out of Bethlehem.

The star is representative of God's glory. This glory guided the Israelites through the wilderness as a pillar of fire by night. The star is the New Testament counterpart that guided the gentiles to Christ by night.

Psalm 72:15 speaks of the Messiah to be given the gold of Sheba.

Isaiah 60:6 says that a multitude of camels will cover (the Messiah), and they will come from Sheba bringing gold and incense and showing the praises (worshiping) the Lord.

One Old Testament counterpart for the wise men could be the Queen of Sheba. She was a gentile woman who came from what could be modern day Yemen or Ethiopia to see King Solomon. She came from the east bringing gifts to a king, and seeking his wisdom.

Another Old Testament reflection could also be the connection between Daniel's three wise friends being taken captive by a gentile (non-Jewish) king and carried east. Now you have wise gentile kings return to the King of the Jews.

Matthew 2:23 says that this was a fulfillment of the prophecy that Jesus will be called a Nazarene. This comes from Isaiah 11:1,10. The Hebrew word for Branch is Netzer, which is where Nazareth gets its name.

Up to this point, the Gentiles had not had any hope of a Messiah. Jesus came to fulfill God's promises to Israel, but he came as a light to the Gentiles also. (Luke 2:30-32)





Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

49. An Empty Tomb

Read John 20

1. Who did Mary Magdalene think Jesus was?
2. What did Mary think happened to Jesus?
3. What was in the tomb?
4. Do you think a thief would have left the grave clothes?

1 Corinthians 15:17-19

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

50. Unable to Speak

Read Luke 1:7, 18, 20, 63-64

1. What do we know about Zacharias and Elizabeth?
2. How did Zacharias respond when Gabriel told him the news?
3. Why did Gabriel say Zacharias would not be able to speak?
4. When was Zacharias able to speak again?

Psalm 139:4-5

For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD you know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid your hand upon me.

51. A Child Is Born

Read Isaiah 9:7

1. When will the government of Jesus stop increasing?
2. What else is always increasing?
3. Whose throne will Jesus sit on?
4. What is his throne established with?

Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

52. From the East

1. What gifts did the wise men bring?
2. Why did the wise men not go back to talk to Herod after they found Jesus?
3. Where did Joseph and Mary take Jesus?

Isaiah 60:3, 6

The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. They shall bring gold and incense, and they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord.

