

Date - January 9, 2022

Scripture/Bible Story/Theme

The Wise Men – Matthew 2

Children's Illustrated Bible – p.p. 196-197

God's Gift to Us

Workshop Name

Scented Sachet Packet

Left/Right Game

***** The following notes I found very helpful to better understand Epiphany. I thought perhaps you might find them helpful as well. It does give you some additional background before presenting the story to the children.

Epiphany: literally means manifestation or appearance. The day of Epiphany itself, which western Christians celebrate on January 6th, is the day that commemorates the visit of the Wise Men. During the season of Epiphany, which stretches until Ash Wednesday, God is made manifest (made obvious) through the flesh and blood presence of his son, Jesus, on earth.

Magi: the same as wise men. Probably were not kings but students of the stars, astrologers. They probably were from Persia (today's Iran) or Arabia. The Bible does not say there were three! We assume there were three because of the three gifts mentioned. The names of the magi – Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar – were given to them in the sixth century.

It is important to note that the wise men were not Jews. In seeking Jesus and worshiping him, we are reminded that Jesus came for all people.

The magi were learned men. Even though they weren't Jewish they obviously knew Old Testament prophecy.

What Old Testament prophecy?

A prophecy is a prediction of a future event. From the beginning God had promised his chosen people that he would send them a king to save them. That king would be a descendant of Abraham and King David, and would be born in Bethlehem. The prophet Micah spoke of this saying, "But as for you, Bethlehem, . . . from you one will go forth for me to be ruler of Israel." (Micah 5:2) The Israelites had been holding onto God's promise for hundreds of years, through many generations. They were watching and waiting in anticipation for the arrival of their king.

What about that star?

Meanwhile the magi were studying the stars. They saw something that caused them excitement! It's likely that is wasn't any large, bright event that everyone noticed. Indeed it seems that only the Magi knew about it. (Herod didn't see it, nor did apparently the shepherds). We have this fanciful image of a picturesque, bright star, but there is no scriptural evidence for such a scene.

At that time in history, stars were often associated with royal events. (All great kings at that time had stars associated with their nativity.) Could what the wise men observed mean that the King of the Jews had come? The wise men were excited enough about this event to go check it out. They wanted to worship this new king.

When did the wise men visit?

Their journey likely was long and they arrived many months, if not years after Jesus' birth. Therefore, they did not show up at the manger. The text makes it clear that they came to the "house" (see Matthew 2:11). By the time these wise men got to Jesus, he had grown and could have been up to two years old.

The wise men journeyed to Jerusalem and expecting to find a king, inquired at Herod's. (Who better to ask about the next king, than the current king?) The wise men asked, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." (Matthew 2:2)

What was Herod's reaction?

Herod was frightened by what the wise men asked. He feared a rival king and plotted how to protect himself. It's obvious he hadn't seen any star. In verse 7 he secretly asks the wise men what time the star had appeared. Then he requested that he be told where the child is found so he too could pay him homage! (In verse 16 we see Herod's real response when he learns he's been tricked – he orders all children two years or younger to be killed.)

After leaving Herod how did the wise men find the Christ?

The star that they had seen appeared again and led them. When they found Jesus they worshiped him and offered him gifts.

What about those gifts?

Gold: A befitting gift for a king.

Frankincense: Incense used in the Temple (burned to honor God), distilled from tree sap.

Myrrh: Also an aromatic tree sap, used to prepare a body for burial.

Then what happened?

The wise men were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, that Herod meant the child harm. Jesus was spared because Joseph was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt. Thus as a young age Jesus became a refugee (someone seeking shelter from something threatening, often by going to a foreign country). After Herod's death, Joseph gets another angelic visit. They return to Galilee to live in the town of Nazareth.

Anything else?

The story of the magi is only found in Matthew's gospel.

Opening Prayer

Dear God,

Thank you for the gift of your son and for loving all of us so much. Thank you for the stars that appear in our lives leading us to you. Amen

Objectives

- Name that the story is found in the New Testament.
- Locate the story in the Gospel of Matthew.
- Re-tell the story of the wise men, including certain story facts: the number of wise men is uncertain; they visited Jesus as a child not a baby, when they found him they bowed down and worshipped him and gave him precious gifts.
- Describe how the wise men were seeking Jesus and were led by a star.
- Discuss how we seek Jesus. God reaches out to us to lead us, even before we are aware of it.
- Recognize what a gift God has given us – his son Jesus. Discover how we can respond by sharing our gifts.

Supplies

1. felt rectangles
2. pieces of ribbon to tie up the package
3. cinnamon sticks (two for each child) and whole cloves
4. glue gun – if you have one, not absolutely necessary

Activity

After reading the passage the following can be used for review and discussion:

What were the wise men called in the story? Magi

Sometimes we refer to them as kings but they probably were not really kings. They were people who studied the stars. They saw stars as signs of important events to come; this particular star leads them to Jesus.

In this story, the wise men found Jesus by following a star. Who led the star? God

So who led the wise men to Jesus? God

What three gifts did they bring to Jesus? Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh

It is thought that the practice of giving gifts at Christmas traces back to the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh that were given to Jesus by the Magi.

Why did they bring those gifts?

Gold - a gift for a king.

Frankincense - incense used in the Temple and burned to honor God made from tree sap

Myrrh - aromatic tree sap, used to prepare a body for burial

When the wise men finally found Jesus they knelt down and worshipped him. They celebrated Jesus' birth by bringing him gifts.

What do you think would be the most important gift you could give Jesus?

God loves you. We give gifts to others as a response to God's love for us.

How does knowing this story make us think differently about gifts we just gave and received at Christmas?

Who leads us to Jesus? God

It would be great if God would always provide us with a "star" to find where we should go. But that doesn't always happen. What are some of the ways God provides for us to get to know Jesus? Studying the Bible, prayer, learning about Jesus in Kids' Kingdom, attending worship services, talking to other people who believe in Jesus

How does God reach out to lead us even though we may not be aware of it?

Directions

Using pieces of the felt material form a small rectangular bag. Glue gun the 2 edges. (Not absolutely necessary).

Leave the top open.

Put a dozen cloves and 2 or 3 cinnamon sticks in each bag. If you break up the sticks, the scent is stronger.

Tie the yarn or ribbon around the neck of the bag about 1 inch from the top.

*****If you have time you can do the following:

Ask the children to sit in a circle. Read the story of Epiphany to the children. When you say right or left have the kids point either to the right of left.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem a star appeared **right** over the stable where Jesus was born. Wise men in the east – magi who studied stars – saw this star. One wise man said to another, "look at that new star!" "Where", said his friend? "**Right** there", the first wise man responded. Ooooh!

Now the wise men knew that God had promised he would one day send a king to **rightfully** rule over his people. Could this star be a signal left by God, that the new king had been born? The wise men **left right** away to follow the star. They **left** their homes behind. They followed the

star, which lead them **right** towards Jerusalem.

The wise men stopped in Jerusalem and asked King Herod, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising, and have come to worship him.” King Herod was afraid. He was afraid that a new king who would kick him **right** off his throne! Herod asked the Jewish leaders where this Messiah was to be born. The Jewish leaders went **right** to their scrolls. They read what the prophets had foretold: the Messiah would be born **right** near by, in Bethlehem.

Before the wise men **left**, Herod asked them when the star had appeared. Herod told the wise men that he wanted to be told where they found this new king so he too could worship him. Ah, but was Herod telling the **rightful** truth? Alas, you are **right**, he was not.

After the wise men **left**, the star lead them **right** to Bethlehem. The star led them **right** to Jesus. When the wise men saw Jesus, they dropped **right** there and worshipped him giving him their gifts. Then they **left** for their own country by another road because they had been warned in a dream not to go back to see Herod.

Right, it's The End.

Reflection/Evaluation

Students are to copy the memory verse into their journals. They are to write an answer to the following question. If they are unable to write a response they may illustrate one.

What is your “star” or the thing that leads you to Jesus and to God?

Lord's Prayer