

Calvary Chapel  Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY  
TEACHER'S PACKET

4s-2nd 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 verses 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** This lesson will use the story of the wise men to present the Gospel and give an example of how we can worship Jesus.

## Key Verses

Matthew 2:1-12—Main Teaching Passage

## Memory Verse - Luke 2:11

“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

## Hook

Turn out the lights in your classroom and your class’ flashlight to create a “star” on the ceiling. Have the students walk around the class following the star. Then have them return to their seats.

Tell the class that this is what the wise men did for several months, perhaps even a year, when Jesus was born . Ask if they could imagine following a star for a year like that.

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

For this study, we will be focusing on the magi and their role in the nativity scene. Although most students will know the story of Jesus' birth, it might be a good idea to briefly review the story for the sake of any new visitors who have not heard before.

We find out in Matthew 2 that Jesus' birth brought some special guests to Israel from a far away land. Some wise men from the East saw a star that guided them to the land of Israel. The wise men believed that this star would lead them to the new king of Israel, so they followed the star until they came to Jerusalem to see the current king in Israel, King Herod. They came to Herod asking where this newborn king might be so they could worship Him. However, Herod had never heard of such a King and was furious when he learned of this new threat to his throne. Herod asked the religious leaders where this king would be born, and they told him that the Scripture said that he would be born in Bethlehem. Then Herod sent the wise men to find this King and return to him when they found Him. The wise men then left and continued to follow the star until they found Jesus in Bethlehem. Once they found Him, they rejoiced and worshipped Him and gave Him precious gifts. However, the Lord warned them in a dream not to return to Herod, for he was plotting to kill Jesus. The wise men obeyed the dream and returned to their homes without seeing Herod.

# LOOK

Because many of us have heard the Christmas story, it can be easy to miss how strange some of the details of the wise men account are. These men were rich, wise, and successful, probably living comfortable lives somewhere in the East, yet they followed a star to find a King with only God's Word and their faith as assurance that they would find anything at the end. At the end of their journey, they didn't find a royal family in a palace, but a poor, small boy in a house with His family. Then, these rich, powerful men offered expensive gifts and bow down to worship this child. From an earthly perspective, none of this makes sense. There was no natural reason to believe that this boy would ever become anyone noteworthy, let alone that He was the Son of God, true King of Israel, and Savior of the world. All these wise men had was faith that this Child was special and worthy of worship, and that was enough.

The wise men offer us a great example of worship. They did know everything about Jesus, but what little they did know, they responded to in faith. They came before Jesus and presented themselves to Him. They

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

# LOOK (Continued)

offered him great gifts from what they had. We might not be as rich as these wise men, but God has given all of us something that we can offer Him. It could be our time, our talents, or our love, but all of us have something that we can give to Jesus. No matter how big or how little our gift is, we can offer it to Jesus and He will accept it.

We actually have even more reason than the wise men to worship Jesus. They knew that He would be a mighty King, but they had no idea that He was going to do that not by establishing a magnificent earthly kingdom, but by dying on the cross for us. On the other hand, we know what happened to Jesus. We know that He would go on to live a sinless life yet die a criminal's death on the cross as a punishment for our sins. We know that three days after He died, Jesus rose again from the dead and gave us the chance to believe in Him and receive eternal life. Today, when we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate not just the birth of this mighty King, but we celebrate His death and resurrection as well. Earlier we looked at how we all have gifts to offer Jesus, but the most important thing, the one thing we absolutely must offer Jesus, is our lives. We all must make the decision to make Jesus our Lord and Savior so that we can receive the ultimate gift He gave us, forgiveness from our sins and eternal life in Heaven with Him.

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

Give an opportunity for any students who have never given their lives to Christ to hear and receive the Gospel message.

As a class, memorize Luke 2:11.

**Pray:** Thank the Lord for sending His Son to be born in Bethlehem to be Savior of the world. Worship Him as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

**Parent Question:** What gifts do you have that you can offer Jesus?

# FURTHER STUDY

## Commentary on Matthew 2:1-12 by David Guzik

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

#### 1. ([Matthew 2:1-2](#)) 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. ([Matthew 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 Aristobulus."

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. ([Matthew 2:4-6](#)) 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. ([Matthew 2:7-8](#)) **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. ([Matthew 2:9-12](#)) **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 sur-



prising 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.