

January 9, 2013

Epiphany

Matthew 2:1-18

LESSON FOCUS

Say with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord." Believe in your heart that God praised him from the dead. Then you will be saved. Romans 10:9 (NirV)

The first story after Jesus' birth opens with Magi who have traveled a long distance to offer homage to a new king born in Judea. They enter Jerusalem with a large enough caravan to attract the city's attention (2:3); they must have assumed that they would find the newborn king in Herod's palace in Jerusalem.

Magi were astrologers from the royal court of the king of Persia. Part of their job description was to make the king of Persia look good, but here they come to promote another king. Kings would often send congratulations to new rulers in other realms, but the king of Persia called himself "king of kings," that is, the highest of kings. We might not expect the Magi to worship Jesus, especially if they found him not in the royal palace but in a cave.

More unexpectedly, these Magi are astrologers, which is why they noticed the star to begin with. Although the Bible forbade divination (Deut 18:9-13), which includes astrology (Is 47:13; see also Deut 4:19), for one special event in history God, who rules the heavens, chose to reveal himself where the pagans were looking.

Yet even supernatural guidance like the star can take the astrologers only so far; for more specific direction they must ask the leaders in Jerusalem where the king is to be born (2:2). That is, their celestial revelation was only partial; they must finally submit to God's revelation in the Scriptures, preserved by the Jewish people.

Another central character in this narrative is Herod (2:3, 7-8). That Herod is dismayed by the Magi's announcement is not surprising (2:3); in this period most Greeks, Romans and even Jews respected astrological predictions. But as many incidents during Herod's reign illustrate, he was more paranoid than most other rulers. For Herod, little room existed for two kings in his realm.

Not knowing himself where the king would be born, Herod gathers the religious experts, the chief priests and scribes (2:4), most of whom in this period were loyal to his agendas. These experts immediately identify the place where the Messiah will be born on the basis of Micah 5:2. But while the religious leaders know where the Messiah will be born, they do not join the Magi in their quest. These are the religious leaders, but they fail to act on all their Bible knowledge. Jesus is just a baby, and they take him for granted.

After the Magi have left Jerusalem, they come and worship Jesus (2:9-11). A road led south to Bethlehem, which was about six miles from Jerusalem, so the rest of the Magi's journey probably did not take very long.

The Magi's innocence compared to Herod's murderous shrewdness again reminds Matthew's readers not to prejudge the appropriate recipients of the gospel (compare 13:3-23). Jesus is for all who will receive him, and God may provide Jesus' servants with allies in unexpected places if we have the wisdom to recognize them.

BIBLE STORY

Epiphany

Matthew 2:1-18

Read from your Bible. Ask students to find it in a Bible too. Those that can read can follow along. Choose the passages you would like to read aloud. Use visuals to help tell the story.

Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem, in the region of Judea. A man named Herod was king over this region of Judea. After Jesus' birth in a stable in Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary moved into a house there in Bethlehem.

It was during this time that Wise Men came from the east. These Wise Men studied the stars. While they were still in their own country, God sent a star to announce the birth of His Son and they saw it. They knew that the star announced something big! When they arrived in Jerusalem they asked about a newborn king, "Where is the child who has been born to be king of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:2 NIV) They wise men had come all this way to worship Jesus.

But when King Herod heard about a newborn king, he was very upset. Herod called together all the teachers of the law and the priests. He asked them where God's promised Son would be born. They all knew exactly where He was to be born. God had promised that His Son would come out of Bethlehem. That is where the newborn king would be born.

As the Wise Men left King Herod, they saw the star that had led them to Jerusalem. They were so excited to see the star again. It led them to Bethlehem. They didn't find a palace. What they found as the star stopped, was a normal house. The Wise Men went into the house. Young Jesus was there with His mother, Mary. The Wise Men bowed down and worshipped Jesus. Then they brought out their gifts.

They gave Jesus gold, frankincense, and myrrh. As the Wise Men left, God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod. They obeyed and they went home another way.

After the Wise Men's visit, Joseph had a dream. The angel of the Lord warned Joseph, "Get up! Go to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you to come back. King Herod is going to search for the child. He wants to kill Him."

So Joseph got up and they left during the night. They went to Egypt. They stayed there until King Herod died. God kept His promise - "I chose to bring my Son out of Egypt." (Hosea 11:1)

BIBLE CHALLENGE

Read this passage from your Bible. Ask students to locate it in a Bible too. Help them learn this verse.

Say with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord." Believe in your heart that God praised him from the dead. Then you will be saved. Romans 10:9 (NirV)

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Frost star shaped cookies. Decorate them with royal colors. Students may eat their star cookies!
(Approximately 2 cookies per student)

GAMES

Journey to Bethlehem

Bible Focus: Matthew 2:1-16

You'll Need:

Large star drawn on large sheet of paper, divide star into 5 parts

In each section of star, write one of the following:

1

2

3

-1

-2

Plain white drawing paper

Markers

Bethlehem written on one sheet of plain white drawing paper

1 bean bag

Lead the Game

We can worship Jesus as the Savior whom God sent for the whole world! Some of the first people who worshipped Jesus – the wise men – went on a long journey to find Jesus in Bethlehem. Let's play a game to take a journey to Bethlehem too!

Give each student 2 or 3 sheets of plain white drawing paper and markers to be shared. Encourage students to draw a star on each sheet and color it in, or decorate it. Allow approximately 5 minutes for this activity.

Students will place their stars on the floor to form a game path. Place the word Bethlehem at the end of the game path.

Students line up at the beginning of the game path. Students take turns tossing the beanbag onto the star with numbers on it and moving the number of star papers written in the section that the bean bag landed in. The -1 or -2 mean to move backwards on the game path. The first student to reach Bethlehem answers one of the Discussion Questions!

Discussion Questions

1. **How do we know that God sent Jesus as the Savior of the world? (the Bible tells us!)**
2. **Why should we worship Jesus?**
3. **What gifts did the Wise Men bring to Jesus?**

SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS

Silver Duct Tape 3D Cross



What you will need:

Fun foam shaped cross

[Shurtape AF 912](#) aluminum duct tape

You can find this tape at a Lowe's or other home improvement store in the heating and air conditioning section. It costs about \$7.00 for 120 yards. It is not Duck tape.

Black acrylic paint

Paper towels

Utensils to engrave the tape

a ballpoint pen, the end of a paint brush, and the tines of a fork

How to Make Silver Duct Tape 3D Cross:

1. Cover the top of the fun foam cross with the duct tape, pressing it down and smoothing it out.
2. Press your utensils down into the tape to make shapes and designs.
3. When you are done with your design paint the entire surface of the cross with black acrylic paint. Let it dry for a few minutes, but not completely. Wipe the paint off the surface of the tape with a folded, damp paper towel. Press lightly so that you don't remove all the paint. You want the paint to remain in the indented areas so that the design shows up better. You do not have to add the black paint. (The cross on the right was done without the paint. The design is harder to see but still effective.)
4. Once the paint has dried thoroughly, you can wipe the surface again to make it shiny.

