



STORY 54

Wise Men, Smart Move

MATTHEW 2

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Matthew 2.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is given many names. Already the angels have called him the “Son of God” (Luke 1:35), “Immanuel” (which means “God with us”; Matt. 1:23), and “Jesus” (which means “Yahweh saves”; 1:21). Matthew also calls Jesus the “Christ” (1:1), because that word means “Anointed” or “King.” The word *king* might remind you of God’s promise to David. God promised David that from his offspring would come an eternal king who would rule an everlasting kingdom. And don’t forget about God’s promise to Abraham that all the nations would be blessed through his Snake-Crushing offspring.

That brings us to one more name for Jesus in our story today. Wise men from the east followed a star a great distance to find the one they called “king of the Jews” (see 2:1–2). Could this king of the Jews also be the King of all the nations?

1
Read

2
Teach

Let's find out by looking at what the wise men came to do and what that tells us about King Jesus.

TELL THE STORY

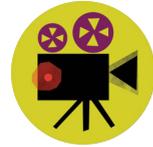
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the Bible passage together



Read from *The Biggest Story Bible Storybook*



Play *The Biggest Story* video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth Jesus is the King of all nations.

A long, long time ago, God promised that a king would come from the people of Israel who would be worshiped by people from every nation. Jesus is that King, and the story today gives us an early picture of what will one day be the world's biggest worship service.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a small town outside the big city of Jerusalem. At that time, Herod was the king over the Jews living in that region. One day, wise men from a faraway country came to Jerusalem. These men were called “magi” (from which we get the word “magic”) because they were pagan priests and stargazers. They came because a bright star rose in the sky, and it was a sign to them that a king had been born. In fact, God sent the star to lead them to his Son.

When they arrived, they asked where the new king was so they could worship him. Herod was troubled and asked the religious leaders where the coming “Christ” (or “king”) was to be born; they said Bethlehem. So Herod told the wise men to head to Bethlehem and find the new king. And so they did. In fact, the star led them to Bethlehem and the exact place where Jesus was. They “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” (Matt. 2:10). They were super-duper happy! Then, going into the home, they saw baby Jesus in his mother’s arms, and they did what they came to do: “They fell down and worshiped him” (2:11). Part of their worship was to bow before him, acknowledging him as King, and another part

was to give treasures to him—precious gold and expensive, nice-smelling oils (frankincense and myrrh).

The sad part about this story is what Herod did with the news of Jesus’s birth. He was jealous of Jesus, and he thought that this new king would take over his kingdom and that he would lose his power. He told the wise men to find Jesus so he could worship him, but he actually wanted to kill him. Imagine that! But God protected his Son (and the wise men too). God warned them in a dream to get out of town. Nothing (not even a king!) would stop Jesus, the baby King, from coming to save his people.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher. {5 minutes}

Three times in Matthew 2 Herod is called “king.” This is because Herod ruled over part of Israel. Jesus is called a “king” too. The wise men come to find the one “who has been born *king* of the Jews” (2:2). Of course, Jesus is more than the king of the Jewish people; he is King of all creation. At the end of Matthew’s Gospel Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (28:18). That’s a lot of authority. Total power! Many powerful people, like Herod, are not good people. But Jesus is perfectly good. Unlike Herod, who lived in a stately palace, Jesus was born in a lowly stall. And unlike Herod, who sought to kill all his enemies, Jesus was born to die for his enemies—sinners like us. This is the good news of our good Savior. He is humble and gentle, yet great and powerful; he is King of kings, yet he came to seek and save the lost.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** How long did God say his promised King would rule? What people do we see come worship the King of the Jews in today’s story? What does this show us about God’s promise that all nations would worship Israel’s King?

TAKEAWAY: The wise men show that God is keeping his promise that all nations will worship Israel’s King.

2. **QUESTION:** How did the wise men know a king had been born? Who controls the stars? Who did the wise men tell? What did Herod want to do to

3

Engage

Jesus? How did God protect Jesus? Herod might have thought he was in control, but who controls all things?

TAKEAWAY: From stars to kings, God controls all things.

Memory Verse
Let everything
that has breath
praise the LORD!

PSALM 150:6

3. QUESTION: What did the wise men come to do? Why? What should Herod and the people of Jerusalem have done when they learned the promised King had been born? Why? What should we do? Why?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus deserves our worship.

4. QUESTION: What did Herod want to do to Jesus? Why? Why can't anyone stop Jesus from saving and ruling over his people? Is Jesus still King today? Will his kingdom ever end?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the forever King.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Herod Says

Supply List: none

Have children stand. Give an instruction (e.g., “Jump up and down” or “Turn in circles”). The children should do the actions as commanded. Alternate by sometimes starting commands with “Herod says” (e.g., “Herod says, march in place”). The children should *not* obey Herod’s commands. If they do the “Herod says” action, they are out and should sit down. Continue until one child remains standing. Remind students that King Herod was a jealous, cruel ruler and that the magi did the right thing by not obeying him.

Option 2: Pass the Present

Supply List: empty box, wrapping paper, music

Before Class: Gather supplies. Wrap a box with Christmas wrapping paper.

This game is played like “Hot Potato.” Have children sit in a circle. When the music plays, pass the present around the circle. When the music stops, the person holding the present is out. Continue until one person remains. Remind children the wise men brought gifts to worship Jesus.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Wise Men Balloon Tennis Relay

Supply List: balloons (three colors), large empty boxes (two per team), paint stirrers, paper plates, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons (at least one per child). Make one “balloon racket” for each team by gluing paint stirrers to paper plates.

Divide children into teams and have them line up single file behind a box filled with balloons. Tell children the three colors of balloons in their team’s box represent gold, frankincense, and myrrh that need to be brought to king Jesus (represented by a second empty box at the other end of the room). The first child on each team takes a balloon out of his team’s box, hits it with the racket down to the second box, hits it into the box, and runs the racket back to the next player on his team. Play continues until a team gets all their balloons into the box on the far end of the room and has all players back to the starting line.

Option 2: Walk Like a Camel Relay

Supply List: balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons (two per team and a few extra).

Divide the children into teams and line them up single file. Have the first two children on each team become a “camel” by each placing a balloon between their knees and having the person in back hold onto the first person’s shoulders. On “Go” the camels race to a designated spot and back. If either of the balloons drop, the pair must stop and put the balloon back in place before continuing. When they get back to the start, have them pass the balloons to the next two players who will become the next camel. The first team to run all their camels wins. Explain that it is possible the magi rode on camels to find the newborn King because it was a common mode of transportation in that time and place.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: King of Kings Crown

Supply List: paper, cardstock, scissors, tape, markers, jewels, sequins, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a paper with the sentence, “Jesus is King of kings” written four times in large print. Cut out the sentence strips (one per child). On cardstock, draw a zigzag line down the center lengthwise (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child one piece of cardstock. Place sentence strips and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut along the zigzag line and tape the two pieces together to form a flat crown. (Do not yet form the circle.) Have them glue the sentence strip to their crown and decorate with markers, jewels, and sequins. Once decorated, form the crown into a circle and tape to secure. Remind children that even though Jesus was born in a stable, he is the King of kings!

Option 2: The Best Gift Picture

Supply List: Christmas wrapping paper, cardstock, markers, scissors, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut Christmas wrapping paper into smaller pieces. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of cardstock. Place markers, scissors, glue sticks, and wrapping paper pieces on tables. Have children write “Jesus is the BEST gift!” on the cardstock. Have children cut wrapping paper into square and rectangular “gifts” and glue them to their paper. Have children add bows to the gifts using markers. Remind children the wise men knew Jesus is the best gift!

Option 1: Craft Stick Star Ornament

Supply List: ribbon, string, craft sticks, glue, sequins, jewels, glitter, plates

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut ribbon into 8-inch pieces. Make a sample craft.

Give each child five craft sticks. Place glue, sequins, jewels, glitter, and plates on tables. Have children glue the craft sticks together to make a star shape, then have them tie the ribbon to the top for hanging. Have children glue sequins, jewels, and glitter to their stars. (Have children use the glitter over a plate so excess glitter falls on the plate.) Remind children that the wise men followed a star to Jesus. When they found him, they worshiped him.

Option 2: 3D Hanging Five-Point Star

Supply List: cardstock, crayons, scissors, hole punch, clear tape, string

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 8-inch pieces of string. Print large star shapes onto cardstock (two per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child two star papers and a string. Place crayons, scissors, a hole punch, and tape on tables. Have children cut out the stars and color them on both sides. Have children take one of their decorated stars and cut a slit from the bottom of the star up to the center (stop halfway). Next, have the children cut a slit on the other star from the top to the center of the star. Slide the stars together to make one 3D star. If needed, use tape to hold the two stars in place. Have children punch a hole at the top of the star and tie a string through for hanging. Remind children a star led the wise men to Jesus.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.