

# The Wise Men

Matthew 2:1-12

## **MEMORY VERSE**

MATTHEW 2:10

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.”

## **WHAT YOU WILL NEED:**

Blindfolds and tape or objects for a classroom obstacle course.

A star to hang from the ceiling or tape to the wall and some strips of fabric to tie legs together for a "three-legged" race.

Some objects to represent gold, frankincense and myrrh.

## **ATTENTION GRABBER!**

### **Faith Walk**

Divide your class into groups of two. Have one of the children close his eyes (a blindfold will make this activity even more fun).

Have the seeing child guide the blindfolded child through an obstacle course. You can set this up by placing objects around the room or by laying tape down in an interesting pattern.

When the blindfolded children have completed the course, have them trade places with the seeing child. Explain to the children that living by faith is like trusting the partner that is able to see. You have to trust where they will lead you. When we walk by faith we need to trust in our heavenly Father to lead us.

## LESSON TIME!

We will learn today that **the just will live by faith**, which means we need to live our lives in complete confidence that Jesus will do everything in our lives that He says He will do. Putting our faith in Him makes us “just” or “right” before Him. To be justified means “to be made right”; in other words, to be made “just as if I never sinned.” Those of us who are Christians are made right before God because we believe in Jesus who lived a sinless life, died for our sins, and rose again. When we believe in Him, in God’ eyes, it is just like we have never sinned.

This is just the beginning to the life of faith. We continue to “walk” and “live” by faith. The way we live our life (the things we do) will prove we have a relationship of faith with Him. We can have faith in Him because He is faithful!

### ROMANS 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Today we are going to look at the famous story of the wise men who came to visit Jesus. When they saw the star it took a lot of faith in God for them to leave their homes to come and worship Jesus. We find that they had to live their lives by faith. As we read about the wise men in our story today let’s think about how they walked by faith and what we can learn from their example.

## MATTHEW 2:1

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...

We read, “now after,” which indicates that Jesus was already born of Mary, and later in verse 8 Jesus is referred to as “the young child.” He was most likely not a newborn baby when the wise men came to worship Him. The word used to describe these wise men is “Magi” which literally means wise men or astrologers. It doesn’t say how many wise men there were. There may have only been two or even more than the traditional three we always see represented at Christmas time.

The Bible says that these wise men came from the East. They most likely came from Babylonia, Persia or possibly Arabia all the way to Bethlehem in Judea. They traveled a long distance to see Jesus. Why do you think they came to see Jesus?

## MATTHEW 2:2

...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."

The wise men eagerly wanted to see God's promised Messiah, “the King of the Jews,” so they could worship Him. How did these men know that the promised Messiah was close by? They were men of science and they knew the star they saw in the East was the sign of something miraculous. They also probably knew about the scripture that foretold the Child that was to come and save mankind from sin and death. They must have been familiar with some of the Old Testament scriptures.

Some believe that perhaps the wise men were Jews who still lived in Babylon. They possibly never returned many years earlier when their captivity ended. If they were Jews they probably would have known the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. When they realized that the Messiah had come they had a desire to go and to meet Him. They stepped out in faith to find the Messiah, Jesus. **The just will live by faith.**

Perhaps these were some of the prophecies they read to help them learn more about the coming Messiah:

NUMBERS 24:17: "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel..."

MICAH 5:2: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

These scriptures prophesied the coming of the Messiah hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Jesus was a long-awaited hope for people of many nations. The wise men knew that the Messiah would come and what He would do. They believed so firmly that they sought Jesus when they saw the sign of His coming. They had faith in God and they acted on His word because **the just will live by faith.**

Some people have thought the star may have been a meteor or the reflected light of planets. But, could not God, who created the heavens and earth, have made a special star to announce the coming of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ (just like we put candles on the birthday boy or girl's cake)? Maybe God wanted His Son to have the biggest, brightest candle ever on His birthday.

## Race to the Star

Hang a star in your room or tape one to the wall.

Pair the children like in the "FAITH WALK" only this time tie one of their legs together as in a "three-legged" race.

Have the pairs race against each other to the star. The wise men had to work together to find Jesus. They also had to trust in God by faith that they would get to see the Messiah. **The just will live by faith.**

### MATTHEW 2:3-6

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

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.'

After the wise men told the people that they had come to Jerusalem to worship this Child, Herod, the king of the land, became very angry. He was fiercely jealous that these wise men would come and worship a king other than himself. Herod was a king that only wanted attention for himself.

Have you ever wanted someone's attention and become angry because that person was paying attention to somebody else? This is

how Herod felt because he was selfish. The Bible tells us not to seek things for ourselves, but to rather encourage others and give others our attention.

Herod wanted to know where the Bible said the Messiah was to be born. He called the chief priests and scribes to find out where the scriptures indicated the Messiah would come from. Herod was afraid he would lose his kingdom, so he was determined to find out where this “King of the Jews” was. The scribes told Herod that scripture said the Child would be born in Bethlehem.

It is interesting that the chief priests and scribes knew that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. Yet later when Jesus was grown they refused to follow Him because they refused to believe that He was the Messiah. They knew the scriptures, but their hearts were hard and they wouldn’t come to Jesus.

#### MATTHEW 2:7-8

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."

Herod was very interested in finding this Child the wise men sought. He said he wanted to worship Jesus, but do you think he really did? No, he wanted to find the Child so that he could destroy Him and insure his rule as king. Could this have happened? No, God had a plan for the life of Jesus, and one little, mean-spirited king wasn’t going to stand in God’s way.

## MATTHEW 2:9-10

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.

After the wise men met with the king, they journeyed to Bethlehem to see the Child. They trusted God's word as they followed the star God had set before them. This star was unique. It was God's sign that His only Son had come to the world. This star actually hung over the place where the young Jesus lived.

These Magi were not wise because they graduated from the "Star of the East University." They were wise because they believed the Lord, trusted in Him and knew His word. Isn't it interesting that these wise men knew more about God's word than the king of Israel (Herod)? The wise men sought Jesus by faith because they knew that **the just will live by faith.**

## Gifts Fit For A King

Bring to class some objects that represent the gifts that the wise men brought to Jesus: an object the color of gold, something that smells sweet like incense (potpourri spray), and a spice like cinnamon or nutmeg.

Let the children look at the objects and smell them and imagine what it was like for the wise men to bring these gifts to Jesus.

## MATTHEW 2:11-12

And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped 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.

The wise men went into the house. Notice that the Bible says “house” not “manger.” Jesus is probably a little older now; he is called a “child” and his parents have settled down in a “house” in Bethlehem.

The wise men fell down, humbled themselves and worshipped Jesus. The word worship means “to lean forward to kiss,” “to bow in reverence.” The Persian people would fall on their knees and bow their foreheads to the ground in profound reverence.

They presented gifts to Jesus, but these were not just any gifts; these were gifts worthy of a king. Some believe these gifts were symbolic of Jesus’ life and death. For example:

- 1) Gold represents purity and deity.
- 2) Frankincense represents the fragrance of His perfect life.
- 3) Myrrh, a spice used in burial, represents His sacrificial death for our sins.

It is also believed that these gifts were financially beneficial to Jesus and His family in their flight to Egypt later to avoid the wrath of Herod.

After they spent their time worshipping and honoring Jesus, the wise men are warned in a dream not to return to Herod, but to go home another way. These wise men learned the word of God and watched for the signs of His faithfulness. They lived their lives according to the word of God because **the just will live by faith.**

## Faith Walk

Talk about what it was like to be led around the room without sight from the beginning of the class. Did the children trust the person who was leading them?

Explain that **the just will live by faith** in relation to the game that was played.

## OPTIONS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

Paste star stickers to a black piece of construction paper. Draw a very bright star to represent the star the wise men followed.

Get on all fours and pretend to be a camel. Give the children camel rides.

Sing a song to the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell:”

The wise men saw a star.

The wise men saw a star.

They followed it to Jesus' house;

The wise men saw a star.

Have the children dress up as wise men with strips and pieces of fabric.

## PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer. Pray for the faith to live life according to the word of God; to trust Him in every area of life. If there is someone who has never placed their faith in Jesus Christ give them opportunity to do so.