

PPT Title

## Herod and the Wise Men

**Main Point:** Each person must decide for himself who he believes Jesus is.

**Key Verse:** *"But what about you?" (Jesus) asked. "Who do you say I am?" - Matthew 16:15*

**Props:** a bright flashlight

### BACKGROUND/REVIEW

**Teacher:** Prearrange for a student to read Luke 2:19 NIV when you call on him or her.  
**Say:** Jesus came to be the Savior of the world. He did not come as a grown king, with trumpets blasting. Instead, He came quietly as a baby. God chose two humble people, Mary and Joseph, to be a part of His amazing plan. This news was too wonderful to keep silent. God sent an angel with word of the glorious birth to simple shepherds in a nearby field. Soon, heaven burst open with a host of angels singing praises to the Lord. The shepherds believed God's message and ran to find the child. After they found Him, they were unable to keep it to themselves. They ran to tell everyone that the long-awaited Messiah had arrived, in a manger in Bethlehem. And what did Jesus' teenaged mother think of all that had happened? Call on your volunteer reader to stand and read Luke 2:19: *"But Mary kept all these things like a secret treasure in her heart. She thought about them over and over."*



### THE INFANT JESUS (Luke 2:21-38)

**Say:** Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem when He was 8 days old. At that time, they gave Him the name Jesus, as the angel had instructed. They returned to the temple when Jesus was 40 days old. Mary and Joseph offered a sacrifice to the Lord, in keeping with God's Law (Leviticus 12:1-8).



While they were at the temple, they met two special people:

The first person they met was **Simeon**. The Bible says that he was a good and godly man, and that the Holy Spirit was with him. God had told him that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. When Simeon saw Jesus, he took Him in his arms and praised God. He said that the Child came to bring salvation to all people. Simeon predicted things that would happen to Jesus, because he was led by the Holy Spirit. He said Jesus would bring some people great joy, but would cause other people to fall. He said even though God sent Him, many people would be against Him (Luke 2:28-35).



The other person they met was **Anna**. Anna was an elderly woman who devoted her life to worship and prayer. The Bible calls her a prophetess. She was a very old Jewish widow.

*She never left the temple. She worshipped night and day, praying and going without eating. Anna came up to Jesus' family at that very moment. She gave thanks to God. And she spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the time when Jerusalem would be set free. - Luke 2:37b-38*

**Application:** Simeon and Anna both knew who Jesus was. They knew He was the Messiah that God had sent to set His people free, and they openly proclaimed His Lordship.

Simeon and Anna spent their lives listening to God and watching to see where He was at work. They abided with the Lord; they remained with Him. They were certain that God would keep His promises, and they waited joyfully. Their eyes were always watching for God's hand. All believers should learn from their example. We should watch and pray, then we will always recognize when God is at work.

### **THE WISE MEN FIND HEROD** (Matthew 2:1-9)

**Say:** Some time later, some men came looking for Jesus. We are not sure exactly how old Jesus was at this point, but we believe He was between 6 months old to one and a half years old. He was no longer a newborn in a manger, but He lived with Joseph and Mary in a house.

*After Jesus' birth, Wise Men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the Child who has been born to be King of the Jews? When we were in the east, we saw His star. Now we have come to worship Him." - Matthew 2:1b-2*

The Wise Men were also called Magi. This term was used for men who were advisors to kings in some countries. At times they were asked to interpret the kings' dreams (Genesis 4:8). Many times, Magi were men who tried to gain wisdom by studying the stars (Daniel 5:7). Somehow, when a very special star appeared in the sky, they knew they should follow it. We will talk more about the star in a few minutes.



We don't know exactly which country the Wise Men came from, but we know they came from east of Jerusalem. **Teacher:** Refer to map to show countries east of Israel. **Say:** Some people believe they came from the Orient, but it is more likely that they came from Arabia (Isaiah 60:6).

**Note to Teacher:** In Isaiah 60:6, the prophet says, "Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord." The peoples mentioned are the descendants of Abraham by his wife Keturah, whom he married after Sarah died. Midian was the progenitor of the tribe of Midianites or Arabians. Sheba also refers to the nation of Arabia, a land rich in frankincense, spices, gold and gems (Strong's Concordance).



Depending on where they came from, their trip may have taken months, or even up to a year! **Ask:** Who can tell me how many wise men there were? (Many kids may say that there were 3.) **Say:** Even though most movies and plays show 3 Wise Men, we really have no way of knowing how many there were. There may have been 3, or there may have been dozens. Either way, when the men arrived in Jerusalem, they caused quite a stir. They began asking where they could find the child who was the new King of the Jews.

The Jews already had an earthly king at that time. His name was Herod. He was not a good man. In fact, he was famous for being a terribly cruel man, who did not trust anyone. When King Herod heard that these men were asking about a **new king**, he became very upset.

**Note to Teacher:** Herod Augustus or Herod the Great (73BC - 4BC) was appointed by Rome as the king of Judea. Because Herod was pro-Roman, and was not even a true Jew, most Jews resented his appointment. In 20BC, Herod began to rebuild the Temple to appease his subjects. Jewish historian, Josephus, tells that Herod murdered his wife, her brother and father, along with his own friends, and hundreds of military leaders. He even killed three of his own sons, accusing them of treason. Herod was known as paranoid and treacherous king who committed atrocities against the Jews.

*When King Herod heard about it, he was very upset. Everyone in Jerusalem was troubled*

too. So Herod called together all the chief priests of the people. He also called the teachers of the law. He asked them where the Christ was going to be born. - Matthew 2:3-4



Herod did **not** want a new king to come along! He wanted to remain the king. So he went to the Jewish religious leaders who knew God's promises about the Messiah. Herod asked them where the Messiah would be born. The leaders told Herod what was written in God's word. One of God's prophets had said that the Messiah would be born in the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Then Herod did something very sneaky:

*Then Herod called for the Wise Men secretly. He found out from them exactly **when** the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem. He said, "Go! Make a careful search for the Child. As soon as you find Him, bring me a report. Then I can go and worship Him too." - Matthew 2:3-8*

Herod pretended that he was happy about the Messiah's birth. He asked the Wise Men exactly **when** the star appeared. This helped Herod to know exactly how old the Child was at that time. Then, Herod told them to go to Bethlehem to look for the Child. He told them to return and tell him **where** the child was, so he could worship Him too.

**Ask:** Do you think Herod planned on going to worship the new King? *No!* **Say:** We will find out that he was planning something terrible!

**Application:** In this part of our story, we see several groups of people, each hearing that the long-awaited Messiah had been born. Let's look at each group's response to the news:

**The wise men** left their homes and their families. They set out on a very long and possibly dangerous journey, hoping that they would have the opportunity to bow down and worship Him.

Just the opposite, **Herod** became angry at the thought of giving up any of his power. Herod knew this was no ordinary child. There was something about this boy that struck fear in his heart. So, he deceived the Magi, and he began to work out an evil plan.

There is one other group of people that the Bible mentions. It is the **people living in Jerusalem**. These were the sons and daughters of Abraham. They were the very people to whom God had made His great promises. They were supposed to be watching and waiting for the Messiah to come. However, Matthew 2:3 says, "Everyone in Jerusalem was troubled." The Jewish people in Jerusalem were troubled to hear that the Messiah had come! But why? One of God's promises about the Messiah was this: When He arrived, it would be a wonderful day for people who were *humble and who respected the Lord*, but it would be a terrible day for those who were *proud and who did not respect the Lord* (Malachi 4). Jesus came to offer forgiveness of sins for all who admit they are sinners and need a Savior. But many in Jerusalem did not want to admit they were sinners and they would not accept God's gift of forgiveness. They liked things the way they were. They wanted to run their own lives, and not bow down to worship the Messiah.

When King Herod heard about it, he was very upset. Everyone in Jerusalem was troubled too.  
Matthew 2:3

### **THE WISE MEN FIND JESUS** (Matthew 2:10-12)

**Say:** *After the Wise Men had listened to the king, they went on their way. The star they had seen when they were in the east went ahead of them. It finally stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. - Matthew 2:9-10*



**Say:** The Magi followed the unusual star to the place where Jesus was. **Teacher:** If possible, dim the lights where you teach in the room. Turn on the flashlight. Stand as far from the students as you can. Shine the light on one student, and ask the kids who the light is shining on. (The farther away you are, the harder it will be to tell who you have chosen.) After the kids guess, or say they can't tell, move the light closer to the chosen student. Ask if they can guess. Keep moving closer until the light is right above

**the student. Say:** More than likely, these men were experts in studying the stars. This must have been a very unusual star in order for the men to want to follow it. And it must have been positioned close enough to earth so that they could follow it for many, many miles, right to the home of to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.



*The Wise Men went to the house. There they saw the Child with His mother Mary. They bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures. They gave Him gold, incense, and myrrh.*

*But God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod. So they returned to their country on a different road. - Matthew 2:11-12*

**Say:** God is faithful to send His people warnings when danger is near. God did NOT want Herod to find out where Jesus was, so He instructed the Wise Men not to go back to Herod. The Magi LISTENED to God, and they went home a different way.

**Note to Teacher:** It is very fitting that God used a star, a great light, to guide men to Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus is the **Light of the world**. Whoever follows Him will never walk in darkness (John 8:12). Matthew 5:14 says that those who believe in Jesus are also light in the dark world. When we tell others about Jesus, we shine like stars in a dark night sky (Philippians 2:15-16).

### **ESCAPE TO EGYPT** (Matthew 2:13-23)

**Say:** Not only did God warn the Magi, but He also sent His angel to warn Joseph to leave Bethlehem and go to Egypt. Joseph also LISTENED to God.

*When the Wise Men had left, Joseph had a dream. In the dream, an angel of the Lord appeared to him. "Get up!" the angel said. "Take the Child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you to come back. Herod is going to search for the Child. He wants to kill Him."*

*Joseph got up. During the night, he left for Egypt with the Child and His mother Mary. They stayed there until King Herod died. - Matthew 2:13-15a*



**Say:** Joseph did not waste a minute. He obeyed God IMMEDIATELY. It's a good thing Joseph was listening to God because once Herod realized that the Magi had not come back, he was furious. Do you know how crazy with anger he became? He ordered ALL the baby boys living in Bethlehem, age 2 and younger, to be killed! This was his way of making sure that Jesus, the King of the Jews, would be dead. **Ask:** Did Herod's plan work? **No. Say:** God protected Jesus. Sending Jesus to earth was God's perfect plan to save people from their sins. The Bible says no one can keep God's plans from happening (Isaiah 14:27, Psalm 33:11). Notice the amazing way God provided for Jesus and His parents. **Ask:** What did the Wise Men bring to Jesus? *Gold, incense, and myrrh.* **Say:** The Wise Men brought expensive gifts which Joseph could use to pay for their traveling expenses. God always provides what we need in order to obey Him! Later, when Herod died, and it was safe to return, God called Joseph to bring Jesus back to Israel. Joseph and Mary raised Jesus in the town of Nazareth.

**Note to Teacher:** Bethlehem was a small town. Some estimate the number of boys killed to be between 20 and 60. This horrible act was not out of character for Herod.

**Application:** Each person in the Christmas story had to decide what to do about the Messiah who had come. Mary and Joseph loved Him and risked everything to protect Him. The Shepherds ran to meet Him. Simeon and Anna proclaimed Him. The Wise Men left everything to worship Him. The Jews in Jerusalem were troubled by Him, and Herod plotted to kill Him. Everyone who has ever lived has had to make a decision about Jesus. Will you despise Him, will you ignore Him, or will you believe in Him and make Him the Lord of your life?

**PPT Key Verse**

**Key Verse:** "But what about you?" (Jesus) asked. "Who do you say I am?" - Matthew 16:15

**PPT Main Point**

**Main Point:** Each person must decide for himself who he believes Jesus is.

**Note to Teacher:** Several Biblical prophecies, specifically concerning the location of the birth of Jesus, are displayed in today's lesson.

*But you, **Bethlehem** Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. - Micah 5:2*

*Joseph got up. During the night, he left for Egypt with the Child and His mother Mary. They stayed there until King Herod died. So the words the Lord had spoken through the prophet came true. He had said, "I chose to bring my Son out of **Egypt**." (Hosea 11:1) - Matthew 2:13-15*

*And he went and lived in a town called **Nazareth**. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene." - Matthew 2:23*

Three cities were prophesied, and all three were correct. Who but our sovereign Lord could have orchestrated such a fulfillment?