



Herod & the Wise Men

After Jesus was born, God revealed His identity to many people. Each person had to decide whether or not to put their faith in Him. Still, today, each person must decide who he believes Jesus is.



Day #1: At the Temple

Do you know what your name means? Ask your parents how they chose your name. Names were very important in Biblical times. The angel who came to visit Mary and Joseph told each of them they must name the baby Jesus, which means, "The one true God saves."

When Baby Jesus was eight days old, they took Him to the Temple to name Him, according to the Jewish custom. And when He was forty days old, they took Him to the Temple again. This time they offered a sacrifice of doves to the Lord (Leviticus 12:1-8). While they were at the temple, they met two special people.

The first person they met was **Simeon**. He was a faithful man who respected and obeyed God, and the Holy Spirit was with him. He eagerly waited for the time when the Messiah would come. In fact, God had promised him that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. God ALWAYS keeps His promises! 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. (Luke 2:25-35).

The other person they met was **Anna**. Anna was a very old Jewish widow who devoted her life to worshipping God and praying to Him.

† *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*

Both Simeon and Anna abided with God. Because they knew Him, they recognized Jesus the moment they saw Him.

* God is active among us every day! Discuss a time recently when have seen Him at work. If you have not witnessed His hand recently, ask yourself if you are abiding with Him. Make time to be with God everyday. Take time (alone) to sit outside in His creation and think about Him. Make time to pray to Him, and listen to Him. Tell God that you want to see Him just as Simeon and Anna did!

Day #2: Wise Men

Jesus began to grow into a toddler. Can you imagine Baby Jesus learning to walk with human legs, or speak the human language? Almighty God put on a human body, and His little body grew just like every other child.

A group of important-looking men wandered into Jerusalem. They were searching for Jesus. We aren't told how many men there were. There may have been just a few, or there may have been dozens of them.

† *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*

We aren't sure exactly which country these men came from, but it is very likely they came from Arabia (See Isaiah 60:6). Wise Men were also called Magi. They were advisors who helped their king make decisions (Genesis 41:8). Many times, Magi tried to gain wisdom by studying the stars (Daniel 5:7). When a very special star appeared in the sky, they knew they should follow it.

Depending on which country these men came from, they may have traveled for months to get this far. Traveling back then was not as easy as it is now. There were no airplanes or cars. There were no cell phones to use in case of emergency. Robbers hid along the roadsides. These men left their homes and their families. They traveled a long, difficult road to get to Jesus. However, they knew the trip would be worth the risks because at the end, they would be face to face with the King of kings.

* Jesus said in order to follow Him, we must say no to the things of this world (Matthew 16:24, Luke 14:26). But everyone who chooses to follow Him will be rewarded beyond measure:

Everyone who has left houses or families or fields because of Me will receive 100 times as much. They will also receive eternal life. - Matthew 19:29

Ask God to search your heart to see if there is anything you are not willing to give up in order to follow Him.

Day #3: Herod

There was an earthly king who ruled over the Jews at this time. His name was Herod. He was known to be a cruel, selfish man. When King Herod heard that the wise men were looking for the new King, he became very upset. Herod wanted to remain the king. He did NOT want a new king for the Jews.

Day #3 continued:

Herod *pretended* to be happy about the birth of the new King. He went to the men who were experts in God's word. He asked them all about the promises God had made in His word about the Messiah He was going to send. The experts told Herod that God's word said the Savior would come from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).



*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 lied to the Wise Men. He was not planning to worship the Baby. He wanted to kill Him! But Jesus was God's plan to take away the sins of the world. Herod, a mere man, could never stop God's plan (Psalm 33:11)!



Herod was threatened by this special Baby. He did not want to give up his power to Jesus. Though no one would ever want to be like Herod, we act like him when we refuse to make Jesus the Lord of our life. Making Jesus the Lord of your life means giving Him complete control of your life: doing things the way He wants, instead of the way you want.

The next time God's Spirit tells you to do something (like be nice to someone when you don't want to, or to have a good attitude) remember to do things *His* way, not *your* way. Jesus can't be your King if you are holding on to the throne. [Younger kids: Draw a picture of a king's throne. Remember there is only room for one person to sit on the king's throne.]

Day #4: Finding Jesus

What is your favorite part of Christmas? For many people, it is the tradition of giving gifts. The Wise Men brought valuable gifts to give as an offering to the newborn King. We give gifts at Christmas as a reminder of this special occasion.



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

The star that had guided the wise men on their long journey finally stopped above Jesus' home. Can you imagine the excitement in the hearts of these men? They could hardly wait to see the newborn King! When they entered the house, they saw Jesus with Mary.

They bowed down and worshipped Him. - Matthew 2:11b

These men were used to being in the company of kings. But when they were in the presence of the King of kings, their knees instantly bent in awe and respect. **They**

Day #4 continued:

worshipped Him because He is worthy of all worship.

Then they opened their treasures. They gave Him gold, incense, and myrrh. - Matthew 2:11c

The Wise Men brought gifts to the Child, but in truth, the Child was God's gift to them, and to all who believe.



Do you have a Christmas ornament that shows the baby Jesus? Take the ornament and tie a bow on it to help you remember that Jesus was God's gift to the world - not because we deserved it, but because He loves us so much (John 3:16). When you look under your Christmas tree at the gifts you have chosen for the ones you love, remember that no gift can compare to the Gift that God gave to us!

The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. - Romans 6:23b

Day #5: A Star in the Night

If possible, turn out the lights and use a flashlight to read. Imagine a night sky that is completely black. It is an empty space that does not end. This is a symbol of the darkness, emptiness, and loneliness that comes from sin. Everyone has sinned, and they are separated from God. They are in complete darkness. Now picture one bright, glowing star piercing through that darkness.

A star was the perfect symbol for God to lead the Wise Men to Jesus, because the Bible calls Jesus, "The light of the world." When He was grown, Jesus said:



I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in Me will no longer remain in the dark. - John 12:46 NLT

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. - John 8:12b NIV

Jesus came to conquer sin (Romans 6:9). Once we believe in Jesus, we no longer live in the darkness of sin. His light shines in us (Matthew 5:13-16).



Did you know that God calls on all those who follow Him to be like stars, too?

*God is working in you. He wants your plans and your acts to be in keeping with his good purpose. Do everything without finding fault or arguing. Then you will be pure and without blame. You will be children of God without fault in a sinful and evil world. **Among the people of the world you shine like stars in the heavens. You shine as you hold out to them the word of life.** - Philippians 2:13-16a*

When you believe in Jesus, God gives you His Spirit so you can live a godly life, and tell others about Him. You shine like a bright star in the dark night!