



The King Is Born

Matthew 1:1–25



LESSON GOAL

Students will see God's grace in human history through the birth of the Son of God.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Praise God for His sovereignty and grace in the lives of sinful men.
- Understand the importance of Jesus being God and man.
- Explain what the name Jesus means.
- Recognize that even the best of men are not good enough, which is why we need a Savior.

KEY VERSE

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

APPLICATION

- Believe what God says in His Word, no matter what your friends or others say.
- Obey your authorities as Joseph obeyed the angel.
- Thank God that He sent His perfect Son to come live a perfect life and die for sinful men.

NEXT WEEK

The King Is Adored
Read Matthew 2:1–12.

Symbol Key



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

The Purpose

Matthew has been described as a book written *by* a Jew, *to* Jews, *about* a Jew who was the *King* of the Jews. Matthew (who was also known as Levi) was a Jewish tax collector who left his sinful life to follow Jesus and become one of His 12 disciples (Matt. 9:9; Mark 2:14). His aim in writing this Gospel was to demonstrate that Jesus is the promised Messiah and King, the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures, which spoke of Him. In this book, Matthew presents Jesus as the Messiah who was revealed, was rejected, and will return.

Of the New Testament books, Matthew (along with James and Hebrews) has some of the strongest Jewish Old Testament emphases, and only Romans has more Old Testament quotes than Matthew. This distinct Old Testament focus is apparent in Matthew’s opening chapter, where he quotes Old Testament prophecy (Matt. 1:22–23), calls Jesus “the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham” (1:1), and traces His lineage through Abraham, the father of the Jews (1:2–6), as well as through David’s kingly line (1:6–11), from which Mary’s husband, Joseph, also descended. The angel reminded Joseph of his ancestry when explaining God’s plan to him (1:20). In contrast, Luke’s genealogy (Luke 3:23–38), with its Gentile emphasis, traces Mary’s lineage back past Abraham all the way to Adam, the father of all races.

In Matthew’s Gospel, Christ comes as “the King of the Jews” (Matt. 2:2), but not in the sense of an earthly, temporal monarch. The Jews had been conquered by many nations and rulers, and they were looking for a Messiah to deliver them physically and politically. However, Matthew more than any biblical writer emphasizes “the Kingdom of heaven.” In fact, he uses this phrase 32 times, while it never appears anywhere else in the Bible. The Jews expected a royal ruler over Jerusalem—not a lowly, manger-born baby from a low-income Galilean family in the carpentry trade. Many expected the Messiah to ride in with his horse and army to conquer the Romans, but, instead, Matthew presents the Messiah-King as riding humbly on a donkey and teaching spiritual repentance rather than political revolution.

Why a Genealogy?

Knowing one’s “roots,” family tree, and origins is interesting, and many people have studied these things to gain perspective on who they are and where they have come from. To the Jews, tracing ancestry and heritage was not just interesting, but also extremely important, much more important than it is in our culture today. Although Joseph was not Jesus’ biological father, he was His legal father in the eyes of Jewish law. In keeping with the book’s purpose, the genealogy in Matthew 1 shows that Jesus had full Messianic legal and lineage credentials. The Jews knew that God had promised Abraham and David that the Messiah would be their descendant, and

Additional Reference Materials

God in a Manger by John MacArthur

Matthew: MacArthur New Testament Commentary

Matthew demonstrates that Jesus qualified in every respect. It was normal in that day to list names of only the most significant Jewish males when tracing one's family. But in Matthew's account there are several unusual exceptions. There is the Canaanite woman Tamar, who was guilty of immorality (Matt. 1:3; Gen. 38), as well as Bathsheba, Uriah's wife (Matt 1:6; 2 Sam. 12), whom God used to continue the dynasty through Solomon despite David's adultery and murder of Uriah. The genealogy also includes Rahab and Ruth (1:5), who were not only women, but also Gentiles. The former was a harlot from Jericho and was saved from destruction by her faith (Josh. 2), and the latter was a Moabite woman loved by Boaz, her "kinsman redeemer" (Ruth 1–4). Even the best of men in this list, Abraham and David, were guilty of serious sin against God and desperately needed a perfect Savior to intervene. This is no dull list of names; it is a testimony to God's grace and faithfulness in using sinful people to accomplish His plan for the birth of the Messiah, who would save His people from their sins.

Betrothal

In Jewish life and law, betrothal was a formal ceremony and celebration in which a contract was signed in front of witnesses, payment was made to the bride's father, gifts were given, wills were drafted regarding property and possessions in the event of death, and the couple were considered husband and wife. Unlike modern engagement, betrothal could be ended only by divorce (Matt. 1:18–19; Deut. 24:1) or death, which was the penalty for adultery (Deut. 22:23–24). In every legal sense, a betrothed couple already functioned as husband and wife, although there was no physical union until the actual wedding ceremony, which could be up to a year later. Joseph probably was between 17 and 20 years old, and Mary between 12 and 16, since these were the normal ages at which couples were betrothed.

The Virgin Birth

Isaiah 7:14 prophesied Messiah's virgin birth, and Matthew's language makes it clear that Mary was a virgin who had never been intimate with any man. Her pregnancy was a miracle with no human explanation. Jesus truly was "God with us" (the meaning of the name Immanuel; God in human form). Mary was a sinner who needed a Savior like everyone else (Luke 1:47). God blessed her with the privilege of being Christ's earthly mother, while God alone was His Father. This unique conception was necessary for a Messiah who would be fully God and fully man, yet without sin. Many believe that Genesis 3:15 refers to Christ, the seed (singular) of a woman rather than a man, and the One who would crush Satan. Mary remained pure until after her wedding ceremony and after Jesus was born, but she did not remain a virgin all her life, as some teach. In fact, Mary and Joseph had a number of other children, including James and Jude, who later would believe and write the New Testament books named after them (Matt. 13:55; Mark 3:31–35, etc.).

Pregnancy outside of marriage would make any Jewish woman the subject of much rumor and scandalous ridicule. In fact, critics later would accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan (John 8:38), born from fornication (8:41), or even the son of a Roman soldier. The Gospels reveal Mary and Joseph's strong faith in God when probably few, if any, others believed the truth and most looked down on them.

Joseph was an honorable and righteous man and was obedient to the angel, even though his message may have been hard to understand or believe. Normally, a Jewish father and mother would carefully choose a name for their child, as names in their culture were very significant. Although Immanuel was one of many names Jesus would be called, the angel told Joseph and Mary to give Him the name "Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (1:21). Jesus is the Greek form of the

Hebrew name Joshua. Both mean “Yahweh saves” or “Jehovah will save.” This is the culmination of chapter 1 and again shows the purpose of Matthew’s Gospel and the reason Jesus came. In Him, God was with us (John 1:14) to save sinners who repent and trust in Christ alone, who is the only one through whom people can be saved (Acts 4:12).

Note: Although Jesus’ virgin birth is a foundational truth, teachers should exercise sensitivity and discretion when presenting it to students.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth” (Psalm 78:1).

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Meaningful Names

Bring a baby-name book to class. Introduce the key verse, and emphasize the meaning of Jesus’ name. Then, as a class or in small groups, discuss the following questions:

Do you know how your mother and father decided on your name when you were born? *Allow two or three students to answer.*

Does anyone know how Jewish parents named their children around the time that Jesus was born? *Answer: the parents chose a name very carefully because a name was very significant in their culture.*

My first name is _____. Does anyone know what my name means? *Give your name and its meaning.*

Would anyone like to find out what their name means? *Use the baby book to look up the students’ names. Share the meanings with the class.*

Does anyone know what the name Jesus means? *Tell the students, “I’ll give you a hint: the meaning is found in Matthew 1:21.” Read the verse out loud.*

Explain the information on Jesus’ name from the Bible Background section.



Family Inheritance

Have two or three students participate in this skit. They should pretend to be together at school or after school, talking about their families. One student should talk about his parents and grandparents, and how one day he will inherit the family business, which his grandfather started. Another student can talk about how his family members, all the way back to his great-great-grandparents, all have attended a particular college. The last student can talk about how his family has always been involved in politics because they can trace their family all the way back to a relative who was the king of England. He can say that one of his family members signed the Declaration of Independence, and someday he would like to go into politics and maybe run for president. When the skit is done, stress to the students the importance of Christ’s genealogy and His being heir to the throne. His genealogy put him in the kingly line.



What's in a Name

Bring in a book that tells what names mean (a baby-name book, for instance). Allow several students to look up their names and tell the class what they mean. Explain that in Bible times, names had meanings. Give a few examples (for instance, Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25:24–26). The name Jesus means “Yahweh saves.” In today’s lesson we will hear about an angel of the Lord telling Joseph that he would name his son Jesus because He would save His people from their sins.



Genealogy Hand Jive

Materials: copy of the “Genealogy Hand Jive” page (at back of lesson) on an overhead transparency, overhead projector

Directions: Before class, practice the hand jive several times so that you are familiar with the rhythm and motions. During class, teach the students the motions while another teacher slowly reads through the genealogy in Matthew 1:1–17. Put the transparency on the projector, and let the students chant through the genealogy while doing the hand jive. For more fun, you could increase the speed of reading during the hand jive.

Variation: For younger students, simplify the hand jive by just having the students clap every time they hear the word “begot.”

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Reading of the Text

Read Matthew 1:1–25.

Introduction

Christmas is a time when we celebrate God’s priceless gift of His Son to us. We are reminded of and celebrate God’s gift by our giving gifts to others. As we look into God’s Word today, think about all that went into God giving us His gift. God’s planning is clearly seen in the beginning of Matthew, where Jesus’ family tree is listed. God knew exactly how He would bring Jesus into the world. In today’s lesson we will look at Jesus’ ancestry and His coming into the world to save sinners.



Leadoff Questions (LOQs)

LOQ: Why did Matthew write his Gospel?

Answer: Matthew’s intention was to demonstrate that Jesus is the promised Messiah and King, the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures.

LOQ: What does Matthew show as he begins his book?

Answer: Matthew traces Jesus' lineage from Abraham, the father of the Jews, through David's kingly line to Mary's husband, Joseph. Matthew is proving that Jesus is in fact the King.

LOQ: What were the Jews looking for in a king?

Answer: They were thinking that the Messiah would come deliver them physically and politically. They believed that he would be a royal ruler over Israel—not a lowly, manger-born baby from a low-income Galilean family in the carpentry trade. Many thought that the Messiah would ride in with his horse and army to conquer the Romans. Instead, the Messiah-King rode humbly on a donkey and taught spiritual repentance rather than political revolution.

LOQ: What was betrothal?

Answer: Betrothal in Jewish culture was an agreement between the parents of a young man and woman. There was a formal ceremony that included gifts, and a payment to the bride's father. It was more than just engagement but was not quite marriage. The couple would live apart for up to a year until the wedding ceremony.

LOQ: What was unique about Jesus' birth?

Answer: Jesus had no earthly father. His birth was a miraculous event that God accomplished in Mary's life.

LOQ: What do we know about Joseph's character?

Answer: Joseph was an honorable and righteous man who was obedient to the angel God sent to him.

LOQ: What was special about Jesus' name?

Answer: An angel told Mary and Joseph to give Jesus His name. A name was very important because it said a lot about the person. Jesus' name was very significant because of what it meant. Jesus means "Yaweh saves."

Summary

In God's perfect wisdom, He chose to send us a gift. His gift is unlike any gift given before and unlike any that will be given in the future. God's Son humbled Himself and came as a little child into the world to one day die for the sins of all who would believe.

Application

As we celebrate this Christmas season, we should thank God that He gave us the gift of His Son. Because of Jesus' perfect life and death on the cross, sinful man can be cleansed of sin. Without His birth, He never would have been able to die.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



God Is Born

Use this discussion to help the students understand what a unique and incomprehensible event Christ's incarnation was. Begin by reminding the students of God's incommunicable characteristics (those characteristics that only God has), such as His eternality, omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. Help them to understand how powerful and wonderful God is. As God the Son, Christ has all these characteristics. However, when He came to earth as a man, He laid aside independent exercise of some of them, though He still was fully God. This is something that our finite minds cannot fully comprehend. Understanding Christ's incarnation should cause us to praise Him for who He is and what He has done.



Act It Out

Today's lesson will be very familiar to most students. They have likely heard it taught each year at Christmas time and will know the basic storyline. Assign students roles in the Christmas story the week before. You may also want to give them short lines to learn during the week. Ask them to bring in a costume to wear during the play. The story can then be acted out during the lesson time.

Praise and Worship

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O-B-E-D-I-E-N-C-E

Praise the Name of Jesus

Silent Night

Trust and Obey

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



Engagement vs. Betrothal

Talk to the students about the fact that Mary and Joseph were not engaged as couples today are. They did not choose each other, and they did not go out on dates as people do today. Instead, Mary and Joseph were betrothed. Explain to the students that in biblical times, a man and woman married only after their fathers had agreed that they should. Look up "betrothal" in a Bible dictionary, and discuss the differences and similarities between betrothal and engagement.



The Perfect Sacrifice

In the Old Testament we learn about the sacrificial system that God set up for the Jews. An unblemished lamb, one with no defect, had to be sacrificed. Tell the students that Jesus was that perfect lamb for us. Explain that God's requirement for a perfect sacrifice never was compromised through Jesus. He lived a perfect life, without sin. Talk to the students about how this, along with Jesus' virgin birth and His genealogy, was to show the Jews that He was the Messiah, the Chosen One.



Obedience in Difficult Times

Talk to the students about Joseph's decision to marry Mary after the angel told him to. Joseph had faith that everything would be alright. He believed that what the angel said was true, that Jesus would be the Messiah. Joseph had faith that God would be glorified through the situation. Have the students think about times when they or their families have been in a difficult situation or have had to make a difficult decision (for example, having barely enough money to buy groceries, or having a sick family member). Ask how they can display faith in God in such situations, through prayer and by trusting that God knows best.



"The King Is Born"

Use this work sheet to reinforce the key truths of today's lesson. The work sheet is located at the back of the lesson.



Journal Page: "The Promised Savior"

Give each student a copy of the journal page at the back of this lesson. The students can complete the page individually, in small groups, or at home.

Coloring Pages

Give each student the coloring sheets from the back of the lesson. Students can color the pages in class or at home.



MEMORY VERSE

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Genealogy Hand Jive

Abraham	<i>Snap</i>	David the king	<i>Snap</i>	About the time	<i>Pause</i>
begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>	they were carried away into	
Isaac	<i>Slap</i>	Solomon	<i>Slap</i>	Babylon.	
Isaac	<i>Slap</i>	by her who had	<i>Pause</i>	And after they were brought	
begot	<i>Clap</i>	been the wife of		to Babylon,	
Jacob	<i>Snap</i>	Uriah			
and Jacob	<i>Snap</i>	Solomon	<i>Snap</i>	Jeconiah	<i>Slap</i>
begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>
Judah	<i>Slap</i>	Rehoboam	<i>Slap</i>	Shealtiel	<i>Snap</i>
and his	<i>Clap 3x</i>	Rehoboam	<i>Slap</i>	And Shealtiel	<i>Snap</i>
brothers		begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>
Judah	<i>Slap</i>	Abijah	<i>Snap</i>	Zerubbabel	<i>Slap</i>
begot	<i>Clap</i>	and Abijah	<i>Snap</i>	Zerubbabel	<i>Slap</i>
Perez	<i>Snap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>
and Zerah	<i>Pause</i>	Asa	<i>Slap</i>	Abiud	<i>Snap</i>
by Tamar		Asa	<i>Slap</i>	Abiud	<i>Snap</i>
Perez	<i>Slap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>
begot	<i>Clap</i>	Jehoshaphat	<i>Snap</i>	Eliakim	<i>Slap</i>
Hezron	<i>Snap</i>	Jehoshaphat	<i>Snap</i>	And Eliakim	<i>Slap</i>
and Hezron	<i>Snap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>
begot	<i>Clap</i>	Joram	<i>Slap</i>	Azor	<i>Snap</i>
Ram	<i>Slap</i>	and Joram	<i>Slap</i>	Azor	<i>Snap</i>
Ram	<i>Slap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>
begot	<i>Clap</i>	Uzziah	<i>Snap</i>	Zadok	<i>Slap</i>
Amminadab	<i>Snap</i>	Uzziah	<i>Snap</i>	Zadok	<i>Slap</i>
Amminadab	<i>Snap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>
begot	<i>Clap</i>	Jotham	<i>Slap</i>	Achim	<i>Snap</i>
Nahshon	<i>Slap</i>	Jotham	<i>Slap</i>	And Achim	<i>Snap</i>
and Nahshon	<i>Slap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>
begot	<i>Clap</i>	Ahaz	<i>Snap</i>	Eliud	<i>Slap</i>
Salmon	<i>Snap</i>	and Ahaz	<i>Snap</i>	Eliud	<i>Slap</i>
Salmon	<i>Snap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>
begot	<i>Clap</i>	Hezekiah	<i>Slap</i>	Eleazar	<i>Snap</i>
Boaz	<i>Slap</i>	Hezekiah	<i>Slap</i>	Eleazar	<i>Snap</i>
by Rahab	<i>Pause</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>
Boaz	<i>Snap</i>	Manasseh	<i>Snap</i>	Matthan	<i>Slap</i>
begot	<i>Clap</i>	Manasseh	<i>Snap</i>	And Matthan	<i>Slap</i>
Obed	<i>Slap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>
by Ruth	<i>Pause</i>	Amon	<i>Slap</i>	Jacob	<i>Snap</i>
Obed	<i>Snap</i>	and Amon	<i>Slap</i>	And Jacob	<i>Snap</i>
begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>	begot	<i>Clap</i>
Jesse	<i>Slap</i>	Josiah	<i>Snap</i>	Joseph	<i>Slap</i>
and Jesse	<i>Slap</i>	Josiah	<i>Snap</i>	the husband of	<i>Pause</i>
begot	<i>Clap</i>	Begot	<i>Clap</i>	Mary, of whom	<i>Clap 3x</i>
David	<i>Snap</i>	Jeconiah	<i>Slap</i>	was born Jesus	
the king	<i>crown</i>	and his		who is called Christ.	
		brothers	<i>Clap 3x</i>		

The King Is Born



Matthew 1:1–25

Name _____

1. Was Joseph troubled over Mary's pregnancy? _____
2. To whom did the angel appear in Matthew 1:18–25? _____
3. Who caused Mary to become pregnant with Jesus? _____
4. Write out Matthew 1:21.

5. Mary was Jesus' mother and God was His Father, making Him both _____
and _____.
6. True or False: The list of people in Matthew 1:1–17 shows that God uses sinful people
to preserve His plan and fulfill prophecy. _____

The Promised Savior

“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

Some parents give their children names to honor relatives or famous people, or to convey a special meaning (the name Grace, for instance), but do you know why God gave His Son the names He did? Each of the following names for Christ from Matthew 1 is a fulfillment of a promise God made to His people! The first two, which you may recognize from past Old Testament lessons, are names that connect Christ with God’s covenants to David and Abraham. The next two names have meanings that tell the world that Christ is the promised Savior.

Can you match each name of Christ below with its Old Testament promise by placing the correct letter in front of the promise?

NAMES

- A. Son of David B. Son of Abraham C. Immanuel D. Jesus

PROMISES

- _____ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14b).
_____ “And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16).
_____ “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).
_____ “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3b).

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_____ “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).
_____ “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3b).

In the Old Testament God promised to send the Messiah, who was His Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible says in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." God loved people so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for the punishment of the sins of all who would trust in Him for salvation.

What does John 3:16 mean?

What does a Christian know about his eternal home?

How can believers honor God with their lives?

PRAYER

Thank You, Lord, for the gift of your Son. Thank You that He died and that anyone who trusts in Him will be saved. Thank You for making a way to live forever with You in heaven.

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An angel appeared to Joseph and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:20).



**Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded
and took Mary as his wife (Matthew 1:24)**



The King Is Adored

Matthew 2:1–12



LESSON GOAL

Students will learn from the wise men how to adore the King of kings.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Describe the events that followed Christ's birth.
- Explain who the magi were and why they came.
- Recount the responses to Christ, and identify the right one.
- Tell why it was important that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

KEY VERSE

"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" (Matthew 2:2).

APPLICATION

- Thank God that Jesus humbly came to earth for sinners.
- Worship Christ, unlike Herod, who really worshiped himself.
- Adore Jesus, as the wise men did, by giving Him your best with "exceeding joy" and lowly reverence.
- Obey Jesus as King, unlike the Jewish leaders, who knew the truth but did not obey it.

NEXT WEEK

The King Is Preserved
Read Matthew 2:13–23.

Symbol Key



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

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Bible Background

Big Picture

The primary focus of the Gospels is the adult life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Only two of the Gospels mention His birth and childhood, and then only briefly. But Christ’s entrance into the world was important. The King of kings came as a tiny baby, not in a royal palace or even in a normal house, but among cattle in the cold. God could not have come to earth in a more humble, unsanitary, or unpleasant way. He didn’t come to the aroma of a clean hospital room, but to the stench of manure and livestock in a stable on a cold evening. He went from the presence of angels to that of animals, from heaven to hay, from a throne to a trough.

The circumstances surrounding our Lord’s birth point not just to His astonishingly lowly condescension (Phil. 2:6–8), but also to His purpose to live and die as a sacrifice. The first people the angels told of Christ’s birth were shepherds in a nearby field, some of whose sheep were likely being raised for Passover sacrifice in the temple. The only glimpse we have of Christ’s earliest years is when He and His family went to the Passover in Jerusalem (Luke 2:40–52) to have the priest slaughter a lamb as a sacrifice. When Christ first appears in John’s Gospel, John the Baptist introduces Him by saying, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). In continuing this idea, the details of Christ’s Passion Week entry into Jerusalem, the Lord’s Supper, and the exact time He died all were marvelously orchestrated around Old Testament Passover sacrifice rituals, which He fulfilled in every way (1 Cor. 5:7) as our sacrificial substitutionary lamb (Isa. 53).

Luke gives by far the most details about events surrounding the birth of Christ (Luke 1:5–80), as well as about the actual birth and manger scene (2:1–20) and about His newborn days (2:21–38). Reading both Luke’s and Matthew’s account may help form a composite picture of these earliest earthly days of our Lord. The importance of the incarnation (the Word becoming flesh) cannot be overstated. Christmas is our planet’s most universally celebrated holiday, and world history is dated by Christ’s birth (B.C. and A.D.). Both John’s and Mark’s Gospels go immediately to Christ’s adult life, but Matthew fills in a few additional details that are important for his purpose.

Bethlehem

Bethlehem was a small village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It was home to Ruth and Boaz and was the birthplace of King David. It was many miles from where Mary and Joseph were living. However, God sovereignly used the decree of the pagan Caesar Augustus to force Mary and Joseph to make the difficult trip, which no woman normally would attempt when nine months pregnant. That was no coincidence, of course, but was for the fulfillment of prophecy. In verse 6, Herod’s scholars loosely quoted Micah 5:2, which, in its original text, contained the

Additional Reference Materials

God in a Manger by John MacArthur

Matthew: MacArthur New Testament Commentary

important phrase “His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.” John 7:42 indicates the Jews understood this as Messianic prophecy.

King Herod

Herod the Great was of Edomite descent and was appointed to govern the area of Galilee, which he ruled from 37 to 34 B.C. Historians record him as a cruel and evil man who executed his wives, relatives, and even his own children, apparently because he was paranoid of competition. That helps explain why he would be greatly troubled when he heard that “the King of the Jews” had been born in one of his villages (Matt. 2:3).

The Wise Men

Of all the people in the story, the wise men are perhaps the most misrepresented and misunderstood in traditional Christmas songs and nativity scenes. Matthew explains that when the wise men visited, Mary and Joseph were already in a “house” (Matt. 2:11), not in the original stable where the shepherds visited. Jesus was not a newborn, but a “child” (Matt. 2:8–9; a different Greek word than in Luke 2:12) who evidently was many months old though still under two years in age (Matt. 2:16). There were not necessarily three of these men; the number has traditionally been assumed because of their three gifts. And there is no evidence that they were kings from the Orient. The term “magi” referred to priestly astrologers or astronomers, magicians, or religious wise men, especially in the areas of Persia and Babylon. Geographically, such a journey may have been hundreds of miles, depending on which region(s) they were from. The book of Daniel gives some historical background on the magi.

The Star

It is possible that these men were familiar with the Jewish Scripture that says, “A star will come out of Jacob, a scepter shall rise out of Israel” (Num. 24:17; see also Revelation 22:16, where Christ calls Himself “the bright and morning star”). Some have suggested that what the wise men saw was a comet, meteor, supernova, or one or more planets, but the way it moved, stopped, reappeared, and then moved and settled over a certain house causes problems with such views. Rather than try to find a natural phenomenon, it may be best to understand it as a miraculous star-like manifestation that may or may not have been seen by people other than the magi. It could have been something like the Shekinah glory in the wilderness or an angel. (Angels are called “stars” in the Bible and similarly guided Israel in the Old Testament; Ex. 14:19.) The focus, however, is not on these things but on the greatest event in the universe. The King of the Jews was here at last, and God’s long-promised plan was about to unfold!

Various Responses to Jesus

When Herod heard that the magi were seeking the King of the Jews, he saw Him as a threat to his own ambitions, pride, and rule. Like many people today, Herod pretended to want to worship Jesus, but in reality, he hated the very thought and wanted nothing to do with this King but to eliminate Him. He was willing to sin greatly and go to any wicked extreme to suppress and extinguish the truth.

A second response, indifference, characterized the religious leaders Herod consulted. They knew the right answers intellectually and theologically, but they were spiritually unmoved when the arrival of the wise men from the East proclaimed the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures.

The third response, and the only right one, was that of the wise men: worship.

They may not have known as much as the Jews, but they “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” (Matt. 2:10), sought to worship the young King (2:2), and knew enough to fall down on their faces in His presence (2:11). No human or angel deserves worship, but Christ accepted worship many times in His life, demonstrating His full deity. The gifts were equally appropriate to who He was. Gold symbolizes value, nobility, and royalty; the magi were giving royal gifts to the King of kings. Frankincense was expensive, sweet-smelling incense used for only the most special occasions. Perhaps more importantly, it was the traditional incense of deity. In Old Testament times, the Jews stored it in a special chamber in front of the temple for sprinkling on offerings. Myrrh was a valuable perfume that some interpreters say represented the gift for a mortal. It may have underscored Christ’s humanity. Myrrh would later be used with spices to prepare Christ’s body for burial (John 19:39–40).

Not all unbelievers will oppose Christ as violently and viciously as Herod did, but indifference or anything short of the magi’s response is unacceptable. Whoever is not fully with Him is against Him. The only proper response is to worship Christ the King as fully God and fully man.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth” (Psalm 78:1).

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

Why did Matthew write his Gospel?

Matthew wrote his Gospel to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah and King, the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures.

What were the Jews looking for in a king?

They thought the Messiah would come deliver them physically and politically. They believed that He would be a royal ruler over Jerusalem, not a lowly carpenter.

What was unique about Jesus’ birth?

Jesus was born of Mary, so He was fully man, but God was His Father, so He was fully God.

What was special about Jesus’ name?

Jesus means “Yahweh saves.”



Adoration

Ask the students what “adoration” means. What does it mean to adore someone or something? Talk about how the magi came to adore the Messiah. They recognized that this baby was the King of the Jews and the Savior of the world. They



humbled themselves, in spite of their wealth and wisdom, and came to give praise to a baby born in a stable.

Where Were you Born?

Ask the students about when they were born. Do their parents have pictures or a scrapbook? Were they born in a hospital? Did they have blankets, booties, diapers, and cradles? Then discuss Jesus' humble birth.



The Magi's Worship

Discuss with the students what it meant to worship Christ with "exceeding joy" and in lowly reverence, as the magi did.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Reading of the Text

Read Matthew 2:1–12.

Introduction

In the book of Matthew, there is a story about some unknown people who came to Jerusalem one day, a long time ago. They were searching for something very important, something that they were excited about. But for some reason, very few other people were as excited as they were. Some were even upset about the person the wise men were looking for.



Leadoff Questions (LOQs)

LOQ: What important people arrived in Jerusalem?

Answer: People called wise men arrived in Jerusalem.

LOQ: When did the wise men arrive in Jerusalem?

Answer: The wise men arrived in Jerusalem after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in the days of Herod the Great, the king.

LOQ: What did the wise men ask when they arrived in Jerusalem?

Answer: "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" (Matt. 2:2). The wise men had followed a star and had come to worship Him.

LOQ: How did King Herod feel when he heard what the wise men asked?

Answer: He was troubled.

LOQ: Why do you think King Herod was troubled?

Answer: King Herod was the Rome-appointed “king of the Jews.” He ruled over the people at the time the wise men came. But the wise men were not asking about him. They were asking about someone else. They wanted to find the real “King of the Jews.” Since King Herod did not want another king to take his place, he was very bothered by what the wise men were saying.

LOQ: What question did King Herod ask the chief priests and scribes of the people?

Answer: King Herod asked them where the Christ (Messiah) was to be born.

LOQ: Where did the chief priests and scribes say the Christ would be born?

Answer: They said that the Christ would be born “in Bethlehem of Judea” (Matt. 2:5).

LOQ: How did they know?

Answer: They knew because it had been written by a prophet. The place where the Christ would be born was prophesied in the Old Testament.

LOQ: What did the prophet write?

Answer: Matthew 2:6 is a quote from the Old Testament (Micah 5:2): “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.” Even though Bethlehem was a small town, and still is, it would be famous because a Ruler would come from it and lead, or shepherd, the people of God. That special person was Jesus Christ.

LOQ: How did the wise men know where in Bethlehem to find Jesus?

Answer: The star reappeared and stood over the house where the Child lived. When the wise men saw the star again, they were very happy and filled with joy.

LOQ: List four things that happened when the wise men found the house.

Answer: (1) The wise men came into the house, (2) they saw the Child with Mary His mother, (3) they fell down and worshiped Him, and (4) they presented Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

LOQ: How did Herod respond when the wise men did not come back to Jerusalem?

Answer: He ordered that all of the male children two years and under in Bethlehem and the surrounding region be killed.

LOQ: What did God tell Joseph in a dream?

Answer: God told Joseph to flee to Egypt to protect Jesus.

Summary

A long time ago, an important event happened in Jerusalem. Some wise men arrived in the city looking for the King of the Jews, who was the Christ. They asked the people in the city where to find Him. When King Herod heard what they were

saying, he was troubled. He found out what the Scriptures said about the Christ: He would be born in Bethlehem, would be a ruler, and would shepherd His people. The Christ would be very special. When the wise men finally found the Child, unlike Herod, they rejoiced, gave Him gifts, and worshiped Him.

Application

The wise men were earnestly seeking the real King of the Jews, who was also the Christ, the Messiah. Herod was troubled. The chief priests and scribes (the religious leaders) did not seem to care, but the wise men did care. They honored Jesus when He was a child by giving Him gifts and worshiping Him. Christians should respond like the wise men, not like Herod and the others. We should honor Jesus Christ and give Him praise and worship because He is not only the King of the Jews, but also the King of all who love Him and follow Him.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



The Gifts

Bring in objects resembling gold, frankincense, and myrrh for the students to see, hold, and smell. Talk about what each was used for and what each symbolized.



Different Responses

Begin to help the students start thinking about the different ways in which people responded to Jesus' birth by making note of each of them during the lesson. At the end of the lesson, ask the students how they will respond to Him.



Promises Kept

Make a promise to the students, and fulfill it sometime before teaching the lesson. When someone keeps a promise, you are more likely to believe that he will keep future promises. Through a prophet, God made a promise that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. God worked out all the details for Jesus' birth to occur in Bethlehem so that His promise would be fulfilled—as it was!

Praise and Worship

Come, Let Us Worship and Bow Down

O Come, Let Us Adore Him

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O-B-E-D-I-E-N-C-E

The Little Drummer Boy

Trust and Obey

We Three Kings

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



Hindered Worship

What hinders pure worship and adoration of God? When Christ was born, in what ways was worship hindered (or absent) for the religious leaders? For King Herod?



Why Bethlehem?

Ask the students which prophet told of Jesus being born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Explain that God had laid out this plan long before Jesus' birth. God gave Micah this prophecy about Jesus' birth so that He would be glorified through fulfilling the prophecy. Talk about other prophecies about Jesus (for example, about His death on the cross and His resurrection). Talk about the prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled—Jesus coming again—and the fact that this, too, will be fulfilled.



Humility

Ask the students what the true meaning of humility is. Ask them to give some examples of how they can show humility in their daily lives. Then talk about the humility of Jesus being born in a stable. Jesus humbled Himself by coming down to earth and becoming a human. Talk to the students about how the King who gives eternal life did not come to a palace or castle, but to a stable.



Do You Really Know the Truth?

Tell the students that there are two kinds of knowing the truth. First, we can hear the truth taught but never act on it. Second, we can know the truth, act on it, and as a result, have eternal life. Explain that the Pharisees and the high priests, the scribes, and even Herod had heard the truth—they knew of the prophecies that Jesus fulfilled—but chose not to act on it. Then talk about people who come to church services but still walk away not believing that Jesus is the Messiah. Explain that we cannot gain salvation through just knowing the truth (hearing it at church or from our parents). In order to be saved, we must act on what we know is true by believing that we need a Savior and that Christ came to die for our sins.



What's It Worth?

Bring to class a variety of items with differing values. Place them on a table where the students can see them, and discuss the value of each one. Choose items that are age-appropriate. You could use photos or magazine pictures. Include several items that are difficult to assign a dollar value to—for instance, someone's life, the earth, or memories. Discuss with the students the pricelessness of God's gift.



Arrival of the Magi

Have three or four adults come to class, pretending to be the wise men telling the news of what they found in Bethlehem. Their excitement and reverence over what they have seen, who was there, and how God spoke to them in a dream should be evident to the class. They could talk about meeting with King Herod in Jerusalem before traveling to Bethlehem, and then deciding not to return there after God spoke to them. They truly were wise men! You could invite them to stay and help the students with their work sheets.



“The King Is Adored”

Use this work sheet to reinforce the key truths of today’s lesson. The work sheet is located at the back of the lesson.



Journal Page: “Worshiping Christ”

Give each student a copy of the journal page at the back of this lesson. The students can complete the page individually, in small groups, or at home.

Coloring Pages

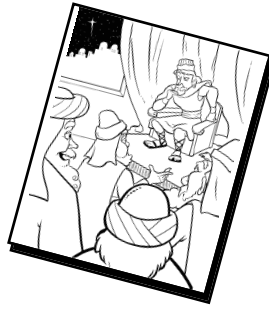
Give each student the coloring sheets from the back of the lesson. Students can color the pages in class or at home.



MEMORY VERSE

“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” (Matthew 2:2).

The King Is Adored



Matthew 2:1-12

Name _____

1. According to Matthew 2:1, when did the wise men arrive in Jerusalem?

After _____

in the days of _____.

2. Whom were the wise men looking for? _____

3. What did the wise men see that made them go to Jerusalem? _____

4. How did King Herod respond to the wise men's search? (Circle the correct answer.)

He was very happy.

He was troubled.

5. What did the wise men do when they saw Jesus? _____

6. What three gifts did the wise men give to Jesus?

7. After seeing Jesus, did the wise men return to Herod? _____

Worshipping Christ

“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” (Matthew 2:2).

Before you were born, your parents probably told all their friends and relatives that you were going to be born, and when your birth day finally came, they must have been very happy. But what if someone, after hearing the news of your birth, said to your parents, “That’s not your baby!”? How do you think your parents would have responded? They probably would have thought that person was very confused, especially since your parents had your birth certificate and hospital records to prove otherwise. When Christ was born, He didn’t have a birth certificate or hospital record to prove that He was God’s Son and the King of the Jews, but He did have something even better—He had God’s Word. God spoke His word through the prophet Micah, who said, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, through 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 are from of old from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). Yet when Jesus was born, there were different reactions by different people.

Matthew 2:3 states that Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled when they heard this. Why do you think they were troubled by such good news? Write your thoughts in the space below.

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Matthew 2:3 states that Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled when they heard this. Why do you think they were troubled by such good news? Write your thoughts in the space below.

In Luke 19:23, when Christ makes His triumphal entry on a donkey, men, women, and children rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!" You can believe that Jesus is the King and praise Him with a heart of worship.

I believe that Christ is

because God's Word says so in _____.

I can worship Christ as King by

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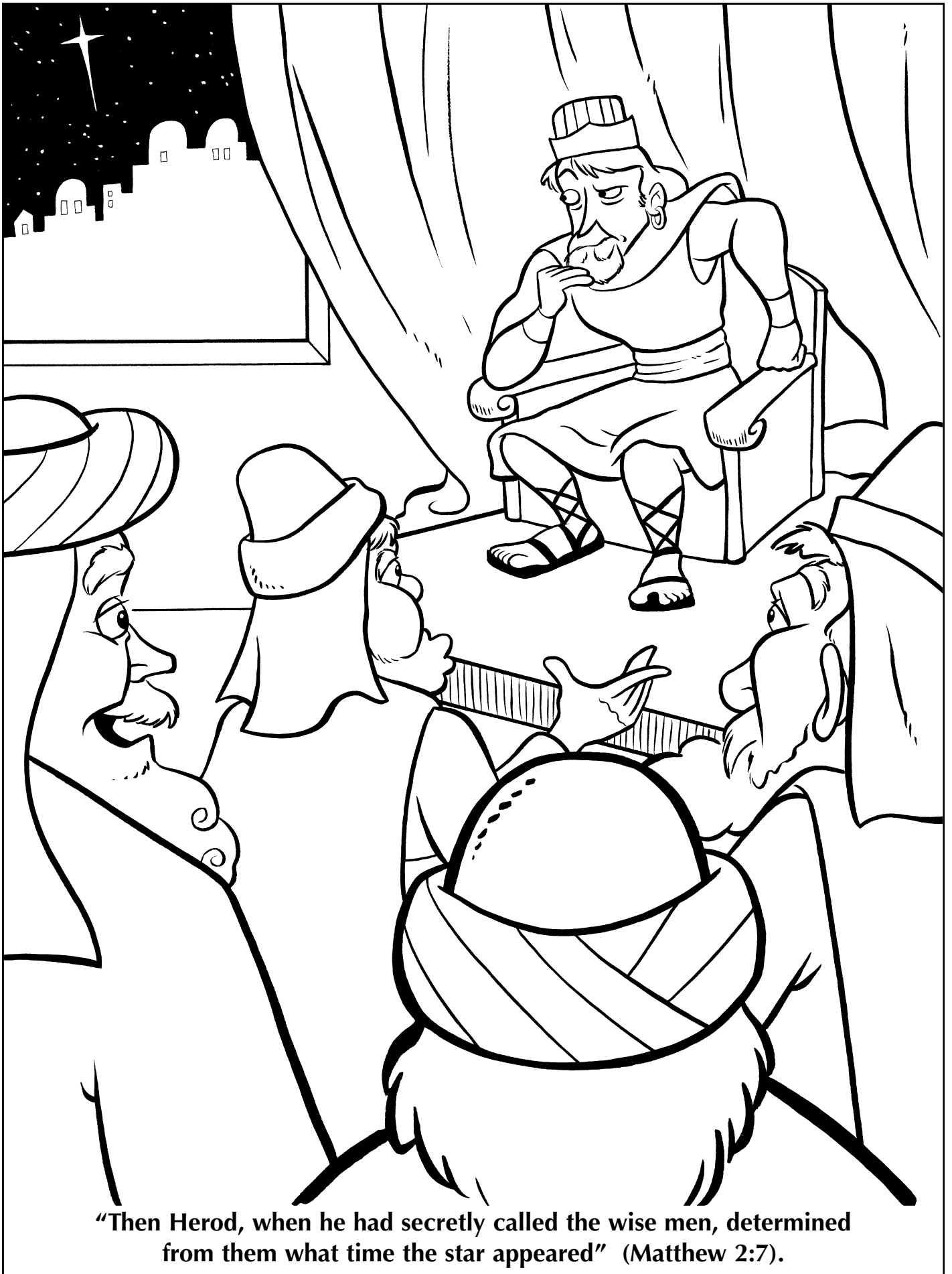
I can worship Christ as King by

PRAYER

In the space below, write a prayer of worship to God.

PRAYER

In the space below, write a prayer of worship to God.



“Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared” (Matthew 2:7).



“And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him” (Matthew 2:11a).



The King Is Preserved

Matthew 2:13–23



LESSON GOAL

Students will see God's sovereign protection of Jesus.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- List examples of obedience on the part of the characters.
- Explain the significance of Jesus coming out of Egypt.
- Describe prophecy and how Jesus fulfilled it.
- Recount how God kept Jesus safe from wicked men.

KEY VERSE

"But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel'" (Matthew 2:19–20a).

APPLICATION

- Give your worries to God because He is sovereign.
- Confess pride and selfishness in your heart.
- Praise God that He sent His Son to undeserving sinners (Rom. 5:8).
- Obey God's Word and your authorities as Joseph did, without delay or debate.

Symbol Key



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Dreams and Angels (Matt. 1:20; 2:12–13, 19, 22)

For hundreds of years there had been no new revelation from God. But with the birth of Christ came a sudden flurry of revelation and supernatural events. Messages from angels through dreams were uncommon in both the Old and New testaments, but Matthew records five supernatural visits in the brief time surrounding Christ’s birth. Luke records additional angelic visitations in these days: Gabriel to Zacharias (Luke 1:11–19), Gabriel to Mary (1:26–38), and the host to the shepherds (2:9–15). The spiritual darkness and silence was broken, and the light and revelation going forth shows that this was a birth of unprecedented significance. God in human flesh was here, being heralded and announced as King!

Another pattern emerging from Matthew’s account is the unhesitating obedience and submission of everyone who received divine guidance (with the exception of Zacharias, who doubted). When God revealed a message to them, they obeyed immediately, whether they fully understood or not. To disobey, delay, or question would have been disastrous. This is an important lesson for both children and adults. God requires that believers submissively follow His Word and the earthly authorities He has ordained.

Why Egypt? (Matt. 2:13–15)

During the intertestamental period, Alexander the Great had established a sanctuary for Jews in Alexandria, an Egyptian city he had named after himself. Jews in the area had translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, and this translation was known as the Septuagint (or LXX). It was used by the Greek-speaking early church and was the translation used for many Old Testament quotes by New Testament writers.

Egypt was at least 75–100 miles from Bethlehem—far enough from Herod’s wicked reach. Of course, God could have sent Joseph, Mary, and Jesus elsewhere, or He could have protected Jesus in some other way. But the journey is in keeping with Matthew’s purpose to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of Jewish Scriptures. From the genealogy to the Sermon on the Mount (chapter 5), Matthew builds almost every paragraph around a text from the Old Testament and shows how it applies to Christ, and 2:15 is yet another example.

Hosea 11:1, in its original context, was a reference to the nation of Israel. Hosea tells of the prophet’s relationship to his unfaithful wife, Gomer, and is a picture of God’s love to unfaithful and undeserving Israel, particularly in bringing them out of Egypt. Moses used this imagery of Israel as God’s son when he told Pharaoh: “Thus says the LORD: ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go, that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed, I will kill your son, your firstborn’” (Ex. 4:22–23). Like Moses, Jesus escaped the fate of other male babies who were to be killed (Ex. 1:22–2:10). Jesus’ return from Egypt might have

Additional Reference Materials

God in a Manger by John MacArthur

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evoked Jewish readers' memories of the original Exodus under Moses. Some Jews were expecting the coming of a prophet "like Moses" (Deut. 18:15, 18). The subsequent command by the angel to travel from Egypt to the Promised Land, Israel (Matt. 2:19–20), may similarly have been reminiscent of the Pentateuch days.

Hosea 11:1 was referring to the past rather than the future. The passage was "fulfilled" by Christ in the sense that the historical exodus of the Jews pictured the Messiah coming out of Egypt as their representative and deliverer. Technically, this might be best called a pictorial prophecy or a type (nonverbal prediction), in which the inspired New Testament writers interpret an Old Testament person or event as illustrating a truth about Christ not explicitly described in the original text. Of course, the rich symbolism of the original Passover escape (Ex. 12) also looks forward to Christ, our Passover lamb, who lived among the people and whose blood covering was the only way believers can escape judgment.

Herod Tries to Kill Jesus

In Herod's mind, there could be only one "king of the Jews"—himself—and any competitor must be killed. Infuriated by the perceived deception by the wise men (who were simply obeying the angel), he unleashed his fury through infanticide. Satan himself wanted to kill Christ (Matt. 4:5–6; Rev. 12:1–5), and Herod's rage was devilish. Population estimates indicate there were perhaps 15 or 20 children less than two years old in Bethlehem at that time. This devastating mass murder was not recorded by contemporary historians (including Josephus), probably because murder to protect the throne was such a common practice. History records that Herod had killed a young high priest, relatives, and friends. He had a favorite wife strangled and even killed some of his own children! Emperor Augustus reportedly joked it would be better to be Herod's pig (Greek huos) than his son (Greek huos), for a pig had a better chance of surviving in a Jewish community.

Herod's massacre was even more heinous because he knew that the child he sought to destroy was the Messiah. Herod questioned the chief priests and scribes specifically about "where the Christ was to be born" (Matt. 2:4) and arrogantly set himself up against God's Anointed. The chief priests and the scribes, along with the many other Jews in Jerusalem who must have heard or known about the magi's message, were not innocent simply because their hands did not cause the bloodshed. They showed no interest in finding this child, much less in worshipping Him, and these leaders eventually would want to kill Jesus themselves.

Matthew 2:17–18 shows that even Herod's evil atrocity was used by God to fulfill (literally "fill up" or complete) Jeremiah 31:15. Like Hosea, Jeremiah's original passage was historical rather than an explicit Messianic prediction, but the New Testament interprets it as a type of Christ. Rachel was the wife of Israel (also known as Jacob; Gen. 30–37) and the mother of sons whose tribes would form the Northern and Southern kingdoms of Israel. "Rachel weeping for her children" in Jeremiah's day represented the lamentation of all Jewish mothers who wept over Israel's great tragedy in the days of its captivity. More than this, they typified and prefigured the mothers of Bethlehem weeping bitterly over the massacre of their children. Men's desire to kill rather than worship Christ would later cause even the King of the Jews Himself to weep over Jerusalem because of His people's rejection of Him, which would bring judgment (Luke 19:41–44).

It should not be overlooked that Jeremiah 31, quoted here by Matthew, is not all negative. For many Jews who knew their Scriptures, it would bring to mind the familiar promises of hope after mourning (Jer. 31:16–17), mercy (31:20), repentance (31:21–22), the new covenant (31:31–34), and God's promised future for Israel (31:35–37).

Jesus Returns to Nazareth

History tells us Herod died in the spring of 4 B.C., which is why scholars place Christ's birth at least a year or two earlier. Herod's son Archelaus ruled over Judea and was known for his cruelty. He executed two popular rabbis whom he saw as troublemakers and once sent his army into a rowdy Passover crowd, where about 3,000 Jewish pilgrims were killed when things got out of hand. He was so bad that Augustus himself feared a revolution from the people and eventually deposed Archelaus and banished him from the area in A.D. 6. This explains Joseph's fear and redirection to Nazareth in Galilee (55 miles north), but, again, the ultimate reason Matthew gives has to do with fulfillment of a divine plan.

No Old Testament text directly matches Matthew's quote "He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matt. 2:23). But ancient authors sometimes blended texts, and since both Jews and Greeks played on words to make a point, some suggest this text could be a play on the Hebrew word *netser*, "branch," a title for the Messiah (Jer. 23:5; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; cf. Isa. 11:1; 53:2). Others suggest that by changing the letters slightly, it could refer to the Nazirites, a class of people dedicated to God (cf. Num. 6:1–21). These views have problems, however, and it may be best to understand this simply as a known saying of the prophets not recorded in the Old Testament. Jude 14–15 similarly quotes a prophecy from Enoch not in the Old Testament, and the New Testament gives sayings of Jesus that were not recorded in the Gospels (Acts 20:35, for example). However one understands the reference, one fact is clear: Nazareth was a lowly, reproachful place in which to grow up (John 1:46), and the insulting name "Nazarene" and other reproaches on Christ fulfilled many prophecies that the Messiah would be "despised and forsaken of men" (Isa. 53:3; 49:7; Psalm 22:6–8; 69:20–21). It was in this lowly and despised place that the royal Son of God would live humbly for most of His earthly life.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth"
(Psalm 78:1).

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

Where did the wise men come from?

We are told in Matthew 2:1 that they arrived in Jerusalem from the East.

How did the wise men know to come to Jerusalem to look for Jesus?

They followed the star.

What verse is quoted in Matthew 2:6?

Micah 5:2.

What were the gifts that the magi presented to Jesus?

They presented Him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Who warned the magi not to return to Jerusalem to tell Herod where Jesus was?
God did in a dream.



Adversaries

Ask the students what an adversary is. Explain that an adversary is a person who tries to keep you from doing something that you intend or even are commanded to do. Tell the students that if they claim Christ as their Savior, they will have adversaries who try to keep them from following Him. In today's story, they will learn about one of Jesus' many adversaries, King Herod. Talk about Herod being afraid of Jesus and wanting Him dead because Jesus was coming as King of the Jews.



Evidence

Ask the students what evidence is and how it is used. In today's lesson, Herod consults his high priests and scribes to find out about the coming King of the Jews. Herod was presented with evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. Discuss how he took that evidence in a selfish, prideful way, choosing to kill all the newborn babies in Bethlehem. Ask the students what they do with the evidence that is presented to them every Sunday at church.



Obedience

Ask the students what it means to obey without understanding why you are being told to do something. Tell them that Mary and Joseph obeyed the angel God sent when he told them to flee with Jesus into Egypt. Ask the students what they think would have happened if Mary and Joseph had delayed in their obedience. (Jesus would have been killed with all the other babies in the Bethlehem area.) Explain that Mary and Joseph did obey, and God protected them because of their obedience.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Reading of the Text

Read Matthew 2:13–2:23.

Introduction

Have you ever had a dream that you thought really happened? Wouldn’t it be exciting and scary if an angel came to you in a dream in the middle of the night and told you to take your family to another city? Today, God does not speak to us through dreams (He reveals His will through His Word), but that is how God chose to give Joseph a very important message. Today we will learn about what God told Joseph.



Leadoff Questions (LOQs)

LOQ: What supernatural events accompanied Christ’s birth?

Answer: For hundreds of years there had been no supernatural activity, but with Jesus’ birth, there was a flurry of revelation and supernatural events. God used dreams to give Mary and Joseph messages, and angels declared Jesus’ birth to shepherds.

LOQ: What did people who were instructed by angels do?

Answer: People such as Joseph received the messages and were obedient and submissive to the instructions.

LOQ: Why did Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt?

Answer: Mary and Joseph were being obedient to God’s instructions. Egypt was also an area where Jews could find refuge.

LOQ: How far was it from Bethlehem to Egypt?

Answer: 75–100 miles.

LOQ: Why was it important that the Messiah come out of Egypt?

Answer: Hosea 11:1 was written about the past but was also a prophecy of the future, when the Messiah of the Jews would come out of Egypt. When Mary and Joseph returned with Jesus from Egypt, they were fulfilling prophecy.

LOQ: Why was Herod trying to kill Jesus?

Answer: Herod was jealous, and in his mind, there could be only one “king of the Jews” —him. Any competition infuriated him, and he tried to use the wise men to find where Jesus was so he could eliminate Him.

LOQ: What did Herod do about Jesus being a threat to his kingship?

Answer: Herod had all male children less than two years old killed in Bethlehem and the surrounding area.

Summary

After being warned in a dream, Joseph took Mary and Jesus and fled to Egypt, which was far from the threat of Herod. Herod felt threatened because of the news from the wise men. They told Herod that the King of the Jews would be born in Bethlehem. Herod had all male children in Bethlehem, less than two years old killed to keep his kingdom from rivals. After the death of Herod, Joseph was told that it was safe to return, so they moved to the city of Nazareth.

Application

In every step of Jesus' life, God's sovereign hand can be seen. He protected and guided Mary and Joseph and even their relatives before them so that His sovereign plan would be completed. We can also trust that God has every detail of our lives planned out. When times are hard or we do not understand why God is allowing something tough to happen, we can trust that He is in complete control and is doing it for our good and His glory.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



The Angel's Message and Man's Response

Several messages to men from angels were given around the time of Jesus' birth. Most people, including Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the wise men, responded correctly by obeying God's instructions right away. But one man, Zacharias, doubted, and so he was left speechless until his son was born. Discuss obedience and disobedience with the students. Ask them how they obey or disobey. Ask them what happens when you delay or question obedience.



Dreams and Angels

Discuss the angel's visits to Joseph and all the revelation and supernatural events surrounding Jesus' birth. Explain that for 400 years before Jesus was born, men heard nothing from God. Also discuss angels in today's world. Explain the importance of checking all things against the Bible, the Word of God, to know whether they are true.

Praise and Worship

Cares Chorus

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Joy to the World!

O-B-E-D-I-E-N-C-E

O Come, Let Us Adore Him

Trust and Obey

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



What Is Prophecy?

Discuss with the students what prophecy is and how God uses it to show His power. Jesus’ birth was prophesied to the Israelites many years before it happened. Where Jesus would be born was written about many years ahead of time. God uses prophecy to glorify Himself. Through prophecy, we can see that He keeps His promises to us. Talk to the students about the prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled—the prophecies about Jesus’ second coming, about His taking believers to heaven, and about how they one day will rule with Him on the earth.



Decisions

Ask the students what kinds of decisions they make every day. Do they ever pray before making an important decision? Discuss Herod’s decisions and how he reacted with pride and selfishness when he heard that Jesus was coming as King of the Jews. Herod could not see that Jesus was the Messiah, even after consulting his chief priests and scribes. Have the students give examples of how they could do this in their own lives (for instance, not cleaning their room when they should because they want to play with their friends, or not obeying their moms when they say not to eat snacks before dinner).



Your Reaction to the Messiah

Talk to the students about Herod’s response to hearing that the Messiah was coming. Then discuss how they react to knowing that Jesus died on the cross for their sins. Ask the students what change should happen when you believe in the Messiah, and what new heart attitude you should have (Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10). Talk about ways we show that we are believers (the fruit of the Spirit; Gal. 5:22–23) and ways that we show we are not believers (continuing to live in sin).



“Clues Point to Jesus”

Give each student a copy of the “Clues Point to Jesus” page (at the back of the lesson). Have one student read the text from the first box in the “Clues/Prophecies” column. Then read the Bible verse out loud. Find the corresponding box in the “Jesus’ Fulfillment” column, and read the text and Bible verse. Direct the students to draw a line connecting the two boxes. Repeat with each set, allowing various students to read. Briefly discuss how the clues of each prophecy point to and are fulfilled by Jesus.



“The King Is Preserved”

Use this work sheet to reinforce the key truths of today’s lesson. The work sheet is located at the back of the lesson.



Journal Page: “Immediate Obedience”

Give each student a copy of the journal page at the back of this lesson. The students can complete the page individually, in small groups, or at home.

Coloring Pages

Give each student copies of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. Students can color the pages in class or at home.



MEMORY VERSE

“Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, ‘Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel!’” (Matthew 2:19–20a).

Clues Point to Jesus

Do the clues given before Jesus Christ was born point to Him as the King?

Read the Scriptures and then the summaries in the left-hand column.

Do the same for the Scriptures and summaries in the right-hand column.

Next, draw a line from the prophecy (clue) to Jesus' fulfillment.

Clues/Prophecies

Read: Genesis 12:1a, 2a, 3b
God tells Abraham that through his descendants will come the One who will be a blessing to all the people of the earth.

Read: Genesis 49:10
The King who is Ruler of all will be from the line of Judah.

Read: 2 Samuel 7:8, 12–13
God tells David that one of his descendants will come in God's name and God will establish His kingdom.

Read: Isaiah 7:14
A son born of a virgin and called Immanuel (Jesus) would be a sign to the people of God's chosen King.

Read: Psalm 72:10; Isaiah 60:3, 6, 9
The Ruler would be worshiped by wise men and presented with gifts.

Read: Jeremiah 31:15
Babies would be killed around the place of His birth.

Read: Hosea 11:1
God's Son would live in Egypt for a time.

Read: Micah 5:2
The Ruler would be born in the city of Bethlehem.

Jesus' Fulfillment

Read: Matthew 1:1–17
Christ was a descendant of Abraham...Judah...and David.

Read: Matthew 1:18–20, 25
Jesus mother, Mary, was a virgin when she gave birth to Him.

Read: Matthew 1:23
Jesus was given the name Immanuel, which means "God with us."

Read: Matthew 2:1a
Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem.

Read: Matthew 2:1–2, 11
The wise men from the East came from afar to worship Jesus and present Him with gifts.

Read: Matthew 2:13–15
Joseph took Mary and Jesus to live in Egypt for a time.

Read: Matthew 2:16–18
Evil King Herod ordered his men to kill all the baby boys around Bethlehem.

The King Is preserved



Matthew 2:13–23

Name _____

1. Who appeared to Joseph in a dream? _____
2. The angel of the Lord told Joseph to flee to _____ (Matt. 2:13).
3. Who was seeking to destroy Jesus? _____
4. Write out Matthew 2:14–15.

5. Herod ordered that all male children under two years of age _____.
6. Where did Joseph, Mary, and Jesus live after Herod's death? _____
7. The prophecies in Matthew 2:13–23 point to the fact that _____.

Joseph was smart

Herod was bad

Jesus is the Messiah

Immediate Obedience

Imagine that it is the middle of the night and you are woken up by a police officer telling your parents that they must leave the house right away because there is a huge fire coming right toward it. That would be a scary thing to wake up to! What if instead of leaving the house, your parents were to say, “No, I think we’ll just go back to sleep.” Your safety would require their immediate obedience to the police officer’s instruction. In today’s lesson something similar happened to Joseph. But it wasn’t a police officer who gave him the instruction to leave; it was an angel sent by God. The angel told Joseph to take Mary and Jesus and flee to the land of Egypt, where they would be safe. Joseph didn’t hesitate. He did just as the angel had instructed him.

How would you react if an angel instructed you to do something?

God used an angel to instruct Joseph and Mary to flee, but what does He use to instruct us today?

How do you react to hearing God’s instructions to you in His Word?

What are some instructions that God has given you in His Word that you must obey today?

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God protected Jesus' life to keep promises that He had made.
What were some of those promises about Jesus? Look up the passage to see what was promised about Him.

Genesis 3:15 _____

Genesis 12:1-3 _____

Genesis 49:10 _____

Micah 5:2 _____

God kept His Word and protected Jesus from being hurt so that He could fulfill the promises that were made about Him.

How do the promises about Jesus affect you?

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PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, for keeping Your promises and for keeping Jesus safe so that He could save men from their sins. Please help me to obey You immediately, as Joseph did. Thank You for Your Word, which gives us instructions for life.

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"Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt..." (Matthew 2:13b).



**“Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, ‘Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead’”
(Matthew 2:19–20).**

