

SCHOLARS VISITED BABY JESUS

Matthew 2:1-23; Luke 2:40

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Scholars, King Herod, and Joseph

Key-locations: Jerusalem and Bethlehem

Key-repetitions:

- Angels (Mat 2:13,19).
- God spoke through dreams: to the wise scholars (Mat 2:12); to Joseph (Mat 2:13, 20, 22).
- Seekers of knowledge: Wise scholars from the East sought the baby born to be king of the Jews (Mat 2:2); chief priest and scholars of Law of Moses had knowledge of where Christ child would be born but no interest in seeking out the child (Mat 2:4-6); King Herod sought knowledge in order to kill child (Mat 2:7-8).
- Star: Wise scholars saw star that signaled birth of king of the Jews (Mat 2:2); King Herod discovered from the scholars the exact time they first saw the star (Mat 2:7); the star reappeared and led the wise scholars to the house of baby Jesus (Mat 2:9-10).
- Scripture fulfilled: birth place of Christ child foretold as Bethlehem (Mic 5:2 / Mat 2:6); Egyptian exile of Christ child foretold (Hos 11:1 / Mat 2:13-15); the killing of baby boys foretold (Jer 31:15 / Mat 2:16-18); Jesus' growing up in Nazareth was foretold (Mat 2:23).

Key-attitudes:

- Wise scholars' determination to find baby born to be king of the Jews.
- Chief priest's and Jewish teachers' lack of interest in acting on their knowledge of birth place of king of the Jews.
- Wise scholars' adoration of the boy Jesus.
- King Herod's fury and cruelty.
- Joseph's willingness to obey God's instructions.

Initial-situation:

An angel informed Joseph that his fiancée Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit and that he should not fear to take her as his wife. Joseph took Mary as his wife, but didn't consummate the marriage with physical intimacy until after baby Jesus was born. Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem in Judea to register for the Roman census. While in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to her firstborn son. Angels informed shepherds about the birth of the baby and they found Mary and Joseph with the baby lying in the feeding trough.

The baby was eight days old when he was circumcised. The baby was given the name Jesus, the name the angel gave him before Mary became pregnant (Lk 2:21).

Initial-problem:

Wise scholars from the east arrived in Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the baby who was born to be king of the Jews? King Herod heard about this new king of the Jews and was disturbed.

Final-situation:

The child Jesus grew, became strong, was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus was born in Bethlehem during the time of King Herod. After Jesus was born, wise scholars from the east arrived in Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the baby who was born to be king of the Jews? We saw a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth and we've come to worship him."

King Herod heard about this new king of the Jews. King Herod was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. King Herod brought together all the chief priests and teachers of the Law of Moses. King Herod asked them where the Christ was to be born.

They replied, "In Bethlehem in Judea. The prophet wrote about it, 'But you, Bethlehem, in Judah's land are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; from you will come a leader who will be the shepherd of my people Israel'" (*Mic 5:2; Mat 2:1-6*).

King Herod had a secret meeting with the wise scholars from the east and discovered from them the exact time they first saw the star. King Herod sent the wise scholars to Bethlehem and said, "Go; carefully search for the child. As soon as you find him, send word to me, so that I, too, may go worship him" (*Mat 2:7-8*).

The wise scholars went on their way with King Herod's instructions. The star they had seen in the eastern sky reappeared and led the scholars and stopped over the house where the child was. The scholars saw the star and were overjoyed. They entered the house and saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped the child. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, incense, and myrrh.

God warned the wise scholars in a dream not to report back to King Herod; they returned to their country by another route (*Mat 2:9-12*).

After the wise scholars left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and commanded, "Get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay until further notice. King Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

Joseph got up while it was still night, took the child and his mother and left for Egypt. They lived in Egypt until King Herod's death. This Egyptian exile fulfilled what the Lord had said through Prophet Hosea, "Out of Egypt I called my son" (*Hos 11:1; Mat 2:13-15*).

King Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the wise scholars. King Herod was furious and ordered his soldiers to kill all boys two years old and younger in Bethlehem and its vicinity. King Herod determined the age from the information the scholars gave him. This fulfilled Jeremiah's prophesy (*Jer 31:15; Mat 2:16-18*).

Joseph was still in Egypt when King Herod died. The Lord's angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and return to Israel, for those who were trying to kill the child are dead."

Joseph got up, took the child and his mother and reentered Israel. Joseph heard that Herod's son succeeded his father as king in Judea, so Joseph was afraid to go there. Joseph was warned in a dream to go to the district of Galilee. Joseph went and settled in a town called Nazareth. The prophet had said, "He will be called a Nazarene" (*Mat 2:19-23*).

In the town of Nazareth, the child Jesus grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him (*Lk 2:40*).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 5. How did the characters face their problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Wise scholars came to Jerusalem looking for the baby who had been born to be king of the Jews. When King Herod asked the priests and teachers of the Law where the Messiah would be born, what happened?
2. How did King Herod, the priest, and the scholars react to the news that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem?
3. How did different people react to the birth of Jesus?
4. How do different people today react to the celebration of Jesus' birth at Christmas?
5. What gifts did the scholars give to baby Jesus?
6. What gifts can we give Jesus today?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **People with Bible knowledge may miss out on experiencing God's actions.** Priests and teachers of the Law knew that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (*Mat 2:5-6*); however, they didn't visit the baby Jesus. Wise scholars who had limited biblical knowledge visited and worshiped the child Jesus.

2. **Worship Jesus because of who he is.** The wise scholars went looking for Jesus. They didn't wait for God to come looking for them. When they found the child Jesus, they responded with joy, worship, and gifts. They didn't come seeking to get something from God. They worshiped Jesus because of who he was (Mat 2:1-12).
3. **The person who knows about Jesus is faced with a choice: accept and worship him or reject and resist him.** Non-Jewish scholars worshiped young Jesus. King Herod tried to kill the baby (Mat 2:1-16; Lk 2:8-20).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Twitter Prayers (short, concise prayers):

Invite listeners to pray about the story in "twitter" length prayers. Tell God:

- How they feel about the story.
- How they are similar to or different from:
 - Bible scholars who knew where the Christ child was to be born, but didn't seek out the child.
 - Wise scholars who sought and worshiped the child Jesus.
 - Parents of slaughtered children who suffered, because an unjust person had power.
 - Joseph who obeyed instructions from God.
- Decisions they need to make as a result of hearing the story.
- How the story helps them face personal life-issues.
- How the story helps them to know God better.