

A NEW LIGHT

Matthew 2:1-12 Herod and the Wise Men

The story of the three wise men is part of Matthew's account of Jesus' birth, but not mentioned anywhere else in the Christian Scriptures. As their portrayal suggests they symbolize wisdom but they also represent the other nations apart from Israel. The text does not tell us exactly how many wise men there were but we assume three because there are three gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh. In later interpretations, the gifts came to represent royalty, divinity and suffering or virtue, prayer and suffering. They certainly are unusual gifts and do appear to be very symbolic in purpose and in fact. Gifts are now a substantial part of Christmas for us. Thus gifts such as these, of symbolic meaning may be more appropriate than the blatant commercialism of Christmas shopping in our society. Herod the Great was a vassal king of the Jewish people under the Romans. He ruled from 37-4 BC and was a very dominant and often violent autocrat.

YOU WILL NEED:

- baby doll
- 3D figures: star, Mary, Joseph, stable, 3 wise men, King Herod, baby Jesus {Nativity set}

Children are seated in a semi-circle ready to listen to the story. When the children are settled, go to the shelf and carry the materials as you would the Bible. Place these beside you.

Cradle the baby doll in your arms and begin by saying...

The birth of a baby is a wonderful event for the family. Family and friends are very excited and everyone wants to see the new baby.

Ask the children if they can remember the birth of a baby in their own family. How did they feel? How did people behave? Allow the children to share their experiences, then continue...

Place doll at your side.

The birth of Jesus was also a wonderful time for Mary and Joseph.

Pick up the figures of the infant Jesus, Mary and Joseph and place them in a nativity scene in a stable.

Not long after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, three wise men set out on a journey to look for this special child.

Pick up and place the three wise men away from the nativity scene as if beginning a journey.

The wise men, or Magi, were from the east. They followed a bright star looking for the great leader God had promised.

Hold the star above the nativity scene and turn the three wise men to look toward the star.

On their way they visited King Herod.

Move the three wise men on their journey and have them stop at King Herod. Continue saying...

"We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him," they said to King Herod. King Herod was not happy.

Turn King Herod appropriately as you say...

The King said to them, “When you find this great leader let me know where he is so I too can go and worship him.”

Move the three wise men to continue their journey toward the nativity scene. Hold the star over the scene again.

The wise men continued to follow the star. It led them to Bethlehem.

Place the three wise men in front of the infant Jesus, Mary and Joseph and continue...

In Bethlehem they found Mary and Joseph with the little baby Jesus. The wise men were overjoyed.

Move the three wise men one by one in front of Jesus as you say.

They bowed down and worshipped Jesus. Opening their treasures they presented Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense (a precious incense) and myrrh (rare oil).

Hold up and show the three presents.

In a dream God warned the wise men not to tell King Herod where Jesus was. Herod was jealous of Jesus and wanted to hurt him.

Move the three wise men to journey back home deliberately avoiding the way to King Herod and say...

The wise men returned to their own countries by another route.

Engage with 'I wonder', KWL p184.

Carefully pack story materials into storage box and put on shelf. Ensure that children are watching so they know how to pack the materials away and where to find them.