
“Visitation of the Magi”

Advent Sunday School Lesson on Matthew
2:1-13



[Heroes of the Christmas Story](#) (Celebrated and Lesser-Known)

Sunday School Lesson on the Visitation of the Magi

There are a lot of great truths to take from the story of Jesus’ birth. There are also a great many clichés and worn-out elements of the Nativity narrative. In this series, we will encounter several characters and look at the story through the lens of various perspectives. Some of these figures are already well-known, but others will be among the unsung heroes, at least for many people. Lessons will highlight who they are and their significance to the life of Christ and to our lives today.

This last lesson in the series focuses on the story of Epiphany and the visit of the Wise Men (Magi). The Magi represent several important elements for children to consider. They are seeking the Christ child, willing to do whatever is needed to find Jesus and bow before Him. The Magi are learned, using their wisdom and academic knowledge as basis to search for Jesus. They are also foreigners and Gentiles, demonstrating that God sent Jesus for all people.

Character focus: The Magi, however many of them there may have been... “Magupati” is the word for these gentlemen from “the East” (perhaps Persia). They may have been astronomers, astrologers, Zoroastrian priests, or wealthy leaders. Whatever else they were, the Magi left their homes to find Jesus.

Passage: Matthew 2:1-13

Importance in the Nativity: The story of the Epiphany demonstrates God’s fulfillment of prophecies which preceded the birth of Christ. The Magi are important in this, recognizing from afar how God was working with prophets as well as the stories of the skies.

Significance to us: The Magi remind us that we can use our academic minds to discern ways of following the Messiah. They also demonstrate how important it is to follow Christ at any cost. The Wise men left their homes and traveled long distances at great expenses to find and worship Jesus. We should be willing to do whatever is necessary to follow, as well.



Materials Needed for this lesson: Popsicle sticks, glue, paint, glitter, paper bags, construction paper, decorative supplies, Bibles.

Bonus ideas:

- Compare another [Children's Bible Lesson on the Wise Men](#)
- See the [Wise Men Worksheets for Sunday School](#) (included in the lesson download)
- Download the [Wise Men Coloring Pages](#) (included in the Sunday School lesson download)

Game and Lesson Introduction Activities

Lesson Opening: This lesson can be taught as a simple Sunday school lesson or made into an Epiphany Day party. There are several fun games or treats that can apply to either situation.

- King cake: one Epiphany tradition is creating a cake or several cupcakes, and placing a small toy or nut in one spot. The child who receives the slice or cupcake with the prize is designated the “king for the day.”
- Find the star/find the baby...use a small star or a tiny baby doll, and hide it somewhere in the classroom. Have students hunt for it and use “warmer/colder” hints to help them locate it.
- Twelve days of Christmas charades...since Epiphany marks the end of the twelve days of Christmas, play a game involving the song. It could be a matching game with pictures and descriptions of the different song parts, or a charades game of acting out one of the lines of the song. Adjust the difficulty based on the age level and capability of the group. Some elements can be challenging! Remind students that Christmas Day is only the beginning of the holiday season.
- Hide and go seek...play a classic game of hide-and-seek, or a variation such as sardines.

Discuss with students what took place after the birth of Jesus. Many times, the Wise Men visitation is lumped in with a Nativity scene or the rest of the story of Christmas day, but the story actually took place somewhat later. There are several details of which we are uncertain, but some significant lessons that we can take away from the Magi and star of Bethlehem.



Sunday School Lesson (Matthew 2:1-13)

The Magi Bring Gifts to Jesus

Ask students what they know, or think they know, about the Magi and star of the Nativity story. Only one of the Gospels contains this tale, but it is significant. The story of the Magi shows us the first time in the chronological New Testament where someone comes to worship Jesus. It starts with several Magi spotting a special and mysterious star from far away:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." -Matthew 2:1-2

We don't know exactly how many wise men were part of this story. Typically we think of three, because three gifts were brought; however, the Scripture does not necessarily describe an exact number. These men were learned astronomers or astrologers from somewhere in the East (maybe Persia or Syria). They studied the skies and the stars, and believed that the stars told stories and followed prophecies of things to come. They saw a significant star shining in the West and followed it to determine what it was representing. Arriving near the star, they located King Herod and asked where they might find the king. But Herod, who was incredibly paranoid and power-obsessed, was concerned.

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶ "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for



the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” Matthew 2:3-8

Christ’s birth had been predicted many years before His arrival, announced by prophets in the Old Testament. Micah specifically mentions the place where Jesus would arrive. The Magi were ready to follow that, but Herod was still quite worried. He asked for the Magi to lead him to “worship” Jesus, but actually wanted to eliminate any potential threat that a new king would pose. Meanwhile, the wise men went on to Bethlehem to find what they sought.

After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. -Matthew 2:9-12

Point out what might be represented by these special gifts. The Magi brought gold, which was obviously worth something, and also demonstrated that Jesus would be king. The myrrh was likely a practical gift as an ointment, but was also an embalming material. It likely showed the kind of death and sacrifice that Jesus would have. Frankincense was used in worship, and given because Christ was God. These gifts were cherished by Mary and Joseph, but also fulfilled a prophecy given prior.

*Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and exult,
because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
6 A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall bring good news, the praises of the Lord. -Isaiah 60:5-6*

Isaiah was another prophet who came long before the Magi, but mentioned specifics of the gifts that Jesus would receive.



After the Magi found the Christ child, they were full of joy and satisfaction. A dream warned them not to go back to Herod, but instead to avoid his requests (and dangers). Mary and Joseph, too, were warned to get out of town, and they escaped barely in time, going to Egypt.

So what do we note and learn from this story? Our job as Christians is to be the “star” as well as the Magi, in a way. We want to shine light on Christ, pointing others to lead the way to Jesus. Our light should shine in the darkness and show the joy of the Lord. We are also to be willing to follow Jesus and give whatever is needed to seek the Lord!

Sunday School Crafts on the Wise Men

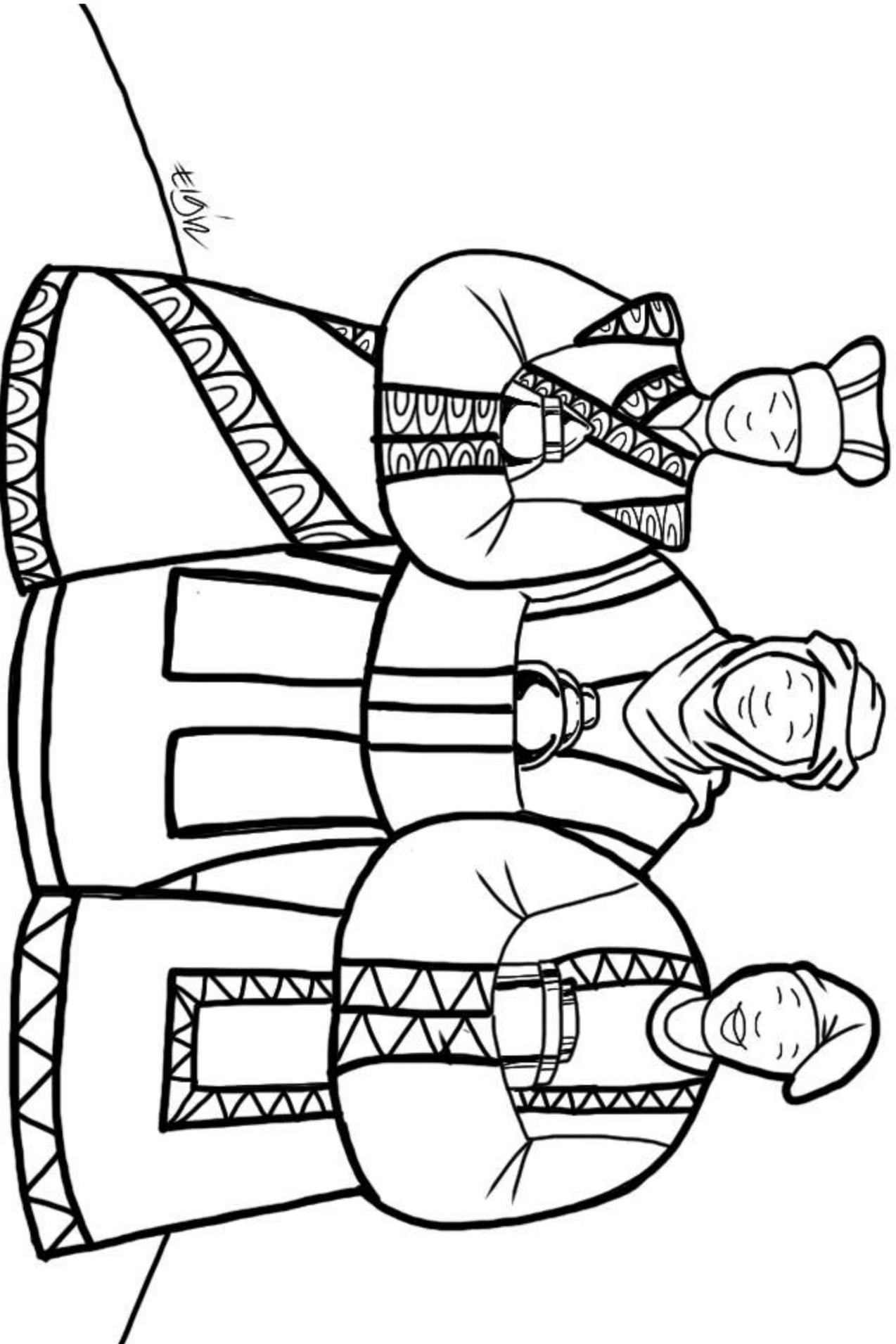
The following crafts highlight stars and potentially represent Magi, as well:

- Paper bag puppets: decorate paper bags to represent the Magi, using crowns, glitter, color, or even fabric to make wise men.
- Popsicle stick puppets: utilize similar techniques to make finger puppets from clothespins or popsicle sticks.
- Paper crowns: cut long paper into crown shapes, and decorate to become a wear-able “crown” for the kings.
- Star ornaments: glue popsicle sticks together in the shape of a star. Paint and dust with glitter to show a star, adding a string or pipe cleaner to hang.
- Constellation: create points onto dark paper by poking with a needle or pencil. Place yellow tissue paper behind it to appear like stars in the night sky.

Close the lesson with prayer and thank God for loving us and coming to die for us. Thank Him for Jesus and ask for help in seeking, following, and sharing Him with others.



... We Have Seen HIS Star in The East...



Wise Men

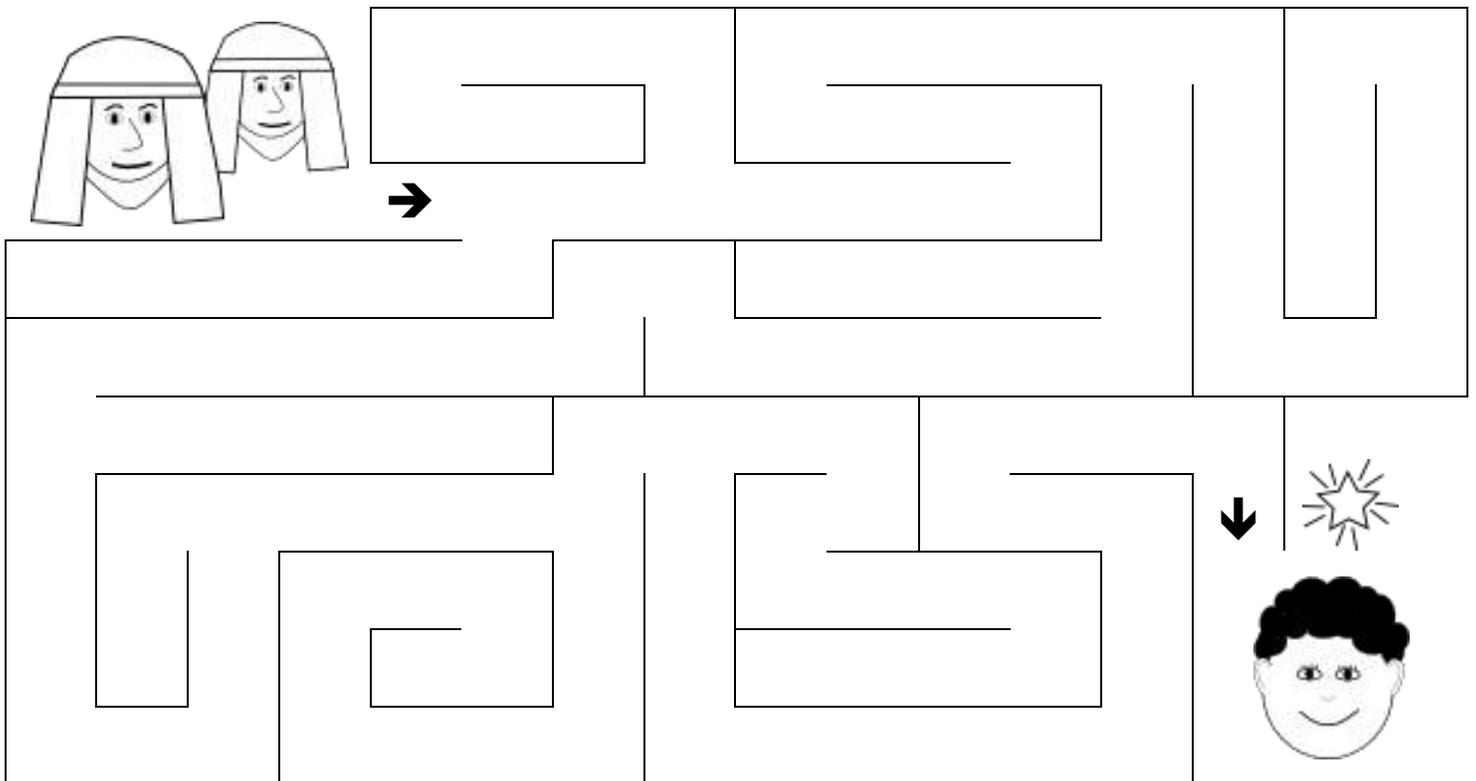
A Christmas activity worksheet from ministry-to-children.com

What Does the Bible Say about the Wise Men?

Mark each statement yes (true) or no (false). Then check your answers on the back of the page.

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| The wise men followed a star to find Jesus. | yes | no |
| There were three wise men. | yes | no |
| The wise men brought three gifts to Jesus. | yes | no |
| The wise men saw Baby Jesus in the manger. | yes | no |
| The wise men worshipped Jesus. | yes | no |

Help the wise men find their way to Jesus.



What Does the Bible Say about the Wise Men?

The wise men followed a star to find Jesus. Yes. They said, “We saw his star when it came up in the east.” Matthew 2:2

There were three wise men. No. The Bible says “some men” came. Matthew 2:2

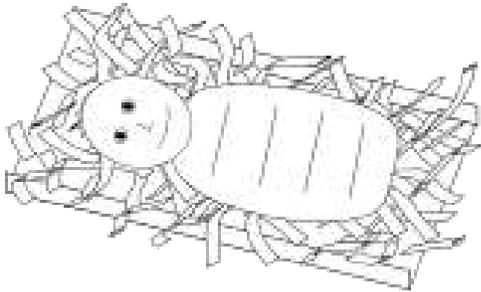
The wise men brought three gifts to Jesus. Yes. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Matthew 2:11

The wise men saw Baby Jesus in the manger. No. The wise men came a long way, and it took a long time. Jesus was probably 1 or 2 years old when the wise men came.

The wise men worshipped Jesus. Yes. They knelt down and worshipped him. Matthew 2:11

Gifts at Christmas

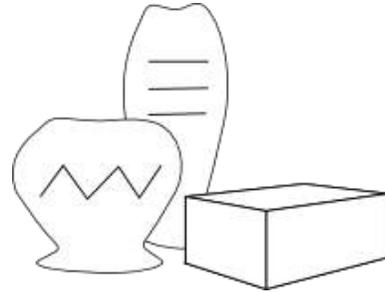
God gave



Jesus

Draw a gift someone
has given you.

The wise men gave



gold, frankincense, and myrrh

Draw a gift you can
give someone else.

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[Sunday School Games](http://ministry-to-children.com/music/), [Bible Crafts](http://ministry-to-children.com/music/), and [Worship Songs for Kids](http://ministry-to-children.com/music/)

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