

# The wise men from the East



Matthew 2:1-12

Wise men from the East observed the rising of the star heralding the birth of a very special king. They decided to go and look for this king. Thus they came to Jerusalem. When they reported their findings to King Herod, he feared for his throne. He sent them to Bethlehem which the Scriptures named as being the birthplace of the Saviour, and asked them to report back to him when they had found the new-born king. The wise men then continued on their way. The star which they had seen in the East, shone over Bethlehem. There they found the child Jesus. They worshipped him and brought him precious gifts. On God's instructions they returned to their homeland without reporting back to King Herod.

The children perceive that Jesus is the Son of God. He is the promised King and Redeemer.

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ar away, in the distant East where the sun rises, live some very wise men. They have read many ancient writings and are more learned than most people. They also study and observe the stars which twinkle at night in the heavens. From knowledge handed down by ancient astronomers, they recognize a specific sign, namely that a prince has been born. They realize that this must be a very unusual child, so they decide to go and look for it. Filled with great expectation, they mount their camels, take precious gifts with them and set out on their journey.

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It is a long journey ... Finally they arrive in Jerusalem where they ask the people: "Where can we find the new-born child, the king of the Jews? We are looking for him as we have seen his star." But nobody can help them. Herod, the king of the land, also hears of their enquiries. He is shocked and fears that his power and rule may be threatened. Agitatedly, he calls the scribes together and asks them: "Where would this king mentioned in the old scriptures, be

born?" They answer: "One of the prophets has foretold that he will be born in Bethlehem."

Thereupon the king has the wise men from the East secretly summoned to the palace. He enquires about the star they have seen and wants to know when they first discovered it. In a very friendly tone he then says to them: "Go to Bethlehem. When you have found the child, please let me know. I would also like to worship this unusual child."

But the king has very different plans. Instead of paying homage to the child, he wants to kill it. He will do anything to prevent this child from taking his place—he wants to remain king.

The astrologers have no inkling of King Herod's wicked intentions. They start on their journey and the star shows them the way. When they arrive in Bethlehem, they are overjoyed to find Mary and Joseph with the child. Although the little baby looks like all other infants, the wise men know this is the new-born king. How far they have travelled to find him and now they can see him! They reverently fall on their knees before the child and pray. They spread out the presents they have brought: gold, frankincense and myrrh. What precious gifts! Mary and Joseph thank them warmly for the gold and the aromatic resins.

The following night the wise men are warned by God in a dream not to go back to King Herod, but to return to their country by another route. They take their leave of Mary, Joseph and the child, and travel back to their homeland via another way, happy and content.

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*In a distant land, wise men saw a bright star arise. They realized that this star heralded the birth of a very special king. After a long journey they found the new-born child, Jesus Christ. They worshipped him and brought him precious gifts.*

- 1 We describe the picture. The wise men have taken note of God's sign. They have spared no effort and have undertaken a long and arduous journey. They must often have discussed the new-born king on their travels. What expectations would they have had? (That the young king would live in a palace. / That he would be dressed in royal robes. / That he would be surrounded by many servants. / That he would have great influence ... )
- 2 The wise men from the East recognized Jesus as the king heralded by the star. What kind of king is Jesus Christ? (He is a king without a worldly kingdom. His kingdom is in heaven. It exists for ever. He also wants to be king of our heart.)
- 3 The children draw the wise men with the child Jesus, or they colour in the beautiful gifts the wise men have brought.