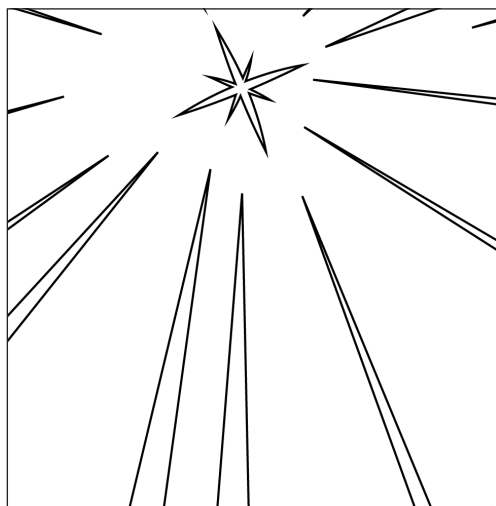
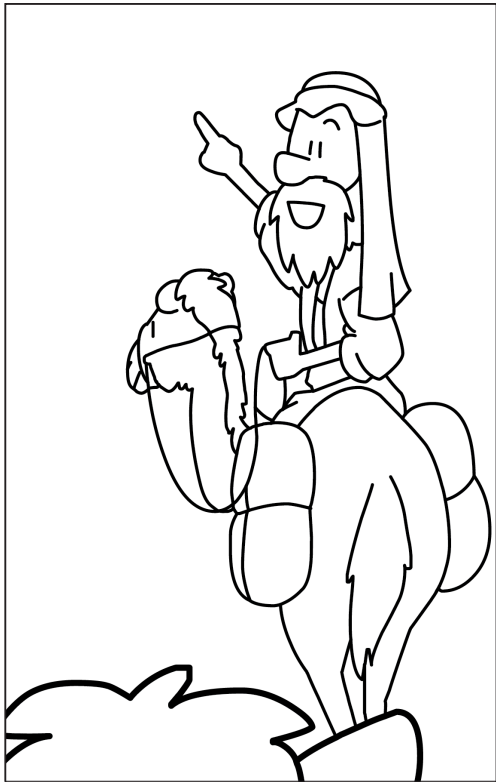


Herod and the wise men



Colour me!



Matthew 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and said, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard about this, he was worried, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. Herod brought together the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?"

They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote,

'Bethlehem in the land of Judea, you are very important among the towns of Judea. From your town will come a leader, who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel.'

Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. He told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I want to go and worship him too."

The wise men listened to what the king said and then left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star.

When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshipped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him. Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.

Commentary

This story could have taken place any time up to two years after the birth of Jesus. Mary and Joseph were living in a house in Bethlehem and their eastern visitors had clearly been following the star for quite some time. They were astrologers – people who studied and found special meanings in the patterns and the brightness of the stars – and the new star that guided them was, in their understanding, the signpost to a new king. Understandably, they looked for this royal baby in a palace, but Jesus was going to be a different sort of king. Bethlehem was the birthplace of King David long ago and it was there that Herod’s advisers sent the wise men.

Their arrival is a reminder that this child was going to be a gift for the whole world, and the special presents have become symbolic of the work Jesus came to do as: the bringer of the kingdom of God (gold), the way to the true worship of God (frankincense) and the means by which people would find God’s healing from all that was wrong inside (myrrh). These wise men from the east were among the first people to seek Jesus and, as an old saying goes, wise people still seek him.

Questions

- ▶ Why do you think Herod was so worried when he heard what the wise men were asking about?
- ▶ What clues in the story can you find that Herod didn’t actually want to go and worship the child?
- ▶ Frankincense was used in worship, and the sweet-smelling perfume of myrrh helped to overcome the smell of disease and death. Why do you think the wise men gave these particular gifts?
- ▶ Do you think Mary and Joseph used these gifts, or did they keep them safe as a reminder of the visit?

Texte biblique tiré de la Bible Parole de Vie, Copyright 2000, © Société biblique française.

Reproduit avec la permission de The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF). Tiré de la Bible The Barnabas Family Bible, © Martyn Payne et Jane Butcher, 2014.



Visual aid

Light a fragrant candle and enjoy its aroma. This is like the frankincense that was given. Perhaps you can find a golden ring and some perfume to represent the other two gifts, as well.



Activity idea

From a book or the internet, find a picture of the night sky in your part of the world. Pick out the brightest stars and the faintest ones; can you see any patterns in the stars? Identify the North Star and some well-known constellations. Imagine the excitement there would be if a brand new star appeared suddenly. If possible, go out and look at the night sky.

Planets look like stars in the sky but they don't twinkle. Can you find any?



Prayer idea

Use the three gifts as a prompt for you to worship Jesus together. Gold is for honouring him as king in our lives; frankincense is for recognizing Jesus as the one who shows us God; myrrh is for healing all our ills and pains. Combine these ideas in a simple prayer: "King Jesus, bring us closer to God each day. Heal us and forgive us for all the things we have done that have hurt you and others."

Key verse

"They knelt down and worshipped him" (Matthew 2:11).

Old Testament story link

Isaiah 60:4-6: Long ago, Isaiah wrote about visitors from far away who would come with gold and spices to worship God.



Colour me!

