



The King Is Adored

Matthew 2:1–12



LESSON GOAL

Students will learn from the wise men how to adore the King of kings.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- God fulfilled His promise that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.
- The wise men came from the East to worship Jesus.
- The wise men followed a star to find where Jesus lived.
- The wise men brought Jesus gifts.

KEY VERSE

“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him” (Matthew 2:2).

APPLICATION

- Thank God that Jesus came to earth as a child.
- Worship Christ with “exceeding joy.”
- Adore Jesus, as the wise men did.

NEXT WEEK

The King Is Preserved
Read Matthew 2:13–23.

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



4 Age Group

Teacher Planning Sheet

PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Personal Application

As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to

- _____
- _____
- _____

Three ways students need to apply this passage are

- _____
- _____
- _____

Materials Needed

POINT

Choose from various ideas to point students to the coming Bible lesson.

- _____
- _____

PROCLAIM

Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.

Presentation Ideas

- _____
- _____

Praise/Music Ideas

- _____
- _____
- _____

PRACTICE

Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.

- _____
- _____

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Big Picture

The primary focus of the Gospels is the adult life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Only two of the Gospels mention His birth and childhood, and then only briefly. But Christ’s entrance into the world was important. The King of kings came as a tiny baby, not in a royal palace or even in a normal house, but among cattle in the cold. God could not have come to earth in a more humble, unsanitary, or unpleasant way. He didn’t come to the aroma of a clean hospital room, but to the stench of manure and livestock in a stable on a cold evening. He went from the presence of angels to that of animals, from heaven to hay, from a throne to a trough.

The circumstances surrounding our Lord’s birth point not just to His astonishingly lowly condescension (Phil. 2:6–8), but also to His purpose to live and die as a sacrifice. The first people the angels told of Christ’s birth were shepherds in a nearby field, some of whose sheep were likely being raised for Passover sacrifice in the temple. The only glimpse we have of Christ’s earliest years is when He and His family went to the Passover in Jerusalem (Luke 2:40–52) to have the priest slaughter a lamb as a sacrifice. When Christ first appears in John’s Gospel, John the Baptist introduces Him by saying, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). In continuing this idea, the details of Christ’s Passion Week entry into Jerusalem, the Lord’s Supper, and the exact time He died all were marvelously orchestrated around Old Testament Passover sacrifice rituals, which He fulfilled in every way (1 Cor. 5:7) as our sacrificial substitutionary lamb (Isa. 53).

Luke gives by far the most details about events surrounding the birth of Christ (Luke 1:5–80), as well as about the actual birth and manger scene (2:1–20) and about His newborn days (2:21–38). Reading both Luke’s and Matthew’s account may help form a composite picture of these earliest earthly days of our Lord. The importance of the incarnation (the Word becoming flesh) cannot be overstated. Christmas is our planet’s most universally celebrated holiday, and world history is dated by Christ’s birth (B.C. and A.D.). Both John’s and Mark’s Gospels go immediately to Christ’s adult life, but Matthew fills in a few additional details that are important for his purpose.

Bethlehem

Bethlehem was a small village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It was home to Ruth and Boaz and was the birthplace of King David. It was many miles from where Mary and Joseph were living. However, God sovereignly used the decree of the pagan Caesar Augustus to force Mary and Joseph to make the difficult trip, which no woman normally would attempt when nine months pregnant. That was no coincidence, of course, but was for the fulfillment of prophecy. In verse 6, Herod’s scholars loosely quoted Micah 5:2, which, in its original text, contained the

Additional Reference Materials

God in a Manger by John MacArthur

Matthew: MacArthur New Testament Commentary

important phrase “His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.” John 7:42 indicates the Jews understood this as Messianic prophecy.

King Herod

Herod the Great was of Edomite descent and was appointed to govern the area of Galilee, which he ruled from 37 to 34 B.C. Historians record him as a cruel and evil man who executed his wives, relatives, and even his own children, apparently because he was paranoid of competition. That helps explain why he would be greatly troubled when he heard that “the King of the Jews” had been born in one of his villages (Matt. 2:3).

The Wise Men

Of all the people in the story, the wise men are perhaps the most misrepresented and misunderstood in traditional Christmas songs and nativity scenes. Matthew explains that when the wise men visited, Mary and Joseph were already in a “house” (Matt. 2:11), not in the original stable where the shepherds visited. Jesus was not a newborn, but a “child” (Matt. 2:8–9; a different Greek word than in Luke 2:12) who evidently was many months old though still under two years in age (Matt. 2:16). There were not necessarily three of these men; the number has traditionally been assumed because of their three gifts. And there is no evidence that they were kings from the Orient. The term “magi” referred to priestly astrologers or astronomers, magicians, or religious wise men, especially in the areas of Persia and Babylon. Geographically, such a journey may have been hundreds of miles, depending on which region(s) they were from. The book of Daniel gives some historical background on the magi.

The Star

It is possible that these men were familiar with the Jewish Scripture that says, “A star will come out of Jacob, a scepter shall rise out of Israel” (Num. 24:17; see also Revelation 22:16, where Christ calls Himself “the bright and morning star”). Some have suggested that what the wise men saw was a comet, meteor, supernova, or one or more planets, but the way it moved, stopped, reappeared, and then moved and settled over a certain house causes problems with such views. Rather than try to find a natural phenomenon, it may be best to understand it as a miraculous star-like manifestation that may or may not have been seen by people other than the magi. It could have been something like the Shekinah glory in the wilderness or an angel. (Angels are called “stars” in the Bible and similarly guided Israel in the Old Testament; Ex. 14:19.) The focus, however, is not on these things but on the greatest event in the universe. The King of the Jews was here at last, and God’s long-promised plan was about to unfold!

Various Responses to Jesus

When Herod heard that the magi were seeking the King of the Jews, he saw Him as a threat to his own ambitions, pride, and rule. Like many people today, Herod pretended to want to worship Jesus, but in reality, he hated the very thought and wanted nothing to do with this King but to eliminate Him. He was willing to sin greatly and go to any wicked extreme to suppress and extinguish the truth.

A second response, indifference, characterized the religious leaders Herod consulted. They knew the right answers intellectually and theologically, but they were spiritually unmoved when the arrival of the wise men from the East proclaimed the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures.

The third response, and the only right one, was that of the wise men: worship.

They may not have known as much as the Jews, but they “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” (Matt. 2:10), sought to worship the young King (2:2), and knew enough to fall down on their faces in His presence (2:11). No human or angel deserves worship, but Christ accepted worship many times in His life, demonstrating His full deity. The gifts were equally appropriate to who He was. Gold symbolizes value, nobility, and royalty; the magi were giving royal gifts to the King of kings. Frankincense was expensive, sweet-smelling incense used for only the most special occasions. Perhaps more importantly, it was the traditional incense of deity. In Old Testament times, the Jews stored it in a special chamber in front of the temple for sprinkling on offerings. Myrrh was a valuable perfume that some interpreters say represented the gift for a mortal. It may have underscored Christ’s humanity. Myrrh would later be used with spices to prepare Christ’s body for burial (John 19:39–40).

Not all unbelievers will oppose Christ as violently and viciously as Herod did, but indifference or anything short of the magi’s response is unacceptable. Whoever is not fully with Him is against Him. The only proper response is to worship Christ the King as fully God and fully man.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth” (Psalm 78:1).

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

Why did Matthew write his Gospel?

Matthew wrote to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah and King, the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Who appeared to Joseph in a dream?

An angel of the Lord.

Did Joseph obey God and take Mary as his wife?

Yes.

What was unique about Jesus’ birth?

Jesus was born of Mary, so He was fully man, but God was His Father, so He was fully God.

What was special about Jesus’ name?

The name Jesus means “the Lord saves.”



Pin the Star on Bethlehem

Bring a large world map to class, and place it on the wall. Give each student a star and have him place it on the map where he thinks Bethlehem is. Then talk about

the Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah being born in Bethlehem. Show the students where Bethlehem actually is. Note how small and insignificant it is. Yet God chose it as the exact place where the Messiah would be born, and He told us about it in the Old Testament.



Where Were You Born?

Ask the students about when they were born. Do their parents have pictures or a scrapbook? Were they born in a hospital? Did they have blankets, booties, diapers, and cradles? Then discuss Jesus' humble birth.



The Magi's Worship

Discuss with the students what it meant to worship Christ with "exceeding joy" and in lowly reverence, as the magi did.



Follow the Star

Divide the students into two teams, and have each team stand in a single-file line against the wall. The first student in each line should stand in the middle of the room. Turn off the lights, and use a flashlight to bounce a shining "star" around the room. The two students in the middle should try to follow and step on the star. When one does, say, "You found the star!" Those two students should then return to their lines, and the next two students have a turn. Continue until all students have had a chance to play. End the game by having the students quietly sit on the floor in the dark. Shine the flashlight on a large, glittery star hanging from the ceiling, and tell the students that in today's lesson, the wise men follow a star to find Jesus.



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Look for the Star

Paste stars up all over the classroom. Each star should have a Messianic prophecy written on it. As each student arrives, give him a Scripture reference and ask him to search for the star with that verse on it. Once he has found the star, he should bring it to you.



Star Light

Bring a lighted star to class (perhaps a Christmas tree topper), and plug it in. Spend a few minutes discussing what the star the wise men saw might have been and what it might have looked like. Explain to the students that in today's lesson, they will learn more about the wise men's search for and discovery of Jesus.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, some men called prophets had said that the Savior of the world would be born in Bethlehem. Bethlehem was a small village near the big city of Jerusalem. In Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to Jesus in a stable because there was no room for her and Joseph to stay at the inn. No one would expect a king to be born in a stable—but Jesus was not a normal king. After Mary gave birth to Jesus, she and Joseph left the stable and eventually found a house to live in.

When Jesus was very young, less than two years old, wise men from the east came searching for Him. They had seen a bright star when He was born, and they knew this meant that the King of the Jews had been born. They traveled a very long way to the city of Jerusalem, and they asked where the new king was because they wanted to worship Him. They found Jewish leaders, who told them that the King of the Jews would be in Bethlehem. That is where the Bible said Jesus would be born.

Herod the Great heard about the wise men and their questions, and he became very upset. He was king, and the news that a Jewish king had been born made him very jealous. He did not want any competition. So Herod decided to trick the magi. He told them to go look for the King of the Jews, and when they found Him, to come back and tell him so that he could go and worship the king, too. But Herod was lying. He did not want to worship Jesus; he wanted to kill Him!

The wise men did as Herod requested and went looking for Jesus. God directed them to Jesus with a bright star. They followed the star, and it led them to the house where Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were. When the magi finally found Jesus, they were very excited. They bowed down and worshiped Him, and they gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They brought Him gold because gold is very valuable, and they knew that Jesus was of great value. They brought Him frankincense, which is like a candle, because it was very expensive and used only for very special occasions. They also brought Him myrrh, a valuable perfume, which was known to represent humanity. They were showing that they knew Jesus was not only God, but also human. After the wise men worshiped Jesus, God warned them in a dream that they should not return to Herod. The wise men obeyed and went back to their own country.

The wise men responded the right way in knowing that Jesus had been born and that He was God’s Son. The only right way to respond to Jesus is to worship Him. How did Herod respond to knowing that Jesus had been born? Herod pretended that he wanted to worship Jesus, but he was lying and really hated Jesus. How did the Jewish leaders respond to knowing that the King of the Jews, the Son of God, had been born? They could have gone to worship Him, but they did not. They did

not seem to care that He had been born, and that is just as bad as hating Jesus. What can we learn from the wise men? We learn that the only right way to respond to Jesus is to worship Him.



Lesson Questions

Who came looking for Jesus?
Wise men from the east.

How did they find Him?
They followed a bright star in the sky.

What did the wise men do when they saw Jesus?
They worshiped Him and gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

What did Herod do when he heard that Jesus had been born?
He was jealous and wanted to kill Jesus.

How should we respond to Jesus, knowing that He is the Son of God?
We should worship Him.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



The Gifts

Bring in objects resembling gold, frankincense, and myrrh for the students to see, hold, and smell. Talk about what each was used for and what each symbolized.

Praise and Worship

Come, Let Us Worship and Bow Down

God Is So Good

O Come, Let Us Adore Him

The Little Drummer Boy

Trust and Obey



Jesus' Star

(Sing to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.")

Twinkle, twinkle, Jesus' star;
(Hold one hand up and open and close fingers.)

Show the wise men where you are.
(Slowly move hand downward while continuing to open and close fingers.)

Precious gifts the wise men bring
(Bow low and pretend to offer a gift.)

All for Christ, the newborn king.
(Pretend to rock baby in arms.)

This year when you see a star,
(Hold hand up and open and close fingers.)

Worship Christ right where you are.
(Place palms together and bow head.)

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



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Star of Wonder, Version 1

Give each student several gold pipe cleaners to create a star. He can twist several pipe cleaners together to make a spiky star, or he can make a traditional star shape. Use one pipe cleaner to make a hook for the star.



Star of Wonder, Version 2

Materials: copies of the star craft pages, scissors, glitter, glue, crayons

Directions: Give the students each a copy of the craft page, and have them cut out the stars and decorate them on both sides. Then they should cut the stars along the slit and slip them together, creating a three-dimensional star. Review the lesson with the students while they work on their craft.



Arrival of the Magi

Invite three or four adults to come to class, pretending to be the wise men. Have them enter the classroom and tell the students the news of what they found in Bethlehem. Their excitement and reverence over what they saw, who was there, and how God spoke to them in a dream should be obvious. They could talk about how they met with King Herod in Jerusalem before traveling to Bethlehem, and how they decided not to return there after God spoke to them.



Ways to Worship Jesus

The wise men sought the new King, and when they found Him, they worshiped Him with gifts. We can worship King Jesus in many ways. We worship Him when we read the Bible, pray to God, obey Him, praise Him, and serve and share with others. Lead the students to various centers in the classroom, showing them how they can worship Jesus in a variety of ways. Here are some examples:

Books: Gather the students on a blanket (outside, if you want) and read a storybook about the Bible passages covered today. Talk about worshiping God by listening to stories from the Bible.

Prayer: Pray with the students, praising the Lord for the things He provides each day—family, love, food, friends, clothes, etc.

Obedience: Show the students pictures of children being obedient. When we are obedient to our parents, we are worshiping God because this is what He tells us to do.

Praise and Singing: Gather the students on a blanket (again, outside, if desired), and ask them each to name something they want to thank God for. This could be something they see around them. Stop and sing “God Is So Good” while praising Him.

Sharing: We can worship God by being kind to others and sharing with them. Cut a star from poster board, punch a hole near the edge, and thread a ribbon through for hanging. Decorate the stars with glitter. Share the star with someone as you tell the students about Jesus, the newborn King.



What’s It Worth?

Bring to class a variety of items with differing values. Place them on a table where the students can see them, and discuss the value of each one. Choose items that are age-appropriate. You could use photos or magazine pictures. Include several items that are difficult to assign a dollar value to—for instance, someone’s life, the earth, or memories. Discuss with the students the priceless nature of God’s gift.

Coloring Pages

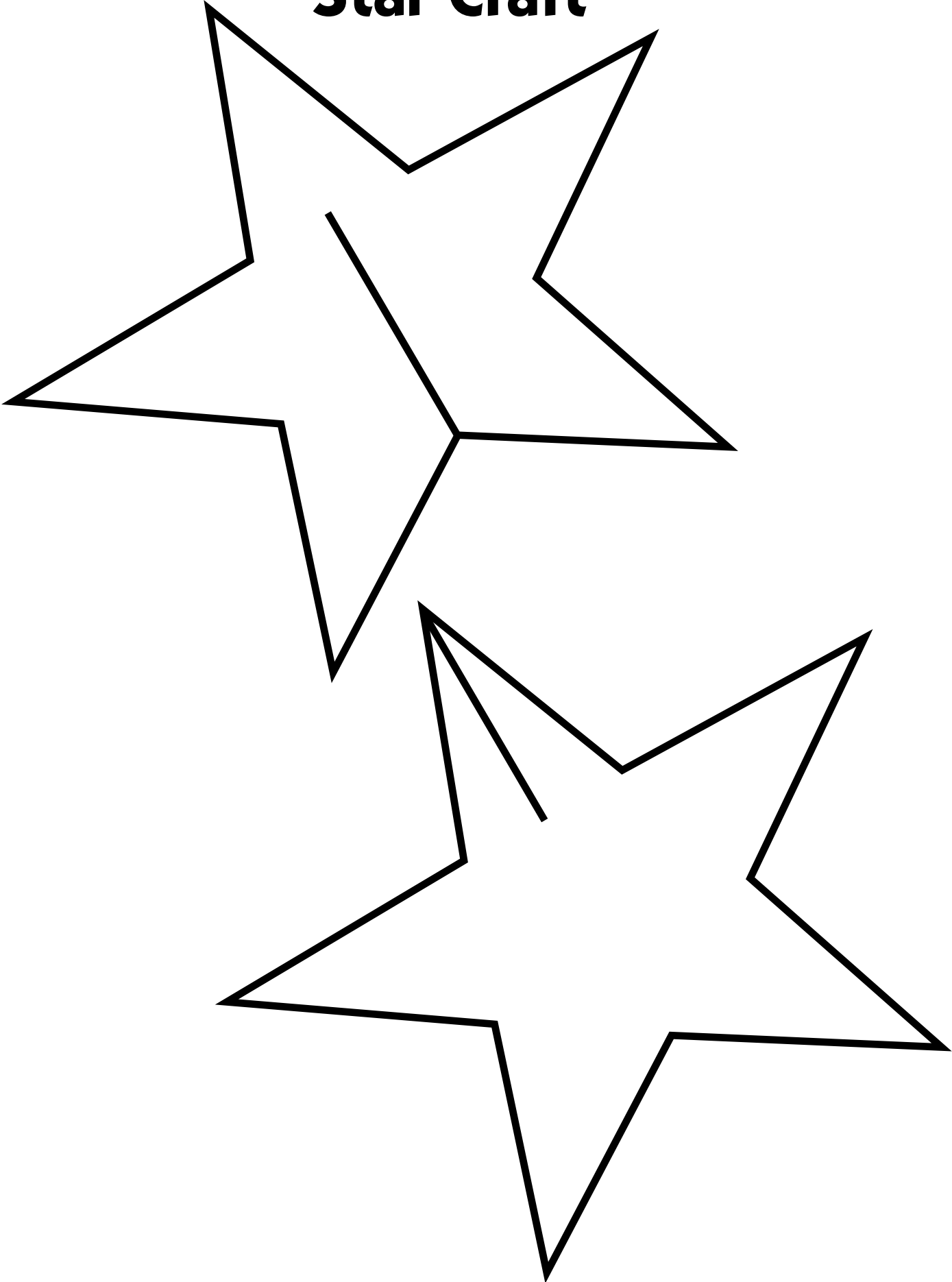
Give each student the coloring sheets from the back of the lesson. Students can color the pages in class or at home.

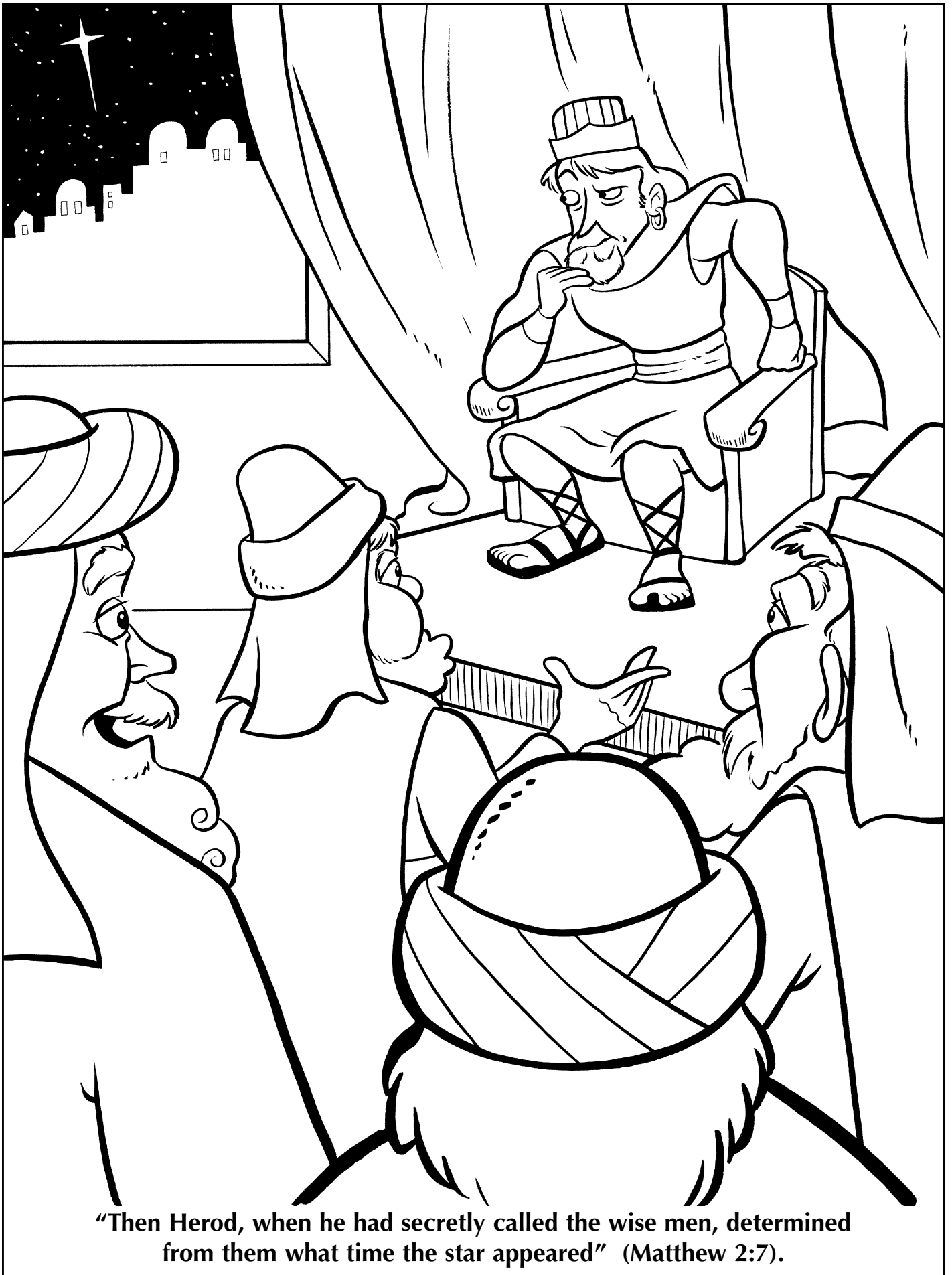


MEMORY VERSE

“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him” (Matthew 2:2).

Star Craft





“Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared” (Matthew 2:7).



“And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him” (Matthew 2:11a).

