



PRAYER: Begin with a few moments of sharing thanks and praises in prayer.

Leaders, it's your call; you may choose to incorporate more information/scriptures as time allows for your small group lesson. Reflection: The Old Testament is "the book of the genealogy of Adam" (Gen. 5:1) but the New Testament is "the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ." In fact, the genealogy of Jesus Christ is the last one given in the Bible, in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. The important thing is not your first birth but your second birth. The birth of Jesus was different from every other birth: He was conceived by the Spirit in Mary's womb and born with a sinless nature. He is "God with us," and He is also God like us because He took our nature and entered into human life and experience. What a wonderful Savior!

Opener:

What do you like best about the Christmas season? Least about it?

What is your favorite family tradition related to the holidays? Why?

Read: Matthew 2:1-6

Discuss:

What do you know about Bethlehem? (Matthew tells us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the City of David, emphasizing the royal lineage.) **Why was it important that Jesus be born there?** (The quotation from the Old Testament prophet is the bridge from the old covenant to the new and a further testimony to salvation history, the fulfillment of God's plan predicted through the ages by His prophets.)

Read: Matthew 2:7-12

(It is believed that the magi came from Persia and were a tribe of priests. These magi became the teachers of the Persian kings and were skilled in philosophy and science. They were known as men of holiness and wisdom and were interpreters of dreams. It was common in those ancient days, such men of science and wisdom studied the stars, believing in astrology. They held that a man's destiny was influenced or settled by the star under which he was born. If some spectacular phenomenon appeared in the heavens, it impressed them that God was breaking into the natural order and announcing some special event. The Scripture tells us that there was a brilliant star that appeared, and the magi, seeing this star, were convinced of an act of God in which the entry of a great king was being heralded to the world.)

What was the Magi's interest in the child?

Since the Magi were astrologers, why would they leave everything in order to follow that star? (The magi represent Gentiles coming from distant areas of the world to worship the Christ. Apparently the wise men took some length of time after the birth of Christ to arrive at Bethlehem. There is no indication that they found Jesus in the stable or in the cave. It may have been all of two years until they actually arrived and found the young child, Jesus.)

What was Herod's interest in the child? (Since Herod was the king in Judea, the magi, searching for one born to become King of the Jews, challenged Herod's rule. Half Jew and half Idumaeon, Herod had been governor from 47 BC and in 40 BC he had received the title of king. Herod was known for being very suspicious, even to the point of murdering his wife, his mothers, and 3 sons.)

Why was he so concerned that the child be found? (Feeling so threatened by the coming of a Messiah, Herod was worried over being displaced in the political order. Thus having all baby boys 2 years and younger killed.)

Read Micah 5:2

What kind of messiah does the prophecy from Micah portray? (Upon the inquiry as to where the Messiah was to be born, Herod called the chief priests and the scribes, experts in the Scripture. These theological scholars were able to tell him that the Anointed One, according to Micah 5:2, would be born in Bethlehem. So Herod sent the wise men to Bethlehem, instructing them that with success they were to bring him word so that he might also bring homage to the newborn king.)

What do the star, the Magi, the prophecy, the gifts, and the worship teach about the nature and significance of Jesus? (From the Old Testament to the New, the fulfillment of God's plan predicted thought the ages by His prophets. As a Christmas message from the experience of the magi,...they worshiped in light of the star (vv. 9-10)... the worshiped in light of the Scriptures, (vv. 5-6) and they worshiped in the presence of the Savior, (v. 11)

Plan for Action:

(The gifts that were presented to the Christ child were gold, is a gift for a king, one who is to rule not by force but by love, to express His will not with a crown but with a cross. Frankincense is said to be a gift for a priest...a sweet perfume used in temple sacrifice. A king rules men on behalf of God but as Priest He ministers on behalf of men to God. Thirdly, myrrh is said to be the gift for one who is going to die. Early on the morning of the third day after Jesus's crucifixion, the women came to the tomb bringing spices such as this to anoint the body of Jesus.)

How are you like the Magi? Unlike them?

How have you searched for Jesus?

What did you find?

How can you worship Jesus in a special way this week?

"Wise men still seek Him"

How can this group pray for you this week?

To view the complete teaching from the Sunday services go to www.centralcommunity.org/media

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