



INTRODUCTION
 Jesus faced many reactions from the people of His day. At the time of this lesson Jesus was probably less than two years old, the word was out that the One who would become King of the Jews was born, and the reactions were mixed. Herod wanted to wipe Him out; the wise-men worshipped Him. From birth to death Jesus' life was not a bed of roses.

After the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary decided to stay in Bethlehem. They were poor, as seen from the offering given when Jesus was taken to the temple. In order not to force Mary to travel immediately after the birth of Jesus, Joseph probably got a job in Bethlehem and then decided to stay on rather than interrupt his wage-earning activities.

Mary, Joseph and Jesus were six miles away when the Wise-Men came to Jerusalem.

THE LESSON
 Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the time when Herod was king. Soon afterward, some men who studied the stars came from the East to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the baby born to be king of the Jews?" We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him." When King Herod heard this he was very upset, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the teachers of the law and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?" "In the town of Bethlehem in Judea," they answered. "For this is what the prophet wrote: 'Bethlehem in the land of Judea, you are by no means the least of the leading cities of Judah; far from you will come a leader who will guide my people Israel.'"

So Herod called the visitors from the East to a secret meeting and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem with these instructions: "Go and make a careful search for the child; and when you find him let me know so that I too may go and worship him. And so they left, and on their way they saw the same star they had seen in the East. When they saw it, how happy they were, what joy was theirs! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshipped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him. Then they returned to their country by another road, since God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod." (Matthew 2:1-12)

We do not know how many Wise-Men there were. Tradition holds that there were three, since they gave three categories of gifts to Jesus: We do not know where they came from. Some have speculated from Persia, Babylon, or Arabia. All we know is that they came from the East. People known as magi or wise-men were skilled in many different areas such as philosophy, politics, science, astrology, medicine, etc., but we have no specific information regarding these who came to honor the new born King.

Although we do not know how many there were, their place of origin, or their particular expertise, we do know that Wise-men were highly respected. These had some on a special mission, to worship the King of the Jews. Notice some distinctive things about these Wise men: (1) They were willing to be inconvenienced in order to search for the King. (2) They did not consider themselves to have too much status to search for Him, even while He was a babe. (3) They were not embarrassed to ask questions to help them in their search. (4) They were willing to take risks. They risked their reputations for no one with any common sense would take the journey they took. Do we hide our colors for Christ because some believe that living for Him doesn't make sense? They took a journey across countries. Are we willing to go across town? They interrupted months of their lives. Are we willing to interrupt popular television programs? They testified before a king. Are we willing to witness before influential people?

Wise men still seek Jesus. Seeking Jesus requires more than seeking a babe to worship, for Jesus has grown up. Seeking Jesus today involves seeking His will, His attitudes, His love, His character, His grace, His morality, His submission to the Father and then living that out of His fullness. Are we "wise?"

Not only do wise men today still seek Jesus, but they also still run from the "Herods." These Wise - men had two influences tugging at them: King Herod commanded them to report back to him; but God told them not to. They saw Herod face to face, but not God. Being a powerful king, Herod could inflict severe punishment on them for disobeying his command.

The world will always have the Herods trying to prevent Jesus from becoming known and popular. With whom will we side, Herod or these Wise - men? These Wise-men chose to ignore Herod and to obey God. That sounds easy at first, but how do we handle "power plays?" Power plays came in a lot of difficult forms. Each of these forms is a different "Herod." Which one of these tends to trip us up? a) Peer pressure? b) Traditional pressure? c) Financial pressure? d) Punitive pressure? e) Elite pressure?

Now as then, God wants courageous people who are willing to be inconvenienced, willing to give valuables away, willing to take risks, and willing to obey Him in spite of threats.

Celebrate Death Of Christ, Not Birth

soft-soaking the Gospel. Uncle Joe had this to say: "Christ said, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Then he asked me, "Why have anything else?" Then he said, "If the Lord called me to carry the Word, I'd carry the Word!" Now, brother, that is my determination. Preach the Word! Carry the Word! It doesn't matter what you think about me or the Word. The Word is the Word and you cannot change it. God's Word will never pass away. It'll be standing when you long, robbing devils, who go in the name of preachers, are dead and in Hell. Now you let that sink in.

Go to the average church and you never hear about Christ dying for sinners and that Christ is the sinner's only hope. It is always some program or something else that is magnified. Or as Brother Shelton used to say, man is deified and Christ is humanized. I know that is so. If I'd go in the average church in this town and tell how God saves a sinner in the dust and

ashes of repentance, the preachers and congregations would brand me crazy and throw me out. Thus saith the Lord: Curse be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD." (Jer. 17:5). Are you going to believe what the LORD says about this pagan celebration or will you trust the arm of the flesh which is pagan tradition? There is no neutral ground. You are either going to come out of it or rebel against God and go on in it. Christmas is idolatry." (1 Cor. 10:14). Then listen again: "And he said unto them, ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15). Now you think seriously about these things, my friends, and I plead with you to take a stand for the truth.

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Memorial Worship

Continued from Page 10A

December 24, at 7 p.m. Rev. Edward B. Newberry is the pastor. The church is located at 2600 Beatties Ford Road.

LIVING SAVIOUR
 A service of traditional carols and scripture readings in the German language will begin at 5 p.m. on Christmas Eve at Living Saviour Lutheran Church. The church is located at 6817 Carmel Road Ext.

GREEN OAK
 The members of Green Oak Missionary Baptist Church announces their 'Appreciation Day Service' for their musician, Evang. James Davis, Sunday, December 20th, at 2:30 p.m. The church is located at 1505 Kennon St. Everyone is invited to attend.

SOUTH TRYON
 The South Tryon Presbyterian Church is offering a free tutoring, arts and craft, recreation and bible study program. For more information contact the church, weekdays between 8 a.m.-3 p.m. The number is 334-8455.

EAST STONEWALL
 The Sunday school department of East Stonewall AME Zion Church announces their annual Christmas program following worship service Sunday, December 20th.

On Sunday, January 10th Brother Walter Ingram will preach his trial sermon at 3 p.m.

ASCENSION
 For Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, Ascension Lutheran Church will hold three special services: Christmas Eve family service at 7:30 p.m., Christmas Eve communion service at 10:30 p.m., Christmas Day communion service at 11 a.m. The public is invited to attend.

CORINTHIAN
 Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church announces their 'Installation Service' Sunday, January 3, at 2:30 p.m. The guest speaker will be Dr. Fred Gibson, pastor of Greater Providence Baptist Church.

The Pastor's Aid will celebrate their second anniversary Sunday, January 17, at 2:30 p.m. Guest speaker will be Rev. Al

Drop Off Needed Articles For Less Fortunate

Outlet Market Place will provide a drop-off station for the Clover Caring Center through December 22.

The Clover Caring Center is a crisis center for clothing, emergency food and furniture for burn-outed and less fortunate families.

Many people still live in what seems a cold and hostile world. So, stop by to add warmth and gentleness to the homes of the needy.

Have a meaningful Christmas season.

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Campbell of Salem Missionary Baptist Church. Everyone is invited to attend.

NEW EMMANUEL
 The New Emmanuel Congregational United Church of Christ invites you to their annual 'Advent Candlelight Service' on Sunday, December 20th, at 5 p.m. The church is located at 3546 Beatties Ford Rd. Rev. Edward Holloway is pastor.

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