

Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

rfour.org

Year 1: Session 4 – Jesus’ Childhood

Class 10: Matthew 2:1-16, 19-20 – Jesus gets some gifts

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Highlight / discuss what King Herod is afraid of
- Make connections between the Matthew story and the Old Testament stories that we covered in Sessions 1-3
- Point out how knowing certain Bible stories (that we looked at earlier in the year) helps this lesson’s Bible story make more sense – and how that is how Bible stories work: The more stories you know, the more they help the other stories make sense.

Materials needed

- Video clip from 90s TV show, “Friends” (video clip is on rfour.org)
- Electronics that show the video clip
- 1 game of “Spot It” per every 10 students
 - As of 2015, it was available at Target and Amazon ([amazon link to see what it looks like](#))

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- For the opening question for today’s class, I [the teacher] will ask the question, and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here’s this week’s question:* What gift are you excited about giving this year for Christmas? Or, what gift do you hope you might get for Christmas?

INTRO TO VIDEO CLIP

- The following clip is about doing something even though you know you aren’t going to like it.
- The clip is from the 90s TV show, “Friends.” One of the friends, Rebecca, has made dessert for the other friends.
- Early on in the episode, it was discovered by all the other friends that she made the dessert incorrectly – she accidentally combined the recipes of two incompatible desserts.

- The other friends, instead of telling her (because it would “ruin” everyone’s Thanksgiving), have decided that they are going to force their way through eating the dessert.
- Let’s see what happens

VIEW VIDEO CLIP

ASK

- Even though none of the friends had tasted the dessert, did they WANT to taste the dessert? (No, they did not)
- Although they didn’t want to taste the dessert...DID they eat the dessert? (Yeah, they did)
- Why?
- Did the first few friends like the dessert once they actually tried it? (Nope...)
- Just because it was funny – did you hear what Ross said it tasted like? (“It tastes like feet”)
- Did anyone like it? (Yes – Joey did. “What’s not to like? Custard? Goood. Jam? Gooood. Meat? Goooooood.”)

TELL

- Even though the friends knew the dessert was not going to taste good, they ate it anyway. And, in the process, one of the friends discovered that he *liked* the dessert.
- In today’s scripture story, we’ll see that the Israelites, 1400 years after exiting Egypt, have found themselves mostly living like they did 1400 years ago: Under powers and rules that they mostly do not have a taste for...
- At the same time, a small minority of the Israelites – the ones who are in charge of the laws -- DO like how the power and rules taste
- And it is into this world that Jesus is born...
- Let’s see what happens

READ Matthew 2:1-16, 19-20

(recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse, including teachers)

1 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, **2** asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." **3** When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; **4** and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. **5** They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: **6** "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel!" **7** Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. **8** Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." **9** When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. **11** On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. **12** And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. **13** Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." **14** Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, **15** and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son." **16** When Herod saw that he

had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.

19 When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, **20** "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead."

ASK

- Verse 1 – Who goes to Jerusalem? (wise men from the east)
- Verse 1 – How many wisemen are there? (we don't know – we're not told that there ARE THREE)
- Verse 1 – Where are they from? (The east, but we don't know how far east...)
- In summary, these are the "We three kings of orient are" But there are not three of them, they are not kings and most likely, they are not even oriental. ("From the East" probably means the Babylonian area of land which is Asia Minor, not Asia)
- Verse 1 – when does this story take place? (after Jesus was born – which means the wisemen do not find Mary, Joseph and Jesus in a barn with the shepherds. As we see with King Herod's decree in verse 16, Jesus was probably pretty close to two years old)
- Verse 2 – what are the wisemen looking for? (the child born the "King of the Jews")
- Verse 3 – what is Herod's first response to the news from the wisemen? (fear)
- Why do you think this is? (He doesn't want to lose his job!)
- Verse 4 – So what is Herod's plan? (Asks for clarification for where the Messiah is to be born. By the way: "Messiah" is the Hebrew word for the Greek word "Christ" and they both mean the same thing: "the anointed" or "anointed one")
- So what do you think, should King Herod know this himself? (Yes – there is a little bit of fun the author is having by poking fun at Herod's ignorance)
- Verse 8 – Does King Herod really want to pay homage to the child that the wisemen find? (nope, not at all)
- Verse 12 – Do the wisemen tell Herod what they found? (No, they do not!)
- Why? (Because in a dream they were warned not to)
- Verse 13 – Where does God tell Joseph to take his family? (Egypt)
- Verse 16 – What does Herod do when he finds out the wisemen weren't going to return with information? (he kills all the baby boys, ages 2 and younger!)
- What Bible story did we recently read where something similar happened? (Birth of Moses – the Egyptians were killing the baby boys by drowning them in the water)
- Verse 19 and 20 – After Herod dies, what is Joseph told to do? (to return to Israel)

TELL

- To help us understand this story, let's think about the stories we've recently talked about.
 - What did Jacob do to his brother and father to get his father's blessing? (tricked him)
 - After Jacob tricked Esau, what did Esau want to do? (kill Jacob)
 - Because Joseph's brothers were annoyed and jealous of Joseph, what did they do to him? (sold him into slavery in Egypt)
 - Once all of Israel was settled in Egypt: How did Pharaoh and Egypt "control" the Israelites? (hard labor and eventually by killing the Israelite baby boys)

- Ok – so let's compare that with what we just read:
- What did Herod first do with the wisemen? (lie to them about wanting to pay homage to Jesus – just like Jacob lied to get what he wanted)
- Why did Herod do that? (so that he could kill the baby – Just like Esau wanted to do to Jacob)
- What effect did Herod's plans have on Joseph, Mary and Jesus? (due to the threats and bad behavior of King Herod, they were basically forced to go to Egypt – just like the Joseph the son of Jacob was forced to go to Egypt)
- And then, in desperation, what does Herod do? (Kills the all the Israelite baby boys – just like Pharaoh did)
- Matthew deliberately tells this story about Jesus with these similar parts to the stories we've read so far this school year to help us think about a number of things about who Jesus is and what he's going to do.
- So the first thing to note is that King Herod is doing just like Jacob's non-transformed self would do: Lie, cheat and steal – anything to get ahead. He even plans to kill, like Esau. And remember, Herod is an Israelite – so what we see, though, is that Herod is living the Jacob-way (Grabber way) and not the Israel-way (Hold on to God way).
- But, Matthew wants us to know that things are even worse than living as a non-transformed Jacob – the people of Jacob are acting like *Pharaoh and the Egyptians*.
- And, things are *so bad* in Israel, that EGYPT has become a place of refuge.
- One of the things that the author of Matthew is trying to communicate is that the physical condition and situation of the people is not the issue here like it was when the Israelites were eventually released from Egypt. Instead, it is the internal condition of the people that is the problem.
- So, just like Moses led the people out of a physical captivity – Matthew has now set the scene to show us that Jesus is meant to do a similar thing.
- Instead of showing/helping the people how to exit their external captivity like Moses did, Jesus is going to show the people how to exit their internal condition – the condition in them that knows they don't like the situation, but they say yes to it anyways. Matthew is setting Jesus up as the Moses-like figure who offers God's option and way of life to the people.
- Through Moses, God provided a workable, physical solution to a physical problem. What the author of Matthew is showing us, in today's story, is that God, through Jesus, will provide an internal workable answer to the people for their internal oppression.

TRANSITION to ACTIVITY

- The following activity is to help us think more about how we just *talked* about the story we just read rather than about the story itself.
- The way that you were just encouraged to think about today's scripture story was based completely on other Bible stories that you've previously read.
- And, today's story isn't the only Bible story that works that way.
- Most, if not all, of the Bible stories use the ideas, images and themes from previous Bible stories.
- To help us think about how that works, we're going to play a board game called, "Spot It."

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- The way this game works is that I will deal all the cards out to everyone
- Then we'll all take the top card from our pile and flip it over on the table
- At that point, everyone will try to find two cards that have the same exact item on it.

- The match does NOT have to have an item on your own card. Just needs to be two exact same items on two different cards.
- If you see two cards that share an item, put your finger on one of the matching cards, and then on the other matching card.
- Tell us what item is on both cards and if it turns out to be true, you get to pick up all of the face-up cards (but don't reuse those!).
- We'll either play through the deck or play for ___ minutes (depending on how the schedule is working)
- Person with the most cards at the end of the activity wins
- Any questions?

DO ACTIVITY of “Spot It”

TELL

- Did you notice that sometimes there was a set of cards that were face up that didn't match or there was only one or two matches?
- That's because there were only ___ cards face up.
- What if we had put 40 or 50 cards face up?
- Do you think the matches would've been pretty easy to find then? (yes, definitely)
- And that's how it works with Bible stories, too. Sometimes a Bible story doesn't share any of the components with 6 other Bible stories.
- But if you are familiar with 20 other Bible stories or 40 or 100, then it is very likely that you will be better able to understand the story you are reading simply because of all the other Bible stories you've read before.
- So, just to prepare you, there's a number of Jesus stories that we'll be talking about, but for those stories to make more sense, we'll sometimes refer back to stories that we've talked about previously this year to help us match up the ideas in the stories.

CLOSING PRAYER