

Jesus' Visitors

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[0 : 01] Welcome, everybody. Do you know what day it is today? What? New Year's Day, January 1st, 2006. It's very exciting, isn't it? I hope you all had a good Christmas break. Did you? Yes? I'm hearing some very enthusiastic yeses. That's good.

Well, we just had Katrina read to us from Matthew chapter 2. And does anybody remember what the story was about? It's about the baby Jesus. That's exactly right. Yes?

Do you have photographic memory? That was excellent. We're actually going to act this out. We're going to do a little drama with all of you being the characters. Now, you didn't know this was going to happen, so this is going to be pretty exciting.

We have King Herod conveniently sitting in his throne. Now, I need some volunteers. I need a volunteer. I need a baby Jesus and a Mary and a Joseph. These are not speaking parts. Who would like to be a baby Jesus? Okay, great. This is Bethlehem over here, right on these steps. So if you would come over to Bethlehem. He doesn't want to. Baby Jesus is, that's it. I need somebody else to be a baby Jesus. Christopher, do you want to come? No? No, he doesn't know. The contract isn't good enough, I guess. Would somebody else like to be a baby Jesus? Okay, we can have an imaginary baby Jesus just right over there.

[1 : 56] Maybe we should get the one from the manger scene. So we'll put imaginary Jesus there. This is the king's palace. That's Herod. This is Jerusalem, and all of you are both the people of Jerusalem, but you're also the chief priests and the rulers of the people in Jerusalem.

Now, I need one person. I need three people to be wise men. Put up your hand if you want to be a wise man. I want to see now what was different about that. Would you be a wise man? Would you be a wise man? Would you be a wise man? A wise person? And I'm going to get you to read that at the time I tell you, not now.

Okay, yes. There. There. There he is. So we'll put baby Jesus over here. Alas, he has no parents in this play, but let's put him right there. Very gently. Sorry. I feel terrible doing that.

Okay. Now, the wise men. The wise men are these three. Now, here's the story. I'm going to narrate, and I'll tell you what's happening, and I'll prompt you to when you need to do what you need to do.

So this is a retelling of the story from Matthew 2. Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea during the time of King Herod. After this time, some magi, or wise men, from the east, which should be from back there, so I want you walking this way, came to Jerusalem, which is here.

[3 : 27] So come to Jerusalem. The wise men came. They've cleverly hidden their gifts. They were almost certainly Gentiles. Now, freeze. I'm going to freeze the play for a minute.

Why do you think that this is important, that the wise men were not Jewish? They were not Jewish. Why do you think that was important? Anybody want to see if you can tell me why that is? Put up your hand if you know why it's important that these three were not from Jerusalem or from the Hebrew people. Any ideas?

Dylan's got an idea, but I'm not sure what it's going to be. Any takers on that? Adults? Adults on the floor here? Your fair game? Okay. So the thing that's important, of course, is that these three wise men are coming from other countries.

They're not coming from God's chosen people, the Jews, the Israelites. They're coming from other countries. And that's to fulfill a promise that God made about his salvation coming through the Jews to the whole world, to all the peoples of the world.

So it's very important that these wise men are coming from distant countries to the east. Their search for Jesus fulfilled this promise of God. And they asked...

[4 : 56] Oh, wait. Test. Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?

We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him. When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed. And all Jerusalem with him looked disturbed.

Now, freeze. Why do you think Jerusalem, all of Jerusalem, and King Herod were disturbed at what the wise men came to ask? Why were they disturbed? Yes. Andrew.

Nope. Not an idea yet. Why do you think they were... Why was the king disturbed? Why was King Herod disturbed? Yes. He wanted to kill baby Jesus.

And that comes up later in the story. But why did he want to do that? What was the problem with these guys coming to... Yes. Yes. He wanted to be king, not Jesus.

[6 : 04] He didn't want Jesus to be king of the Jews. He wanted to be king of the Jews. All right. So he was pretty disturbed about that. Now, when he had called together... So now King Herod calls together all of the people's chief priests and the teachers of the law, which is kind of all of you.

And he asked them where the Christ was to be born. And the chief priest replied... And here it is. In Bethlehem in Judea, for you, this is what the prophet has written.

But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judea are by no means among the rulers of Judah. For out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.

Then Herod called the Magi secretly. Psst. Come here. Okay. Guys, this is it.

Now, go. Go look really carefully for the child. And when you find him, report to me. So I want to go worship him too. Can you do that? Lay me five, man. All right.

[7 : 19] Freeze. Freeze. Freeze. Is this true? Is Herod telling the truth? No. No? What is he doing? Do you know what he's doing here?

Yeah? He wants to kill the baby Jesus. So this is actually... He's lying to the wise men. And it's a plot. It's a plot. Who were the wise men coming to worship?

Baby Jesus. And they weren't coming to worship King Herod. But King Herod made it sound like he wanted to worship the baby Jesus. But it's a secret plot. He wants them to go and find out where the baby Jesus is so that he might go and kill the baby Jesus.

So after the wise men had heard the king, they went on their way. And a star that they had seen ahead of them led them to Jerusalem, to the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. Okay, you have to be joyful. Joyful. Good.

[8 : 24] On coming to the house, they saw the child with his imaginary mother, Mary. And they bowed down and worshipped him. And then they opened their imaginary treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. One of them and then the other two will follow.

But to their country by another route. Excellent. Now, one last question. What does this dream tell you about God and his control of this situation?

What does the dream, why is that important? What was cool about God giving these wise men the dream? Do you know? Hands up? Ideas? Yeah? Right.

That's right. God knew. God knows whatever we're thinking. He knew what Herod's plot was. And so God foiled Herod's plot and allowed the wise men to go back and not reveal where Jesus was laying in Bethlehem.

[9 : 40] So that's the story. It's a great story. Thank you for your help in acting it out. Let's give a little hand for our actors this morning. Good job. I'm going to say a quick prayer for you.

And then you're going to go back to your seats. And the McConaughey's are going to pray for us this morning. But just before you go, let me just say a prayer for each of you. If you would bow your heads.

Lord Jesus, we give you thanks for your coming to be among us. And for this story from Matthew chapter 2, which tells us about the way that you control history and the way in which you have given salvation through the Jews, through Jesus, to all the peoples of the world.

We thank you for this in Jesus' name. Amen. Would you go back to your seats, please? Thank you very much.