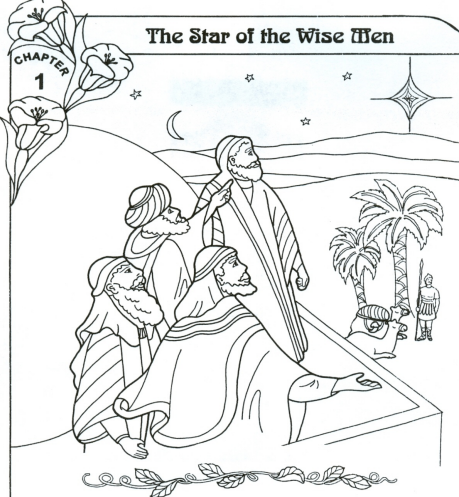


Part I - New Testament Covenant

(Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-11)

Pre-school - 5th Grade

Youth Ministry "First Steps"



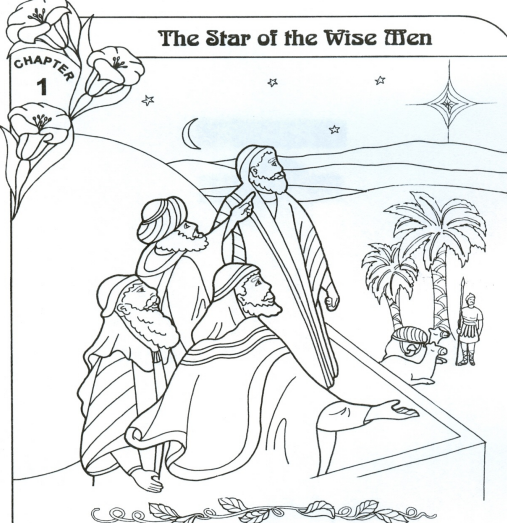
CHAPTER 1

The Star of the Wise Men

The Gospel Story of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, began 2,000 years ago when wise men from the Far East, saw a giant shining star. This was the Heavenly Father's sign that the Christ child was coming to earth. The wise men happily began a long trip to Jerusalem to see the newborn king.

Matthew 02:01
1 Copyright ©1991 Jonathan B. Hobbs

Teaching Guide
(Map A)



CHAPTER 1

The Star of the Wise Men

The Gospel Story of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, (which means "Messiah" in Hebrew), began 2,000 years ago when wise men from the Far East saw a giant shining star. These wise men knew that this was a sign from heaven. The long awaited Christ was finally being sent by God to the Promised Land of Canaan, the home of the Jews. With great excitement, the wise men assembled a caravan and began a 1,000-mile trip to Jerusalem to see the newborn king.

Matthew 02:01
1 Copyright ©1991 Jonathan B. Hobbs

Teaching Guide
(Map A)

1.

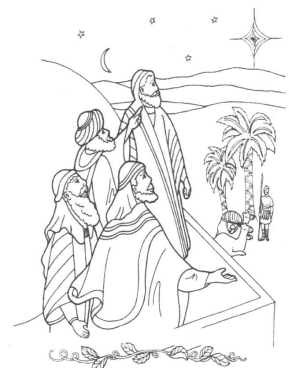
Star of the Wise Men
(Old Testament Summary)

"Bible Notes" – A Summary Study Guide

Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets sent to the Land of Canaan which God had promised to the patriarch Abraham for his unwavering loyalty. This Promised Land was passed to his son, Isaac, and to his grandson, Jacob, and to his twelve sons and his name was changed to Israel.

After a 400-year captivity, an estimated two million Israelites returned to the Promised Land from Egypt in the Exodus. Following the 300-year rule of the Judges and rejection of King Saul, King David, Solomon and Rehoboam's reigns, the Israelites split into two nations. The northern kingdom remained Israel and the southern became Judah, the kingdom of the Jews.

The nation of Israel first strayed away from God and centuries later the Assyrians carried away forever the nine disobedient or lost tribes of Israel. The tribe of Joseph was split in half with his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim.



Some 250 years later the remaining three tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Simeon, the Jews, also fell away from God's favor and were taken into captivity to Babylon, the Greek word for Babel. Here, a young teenager named Daniel grew and through God's power, would interpret King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. Daniel first became ruler of the whole province of Babylon (Daniel 2:24), and then president of the empire (Daniel 6:2).

The prophecies of Daniel were written in Babylon; years later, with its fall, the King of Persia allowed Ezra the priest and Nehemiah in 461 B.C. to lead some 50,000 Jewish exiles back to the land of Israel. They rededicated a modest temple from the rubble of King Solomon's magnificent temple and rebuilt the collapsed walls of Jerusalem while under constant attack from the resentful Samaritans.

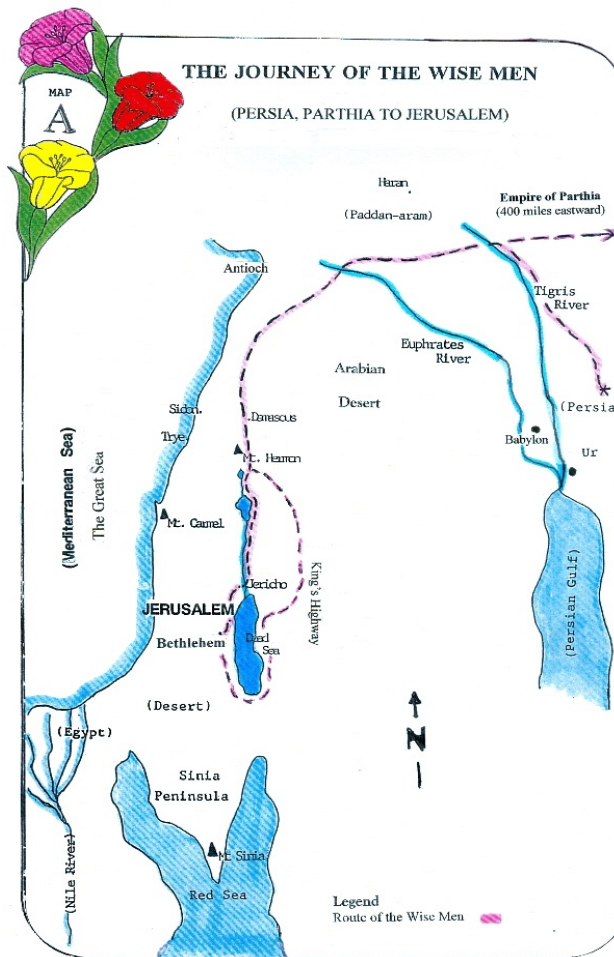
Over the next six decades, the Jews fell away from God's guidance ending with the prophet Malachi, and for the next 400 years no prophets were sent even though temple rituals continued. The history of the Promised Land would be kept through the family called the Maccabees, amidst invasions by the Greeks under Alexander the Great, five different kings of Syria, and finally ending with the mighty Romans. The time of the Messiah's visitation was at hand and the fulfillment of over 140 Old Testament prophecies would form its foundation and validate the genuine Gospel Story. The star of the wise men first appeared about 7 B.C. in the night skies over the Far East.

Sermon#1,

Biblical Scriptures:

Gospel of Matthew - Chapter 2.

1. Now When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the Great, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.



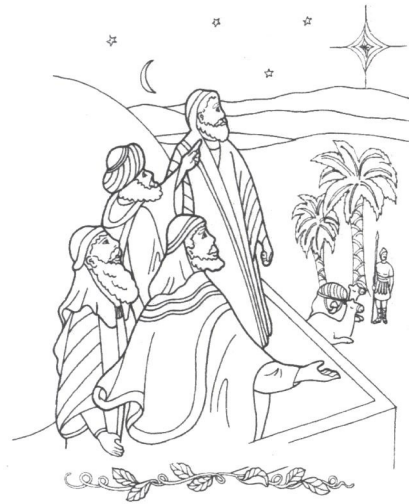
1.

“EMMANUEL”

Star of the Wise Men

[Jesus, The Promised Messiah]

Two thousand years ago in 7 B.C., a mysterious glowing star appeared over the eastern homeland of the Wise men, believed to be the old Persia of Mesopotamia that was absorbed into the massive Parthian Empire (see Dan. 2:12). At this time in history, the forgotten second superpower of the ancient world, the Parthian Empire, rivaled and neutralized the might of Rome. The Parthians controlled the vast area of Mesopotamia, Babylon and the Near East. Parthia was the identified location of the ten displaced tribes of Israel (highlighted by their presence the day of Pentecost 29 A.D.,²⁰ whose proximity was verified by Flavius Josephus, the famous 1st century Jewish historian.²¹ Regardless of their actual location, the star sent the Wise men searching the nightly heavens for its true meaning. One must realize that during this period in history, everywhere throughout the eastern world, men were anticipating the coming of a great king, a “Warring Conqueror”, who would rise from among the twelve tribes of the Hebrews. The promise of a divine redeemer had been fermented in the minds of men, Gentiles as well as Hebrews, since Jacob’s death in Egypt over thirteen centuries ago.²²



The prophet Daniel, who was an eighteen year old Jewish captive of the Babylonians in 586 B.C., first became ruler of the whole province of Babylon (See Daniel 2:46-49), and then president of the empire. (See Daniel 6:2) The teachings of the scroll of Daniel, was part of the Wise men’s ancient literature. His prophecies were made known to them; one being the code of the 70 weeks, or 490 year calculation in which he predicted the arrival of the Christ. (see Daniel 9:24) It coincided with the return of the Jewish people from Babylon, the building of Jerusalem’s wall, the restoration of the second, but modest temple of Zerubbabel and the rituals of the temple being fully reestablished by 441 B.C. This knowledge easily passed to Parthian with the conquest of Babylon.

[*Author’s Reflections:* As a result, the Wise men of the gospel story saw their star, or possibly a constellation between, one and two years before the arrival of the Christ. Three times in 7 B.C., May 29th, September 29th and December 4th, the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn within the constellation of Pisces appeared. If so, symbolically to the Wise men, Jupiter, the largest celestial body in the heavens represented the king planet to the Wise men, and Saturn the second, the nation of Israel. Therefore, it is quite easy to visualize the motivation behind the sudden hysterics of the Wise men. They clearly understood that the true king of Israel was coming to Jerusalem, his earthly kingdom and throne.

²⁰ Acts 2:9.

²¹ Antiquities of the Jews - Book XI (Ch. 5).

²² Genesis 49:10.


Spiritually, the sighting of the star formation shown in the east only to the Wise men clearly revealed that the Lord Jehovah had finally forgiven the “Ten Displaced” tribes of Israel. Not to return to the Promised Land of Canaan, but to be aware that the Messiah was coming, (see 2 Kings 17:6-23; Matthew 15:24). Not to return to the Land of Israel, but to be aware that the Messiah was coming. This would also usher in the spiritual Israel of the New Testament (John 4:23-24.)²³ Unknowingly the massive number in the ten displaced tribes of Israel in Parthia would someday play a key role with the worldwide mission of the apostles after Jesus’ ascension. They would continue to spread Abraham’s blessed seed from Isaac and Jacob worldwide, which would occur through migration and foreign invasions (see Genesis 22:14-18.)]



The eastern country of the Wise men is believed to have been Parthian, over 1,000 miles east of the Promised Land of Canaan. The gospel never mentioned the number of wise men. For safety, it is believed that they prepared a massive, heavily armed caravan for the journey.

The caravan would have been led by the Bactrian, a two humped camel. It has shorter legs than its’ one-humped cousin and is about five feet higher at the shoulders. However, it usually has a heavier torso. This camel is adapted by virtue of its’ smaller size and heavier build, harder and more cloven feet, and longer and finer hair, to the rocky and cooler climate from which the Wise men had come. It can endure temperatures of up to 140 degrees Fahrenheit in summer and down to arctic cold conditions in winter, such as is the climate of the Tibetan plateau. In times of danger, these animals can cover more than 100 miles a day, as the normal daily mileage was customarily ten miles. The flesh and milk were used as food, and the hide for leather.

²³ Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrew 8:8-11.



The caravan consisted of a group of pilgrims and merchants coming together to protect each other against the danger of travel. On these journeys, the camels were lined up in single file and could actually stretch to distances of five miles. The caravan could conceivably consist of several thousand people, and number of camels used for the trip could be more than 10,000.

Using navigational charts, the Wise men's large and heavily armed caravan began their journey from Parthia. Traveling to the Tigris River, pass the ruins of Babylon and through the plain of Mesopotamia. Six hundred miles into their journey, they crossed the Euphrates River and entered the Syrian Desert. Finally, after another 430 miles, they reached Damascus.

The Wise men entered the vast kingdom of Herod the Great. Some 28 miles into the territory, a snow-capped Mount Hermon, the nation's highest and most sacred mountain, came into their southwestern view. Twenty-four miles later, they viewed the hilly country of Upper Galilee and the first inland water source, Lake Hulek. Its southern end is the beginning of the Jordan River. Fifteen miles further the caravan rounded the eastern cap of the Sea of Galilee.

Thirteen miles later, they entered the valley of the Jordan River, which descended over 2,000 feet in less than 60 miles. Finally, after two years of preparation and travel, the huge caravan of the Wise men crossed the Jordan River at Jericho, located at the eastern border of the ancestral land of the tribe of Benjamin. The city sat at the base of the Wilderness of Judea, and was located 24 miles from Jerusalem.