



Small Group Study Guide for January 5, 2025

Our Savior Lutheran Church and School

Theme: Jesus came to be our prophet, priest, and King. The visit of the Magi showed that Jesus was to be the Savior of all nations. Their gifts inspire our worship and generosity as we seek the Lord, search the Scriptures, and pay homage to King Jesus.

Getting Started: (sharing with each other)

1. What are your goals/plans/desires for the new year 2025?
2. What prayers are currently at the top of your prayer list this week?

In the Word: Read Matthew 2:1-12

3. Matthew's Gospel does not include the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary or the events in Nazareth, but starts promptly with "Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea..." Look at Chapter 1 and how Matthew starts his Gospel with the genealogy of Jesus. Bethlehem was the hometown of Obed, Jesse, and David. Judah was the tribe descended from Judah, the son of Jacob (also called Israel). Locate these names in the genealogy of Jesus in chapter 1, and notice the link between the genealogy, chapter 1:17, and how Matthew describes Jesus' birth in 2:1, and 2:6.
4. Herod the Great was not Jewish, but was installed as King of Judea by the Roman Empire to rule on behalf of Caesar Augustus. He is known for being the King during the birth of Jesus, and for the monumental building projects he initiated, including palaces, fortresses, and most significantly the magnificent temple in Jerusalem. He reigned until 4 B.C., which tells us that Jesus was born sometime 6-4 B.C. He is also known as being a ruthless tyrant, murdering his own family members because of his paranoia. What was Herod's reaction to the arrival of the Magi in Jerusalem and what steps did Herod take?
5. How many Magi does Matthew say visited the child Jesus?

6. Many nativity scenes include the Wise Men at the manger along with the shepherds and angels. However, while they all relate to the birth of Jesus, they were not there at the same time. When the Magi saw the star announcing Jesus' birth, it would have taken them considerable time to prepare for a journey, and then travel on foot and by camel across the desert or around the fertile crescent to Jerusalem. Notice in verse 7 Herod asked the Magi about the exact time the star had appeared. What does Herod's dastardly decree in verse 16 say about how much time may have passed between Jesus' birth and the visit of the Magi?

7. The sad and tragic account of Herod's murder of the innocents of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:13-18) is often omitted from the joyful and peaceful Christmas story. It stands in sharp contrast to the prince of peace and gentle Mary laying her child lowly in a manger. You can identify two prophecies from the Old Testament mentioned in relation to this event. What is the significance of each?

Putting it all Together (what do we believe or do as disciples?)

8. How does the visit of the Magi reinforce the truth that Jesus came to be the Savior of all nations? How can we reinforce and celebrate that truth in the church today?

9. The Magi were guided by the Scriptures. The Scriptures told them about a King. The Scriptures led them to Jerusalem. The Scriptures led them to Bethlehem. Look up and **read John 5:39**. What does Jesus say is the point and purpose of the Scriptures?

10. The Magi brought Jesus great treasures – gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts foreshadowed Jesus' threefold office of King (gold), Priest (frankincense) and Prophet (myrrh). They spent a considerable amount on their travel, which took many months. Their gifts may have seemed wasted at the time (especially by King Herod), but they have been remembered for 2,000 years as part of the Jesus Story. They gave so much just to worship Jesus. What do the Magi teach us about how we should use our wealth and resources?

11. How does the story of the Magi inspire you to worship Jesus in the new Year of our Lord 2025?

Prayer: Thank God for sending Jesus to be the Savior of all nations, including everyone in the greater Lansing area. Ask for the Holy Spirit's help in worshipping Jesus rightly, fully, and joyfully this coming year, and in giving joyfully and generously so that others can worship Him too. Include prayer requests that you mentioned in #2 above.

Next Week: The Baptism of our Lord commemorates the baptism of Jesus and the launch of His public ministry as Anointed One / Messiah. It is also a time for us to remember our own baptism, and the promises that God makes to us when He welcomes us into His family.