

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

HEROD'S NIGHTMARE

Matthew 2:1-18 NLT

1 *Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, 2 "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him."*

DISCUSSION: To what extent have you gone to "seek after" Jesus? Do you expect Him to always come to you or do you reach out to Him? How can you become more proactive in the relationship?

3 *King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. 4 He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"*

DISCUSSION: What part of your life do you keep separate from your relationship with Jesus? Are you "freaked out" by the thought of welcoming the Messiah into that aspect of your life? Should you be?

5 *"In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote: 6 'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'"*

DISCUSSION: How are you looking for Jesus in the simple and ordinary things of life? How are you typically looking for Jesus in the bigger parts of your life?

7 *Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. 8 Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"*

DISCUSSION: Herod was unwilling to submit to Jesus as his King. In what ways have you been unwilling to submit to Jesus in order to yield the control of your life?

[9](#) *After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. [10](#) When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! [11](#) They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

DISCUSSION: The Magi showed us that a true act of worship leaves something as an offering. What monetary offering do you leave for Jesus, your Messiah? What is your response to the King? Is He even King in your life?

DISCUSSION: Romans 12:1 says that you are to offer your body as a living sacrifice. What does your living sacrifice look like?

[12](#) *When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.*

[13](#) *After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."*

[14](#) *That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, [15](#) and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my Son out of Egypt."*

[16](#) *Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance.*

[17](#) *Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:*

[18](#) *"A cry was heard in Ramah— weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted, for they are dead."*

PRAYER PROJECT: Spend 5-7 minutes alone with God and talk to Him about the way in which you honor Him with your treasures and your life. Ask Him if there are any alterations you need to make. What did He say?

Break into groups of 3-4 and discuss your prayer experience with the group.