MATTHEW 2:7-15 (NRSV)
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.”

MATTHEW 2:7-15 (KJV)
7 Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.
8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, “Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.”
9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.
10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.
11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.
12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.
13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.
14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:
15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.
KEY TERMS

- **Magi** – Distinguished foreigners, wise men, astronomers from the East.
- **Frankincense** – Olibanum, resin of the Boswellia tree; a woody, spicy smell, mixed with myrrh to make incense for God’s temple.
- **Myrrh** – A natural gum resin, reddish-brown in color; it is dried sap from a thorny tree, mixed with frankincense to make incense for God’s temple.

INTRODUCTION

Walking a mile can seem a long way for many. People in some countries walk three or more miles a day (one way) to get water. Think about a round trip of over six miles by foot to get water, a necessity for life. In today’s lesson the, Magi traveled over a great distance for an even greater necessity. Some believe they travelled more than 9,000 (14,484K) miles over a 30-month period. The Magi’s round trip was probably over 18,000 miles (28,968K). They wanted to find the king, the son of God. After their visit, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus also travel a great distance. They left Bethlehem to go to Egypt, a 430-mile (690 K) trip. God served as guide and protector on both journeys.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Matthew 2:7-8

No one knows where or when the Magi’s trip began. These astronomers noted a star in the sky, and because they understood the meaning of the star, the wise men set out to follow the star. The Bible does not tell exactly how many wise men there were, nor record any discussion they had before beginning their journey. What the Bible does tell us is where the star led them – to Jerusalem. Once in Jerusalem, the Magi asked Herod where they could find the king of the Jews. In Herod’s mind he was ruler of the Jews. How dare the wise men look for someone else! So, Herod found out from the Jews all he could about the Messiah. Intent upon killing anyone seen as ruler instead of him, Herod quizzed the

What the Bible does tell us is where the star led them (the wise men) – to Jerusalem
Magi about the star. He then told the Magi that Bethlehem was the place they should go.

**Matthew 2:9-15**

After leaving Herod’s presence, the Magi again saw the star. It seems God disrupted the star’s appearance for a moment so that scripture could be fulfilled. Herod, alerted to Messiah’s birth, decided to murder Jewish males aged two or less. Jeremiah had foretold that mothers in Ramah would cry over their deceased children (Jer. 31:15). Twice God uses dreams to protect Jesus. The Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they took a different route home. An angel appeared to Joseph and instructed him to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus. God had rescued Israel from Egyptian bondage over 1500 years ago. The Israelites were freed from Egypt so that they would worship God. This time when God brought Jesus out of Egypt, everyone, including Jews and Gentiles, would be free to worship.

"This time when God brought Jesus out of Egypt, everyone, including Jews and Gentiles, would be free to worship."

**SANKOFA**

Over 3,000 distinct ethnic groups claim the African continent as home. These groups share some common ceremonies. A baby-naming tradition is one. Naming rites across Africa take many different forms. Usually, newborn babies' first names begin as nicknames or false names. Or newborns may initially not receive a name. Sometimes, children do not receive their names until after they complete a rite of passage. Elders have a primary role in choosing a child’s name. The choices may represent a day of the week, an ancestral tie, or family circumstances. Some names have religious links. For example, the Nigerian Igbo and Yoruba names that start or end with Chi or Oluwa refer to God. In Ethiopia, the name Hailemariam means “the power of Mary.” While in Togo, Ghana, and Benin the name Makafui means, “I will praise God.” The Magi did not know Jesus’ name, but knew they were looking for the king. God named the king, Jesus.
CASE STUDY

Dr. Jarita C. Holbrook, Ph.D. in astronomy and astrophysics, teaches at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. Dr. Holbrook's expertise focuses on African indigenous astronomy. Her research involves the night sky. She notes that people's perspective of the sky depends upon social and environmental factors. Recognizing that people use information from the sky differently, Holbrook examines cultural variations. She reports that people's physical location determines which stars they see and use. God shone a star that brought the wise men to Jerusalem and on to Bethlehem. They travelled over 400 miles through several countries following a star. Dr. Holbrook's research results show how amazing the Magi's journey was. Their location kept changing but the star remained a steady guiding light.

LIFE APPLICATION

The heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1). Too often we fail to see what the heavens are saying! Many of us do not look up at the night sky. Stars, moons, planets, asteroids, meteor showers go unnoticed. Enslaved peoples used the stars to lead them north as they fled from plantations. Abubakari II, emperor of 14th century Mali, reportedly used the night sky to navigate from West Africa to the Americas.

According to Jesus, we look at the sky and say it will rain or be sunny, but we "cannot interpret the signs of the time" (Mt.16:3). Astronomers share when we can see sky events such as eclipses, night of the northern lights, pink moons, etc. Suppose we took the time to look up. Perhaps while looking at the sky God would speak to us. The Magi gave us a peek at what the heavens can tell us.

SUMMARY

The Magi traveled great distances seeking a king. Once they found Jesus, they worshipped him. They gave him their best offering. Isn't it a blessing to
have Jesus always with us through the Holy Spirit?

QUESTIONS

1. How often do you look up at the night sky? When you do, what do you see and how do you connect with what you see?

2. Why do you think God uses the heavens to speak to us?

3. What are your thoughts about people who sometimes risk their lives to spread the gospel message?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Listen to “You Can’t Beat God Giving”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tqM5GJ-tq0. Think about how much you give to God and compare it with how much God gives you. Meditate on a portion of the song, “We Three Kings...” (although we know that the number may be inaccurate).

Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain
Moor and mountain
Following yonder star
...Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light

Prayer: Lord, thank you for creating the heavens. When we look up, allow us to see with our spiritual eyes. We desire to hear your voice in unexpected ways. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 14-December 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Exodus 1:15-22</td>
<td>(Midwives Frustrate Pharaoh’s Decree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>1 Kings 3:5-14</td>
<td>(God Answers Solomon’s Dream)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Daniel 1:8-17</td>
<td>(Insight Into the Meaning of Dreams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Galatians 3:25-29</td>
<td>(In Christ No Divisions Allowed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Micah 5:1-5</td>
<td>(Gracious Ruler to Come from Bethlehem)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Matthew 2:19-23</td>
<td>(Successful Return from Egypt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Matthew 2:7-15</td>
<td>(Safe in the Midst of Danger)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>