

cepted Jesus, as the wise men did, are frequently falling back on the great Jewish expectation of a coming Christ, while many others claim to be the Christ on his "second" coming and find followers.

### By Way of Illustration.

*The wise men.* In this Bible night scene God honored science. Who are the three wise men kneeling before the divine infant? Not bores nor ignoramuses. They were the Isaac Newtons and Herschels and Faradays of their times. In this I see the prophecy of the time when all the telescopes and microscopes and all the observatories and universities shall bow to Jesus. It is much that way already. Where is the college that does not have morning prayers? Who have been our greatest scientists? Joseph Henry, who lived and died in the faith of the Gospel, and Agassiz, who, standing with his students among the hills, took off his hat, and said, "Young gentlemen, before we study these rocks let us pray for wisdom to the God who made the rocks."—*Talmage.*

*The Star of Bethlehem.* Some astronomers conjecture that Aleyone is the center around which the whole star system revolves. Whether that be true or not, it is undeniably certain that the Star of Bethlehem is the center of this world's spiritual astronomy. If that star had never risen on a dark and sin cursed world, how differently its history would read! With Christ came the gospel of human brotherhood, the elevation of woman, the highest civilization, and the purest philanthropy; with Christ came atonement for sin and victory over the grave. Herod has many followers. The curse and crime of infidelity is that it aims to extinguish the Star of Bethlehem. A band of wreckers who should extinguish the great lantern on Fire Island, and then hoist a false light elsewhere to decoy New York bound vessels to destruction would be merciful in comparison with the skeptics who are trying to destroy man's faith in his only Saviour.—*T. L. Cuyler.*

*The Child-king.* When Columbus discovered America he merely touched a few islands. The great continent he never saw. And the king and people who praised him did not know a thousandth part of the great discovery he had made. Beyond the little islands that Columbus saw lay America, with its great rivers and mountains and prairies, its Niagara and Yellowstone and Yosemite. Neither the wise men nor the shepherds dreamed of the empire over which that little Child-king in the Bethlehem manger was to rule through the ages; the great soul of Paul that was to be swayed by him; the great man that he was to inspire; the institutions and schools and colleges and nations that were to spread his fame. The blessed song was to all people.—*Bishop Vincent.*

### Before the Class.

*Introduction.* Present to the class some of the conditions existing in Judea at the time of our lesson story. Picture to them the character of King Herod—cruel, crafty, suspicious, unscrupulous, but masterful in many ways, who did not hesitate at murder to accomplish his purposes. (Witness the murder of his beloved wife, his sons, and many of the leaders of the Jews.) He was now old and hated by all, courtiers and people alike. The lesson shows his craftiness, and also his cruel nature.

The "fullness of time" had now come, and the world was ready for its Saviour. Bring out the following points, showing that the time was a favorable time for the advent of the Messiah: (a) Rome ruled the world, and the stability of government was favorable to the spread of the Gospel; (b) The Greek language was everywhere spoken; (c) There was a widespread conviction that a great prophet was soon to arise who should rule the world; (d) There was a widespread knowledge of the Old Testament prophecies through the preaching and teachings of the scattered Jews.

*Development of the text.* Take up the following outline, point by point, developing the outline by questioning the class: (a) Seeking; (b) Finding; (c) Worshipping; (d) Honoring.

In verses one to eight we find the wise men from the East seeking the young babe, born King of the Jews. Question the class upon the following: (a) The journey of more than twelve hundred miles; (b) The definite purpose the magi had in mind—finding the young king; (c) The king's trouble because he feared for his throne; (d) The king's crafty plan for finding out the dwelling-place of the babe; (e) The inquiry concerning the birthplace of the Christ, and the answer; (f) The king's command to the wise men.

In verses nine to eleven (first part) we have the story of the finding. Bring before the class from these verses: (a) The miraculous guidance; (b) The magi's joy; (c) The finding of the child with Mary the mother.

Lastly, in verse eleven we find the wise men worshipping the king, and honoring him with their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They probably worshipped him not as the Messiah of God, but as a great future king whose coming had been revealed to them. In accordance with the custom of the East they honored the new-found kingly babe with their precious gifts.

*Specific application.* The specific application is the old, old story of the Gospel of love.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel of pardon for the past, and peace and power for the present and future. This was the message which was brought to the earth by the Christ-child. Salvation is free to all and intended for all, and the first step toward the obtaining of this salvation is the step of repentance which brings the pardon of God, and