

Kids' Chronicle

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Micah's prophecy comes true

By JOE SARNICOLA

The snow was just beginning to fall as Mrs. Patterson told her religious instruction class, "Today we'll be talking about the first Christmas."

Erica, one of the students, raised her hand and asked, "Is it true that some of the prophets knew that Jesus would be born?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Patterson. "One of those prophets was named Micah. Let me tell you what he said."

"Although Bethlehem is only a small town in Judah, the Lord says he will bring out of it a man who will rule over Israel. He will protect the people and they will live in peace."

Mrs. Patterson paused, picked up her Bible and said, "Now that you know what Micah prophesied, let me tell you the story of Jesus' birth, according to what is written in the gospels of Matthew and Luke."

During the night, when Joseph was sleeping, an angel appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, do not be afraid. Take Mary as your wife and she will have a son conceived by the Holy Spirit. When he is born, you will call him 'Jesus,' because he will be the savior of his people."

So Joseph and Mary became husband and wife.

Not long after the angel appeared to Joseph, the Roman emperor ordered the people to return to the cities where they were born in order to be counted in a census. Joseph went with his new bride to Bethlehem, where he had been born. He was a descendant of King David, who had also been born in Bethlehem.

There were already many people in Bethlehem when they arrived, and all of the inns were full. Finally, Joseph found an innkeeper who let him rent the stable. By this time,



Illustration by Kathy Welsh

Mary was ready to give birth to the child that had been promised by the angel, and before long Jesus was born while Joseph and Mary were still staying in the stable.

At the same time, several astrologers appeared before King Herod and asked, "Can you tell where we may find the newborn king of the Jews? We have seen his star in the Eastern sky and the prophets foretold he would come from Bethlehem. We have come to worship him."

Herod did not like the idea of a new king of the Jews, so he told the astrologers to let him know as soon as they found the baby, so that he could worship him, too.

The astrologers left the palace and, after finding Jesus, they presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They did not tell Herod,

because God warned them of the king's trickery in a dream. The returned home by a different route.

In a field not far from the stable where Jesus was born, shepherds were keeping night watch over their sheep when an angel appeared who lit up the sky with the glory of God. The shepherds trembled with fear.

"There is no need to be afraid," said the angel. "I have good news for you and for everyone. Today the savior was born. You will recognize him when you find a baby in a manger wrapped in cloths."

Then the sky was filled with more angels who sang together, "Glory to God and peace on earth."

After the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds immediately went to look for Jesus, and found him exactly as the angels had said.

"Now you know the story of the first Christmas," Mrs. Patterson said. "When you celebrate the holiday this year, remember that the great joy the angels said Jesus would bring is for us, too."

Read more about it: Micah 5; Matthew 1 & 2; Luke 2.

Q&A

1. How did Joseph learn that Jesus would be born?
2. Why didn't the astrologers tell Herod where Jesus was?

Bible Accent

The gifts of the astrologers all had special meanings or uses.

Gold is often associated with symbols of God's glory or majesty in the Bible. The Ark of the Covenant was plated with it (Exodus 25:11); the interior of Solomon's temple we decorated with it (1 Kings 6:21,22); the new Jerusalem will be made of it (Revelations 21:18).

Frankincense is an expensive, aromatic sap from the Boswellia tree, which grows in Arabia and was often traded for other goods from Israel. It was used as an incense for many of the religious ceremonies in the Old Testament. Revelations 5:8 says the burning of incense is the same as the prayers of God's people.

Myrrh is another incense which was used to freshen clothing and linen (Psalms 45:8), as a skin conditioner (Esther 2:12), as a medicine (Mark 15:23), and to prepare bodies for burial (John 19:39).



St. Stephen

Stephen was the first Christian martyr. When the apostles selected seven men with good reputations to be deacons, Stephen was one of those chosen.

Because of Stephen's eloquence and skill in business matters, some of the Jewish leaders did not like him, and looked for an opportunity to discredit him. As part of their plan, several people falsely accused Stephen of wrongful acts.

Stephen was stoned to death for blasphemy. As he died, he saw a vision of the Lord, and he prayed that Jesus would forgive the men who were stoning him. We honor Stephen on December 26.

Bible Trivia

Where did Joseph take his family after he left Bethlehem? (Matthew 2.)

Send answer to: Catholic Courier Bible Trivia, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y., 14624. Please include your name, address and school name.

All entries must be received by January 12, 1995. A winner will be selected at random from all the correct entries submitted.

Last month's winner was Ryan Porter of Farmington. He knew Solomon was the son of King David who became a wise king.

Places from the Bible

Match the place with the correct definition. Answers on page 2.

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| 1. Birthplace of King David (Luke 2:11) | a. Jerusalem |
| 2. Walled city (Joshua 6:1) | b. Egypt |
| 3. Jesus rode here on a donkey (Matthew 21:10) | c. Bethlehem |
| 4. Adam's garden (Genesis 2:8) | d. Sodom |
| 5. Destroyed by fire (Genesis 19:24) | e. Damascus |
| 6. The Israelites escaped from here (Exodus 40:41) | f. Jericho |
| 7. Saul (Paul) was blinded here (Acts 9:8) | g. Patmos |
| 8. John saw a vision here. (Revelations 9:9) | h. Eden |

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