



R.E. LESSON PLAN - WATFORD SCHOOLS TRUST

LESSON TITLE Christmas - The gifts of the wise men	LEARNING STAGE LKS2	WST TEACHER/DATE Mrs Tricia Bastable Mrs Johanna Jordan
AIM: To consider what is significant about myrrh in the events of Christmas and Easter. LEARNING OBJECTIVE: To describe and explain the significance of the wise men's gifts.	MAIN AREAS/ OF LEARNING (Herts R.E. Agreed Syllabus 2017-22) Beliefs and practices Symbols and actions Other AOL covered: Prayer, worship and reflection Ultimate questions	LESSON RESOURCES WST will bring: Samples of gold, frankincense and myrrh Photocopiable worksheet Pictures/captions to cut out worksheet PowerPoint School to provide: Scissors Glue sticks

Introduction

Discuss with the children why people might give presents to each other. What are we saying when we give a gift to someone? It may be an expression of love for them. Ask the children to help you briefly re-cap the part of the Christmas story featuring the journey and arrival of the wise men. Show video clip from Saddleback kids 'Jesus and the wise men'. The wise men were thought to be astrologers/astronomers, well-respected, very wealthy, and definitely not Jewish. However, the gifts of the wise men seem to have been carefully chosen to celebrate the birth of someone long-awaited in Jewish Biblical history. All the gifts would have been regarded as expensive in their time. They were the kind of gifts that one might give someone very special (and not necessarily a baby!), but they each had a symbolic meaning that would foretell something about Jesus' life in the future.

Main content

Show, (hand round) and describe the origin and significance of each of the gifts that the wise men brought for Jesus:

- **Gold – a gift for Jesus the King.** Gold is a very precious and valuable metal. Gold was a symbol of Jesus' divinity (that he was like God). For Christians, Jesus would become a king, but not a conventional king who sits on a throne and wears a crown. He could be described as the King of people's hearts, as he would describe himself as 'the way' to God, the (only) person through whom people could be friends with God again. He was called a King when people mocked him at the cross, when he would be forced to wear a crown of thorns. Pilate put a sign on his cross – Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.
- **Frankincense – a gift for Jesus the priest.** Frankincense starts off as a white resin or gum. It is obtained from a tree by making incisions in the bark and allowing the gum to flow out. The resin can be burnt as it is or made into oil. Frankincense is sometimes used in worship. It is a symbol of holiness. When incense is burned it produces a pleasant smell (aroma) and the smoke produced is seen as a symbol of people's prayers going up to God. A priest is someone who teaches about God, and who is also the link between God and his people. It indicated that Jesus would be worshipped, but also that he would become the lasting link between God and people when he gave himself up on the cross as a sacrifice for people's sins. People used to make burnt offerings to God to represent their sins for which they wanted to be forgiven. Jewish people had long believed that God was going to send a Messiah (saviour) into the world, someone who would be

able to forgive all the sins of the world. Jesus would say that he was that Messiah, who would take the blame for everybody's sins – the ultimate sacrifice.

- **Myrrh – a gift for Jesus the ultimate sacrifice.** Myrrh is extracted from a tree, like frankincense. When the resin goes hard, it is dark red/brown, and some people think it looks like blood-stained tears. In Biblical times myrrh was made into a special oil that used to be spread on someone's body when they had died, to prepare them for burial (embalming). Sometimes it was mixed with wine and used/drunk as a painkiller. It tastes very bitter, which is why it would be mixed with wine, to make it more palatable. It is a symbol of the pain, suffering and death that Jesus would go through on the cross. It would have been used on Jesus's body had he not been resurrected before his friends got to his tomb to prepare him for burial. The Bible says that Jesus was offered a pain-killing drink made from myrrh and wine when he was dying on the cross, but he refused it. So, when the wise men gave Jesus myrrh they were foretelling his death.

Activity

Children to complete worksheet or to make a fact file:

- Cut out the different pictures and captions and match them to the appropriate gift (or draw the pictures instead).
- Draw a picture of the wise men and write down some facts about them.
- Draw or write about a special gift you might give to someone.

Optional

According to other old documents, the wise men had names! Can you find out what they were?

The website [whychristmas.com](https://www.whychristmas.com) has lots of interesting information about all aspects of Christmas and the story of the Nativity:

<https://www.whychristmas.com/story/wisemen.shtml>

Plenary

When the wise men gave Jesus their gifts they were foretelling that he would one day be a King, that people would worship him, and that his painful death on the cross would be a way – the Bible says the only way - for people to connect (be friends) with God forever.

At Christmas people concentrate on Jesus' birth, and yet the gifts of the wise men point us to his future life and death on the cross.

Deeper Questions - Possible follow up/class discussion suggestions

Which event do you think is more important for Christians – Christmas or Easter?

Why do some people light incense (frankincense) when they pray?

Class teacher's notes

For further lesson plans, resources and support material visit
www.watfordschoolstrust.org or email info@watfordschoolstrust.org

