

JESUS AND THE NEW COVENANT

UNIT ONE: THE WAY IS PREPARED

Lesson 3: The Magi's Visit: Looking Beyond Externals

CONTENT:

- The gifts brought by the magi are considered significant, telling us something about who Christ is:
GOLD, considered the 'king of metals' speaks of his kingship.
FRANKINCENSE, used in worship, speaks of his divinity.
MYRRH, used to prepare the dead for burial, speaks of his humanity.
- These gifts remind us of an important truth: that Christ is truly God and truly man. He is not part God and part man, but has 2 natures, human and divine, united into one person. He is like us in all things but sin. Thus, he has a human mind and learned through his experiences, like any of us; at the same time being divine he was able to read the thoughts of people.
- God enabled the wise men to look beyond the externals and recognise the helpless little baby as divine. We too are called to look beyond the externals and realise the value of each person, since every person is created in the image of God. (They are not God, but have something of God in them)



ASSIGNMENT: Do the action you have decided on in [4] to build a new relationship with the person you have chosen.

REFERENCES: Luke 2:1-12. Psalm 72:10,11,15. John 19:39-40. Leviticus. 2:1-2.
CCC 463-483 [Compendium 87-93.]

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts; Symbolic objects brought by students/ by teacher.

I. STARTER:

- The wise men expressed what they believed about Jesus through their gifts. Let us now share the objects we have brought which show something of what Jesus is.
[Students show the objects they have brought and share their thoughts:
E.g. 1. A sprig of leaves: Jesus gives life to others, just as these leaves give oxygen and food to support the life of others.
2. Rock: This rock is firm and hard. Jesus is strong and unchanging. He can be trusted.
3. Egg: This egg symbolises new life. Jesus gives us a chance to live a new life if we repent and turn to him.]

[Affirm the ideas of the students and tactfully correct any that are incorrect.

ALTERNATIVELY, the teacher could come prepared with a few objects and place them on the table; then ask the students to think about what they may say about Jesus.]

II. DEVELOPMENT:

- We will now think about the gifts brought by the wise men. Did anyone find out what they say about Jesus?

[Accept ideas which may be a little different from those on handout. E.g. Myrrh stands for suffering. Give out handouts. Go through the information given about the gifts under [2] and then ask students now fill in [1] and [2]. The answers for [2] would be: Gold says Jesus is a king; Frankincense says he is God, and is to be worshipped; Myrrh says he is human and will die some day]

2. These gifts remind us of an important truth about Jesus. We talked about the incarnation not long ago. What does it mean? [*That God became man.*]

- The Church has had to explain what exactly this means through the years, because every now and then, someone would come up with a wrong explanation about who Jesus really was and what his nature was. In your handouts there are some statements about Jesus. Some are right and some are wrong. Look over them and try and decide which are right and which are wrong.

[Let students guess and then bring out the correct answers, explaining as you go along:]

ANSWERS TO 'WHO IS JESUS?'

- ✓ Jesus is true God and true man.
- X Jesus is part God and part man. Jesus is fully God and at the same time fully man. He is not a kind of mixture or half and half, like a mermaid who is half fish and half human.
- X Jesus only looked like a man, but had the mind and heart of God. Jesus did not only look like a man, but he has the mind and heart of a human being and at the same time he had God's mind.
- X Jesus was exactly like any of us. This statement is not completely right, because there is one way that Jesus differs from us, and that is, Jesus did not sin.
- ✓ Jesus was like us in every way except sin.
- X Jesus stopped being God when he became a man.
- ✓ Jesus remained God when he became man.
- ✓ Jesus had a human soul in a human body.
- ✓ Jesus learned through his experiences. Because Jesus was human he learned and grew like any of us. The Bible says he 'grew in wisdom and stature'. But at the same time, being God, he could also read the minds of people.

III. REFLECTION & PRAYER:

- Let's go back to the wise men. There were many differences between them and Jesus. What were the differences?

*[They were grown men, Jesus was a little baby;
They were rich and powerful, he was poor and helpless;
they had a lot of knowledge, he being a baby, knew nothing;
they were from a foreign country, Jesus was a Jew.]*

- In spite of all these differences they were able to recognise God in the little baby. They looked beyond the outer things, the externals, and saw God. This was surely because God helped them.
- What about us? When we look at people, do we only see the externals (that means the outer things) or do we realise that each person is someone special, made in God's image? (Human beings are not God, but have something of God in them!) If we are honest, we will admit that very often, we are influenced by outer things.
- What are the things that make us forget the dignity of others and make us look down on them and treat them badly?
[If a person is different from us in their looks, build, colour, way of talking, habits, family background; if they are poorer than us; if they dress differently; if they are not as smart or as talented.][As suggestions are made, students write in their handouts [4] They now do the last part of the exercise in silence, reflecting and praying.]

Home assignment: Make sure you do what you have decided. It should be something practical.