

CHRISTMAS AT  
**BETHLEHEM**

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**EXTENDED VERSION**



**A CHRISTMAS PLAY**  
**BY JEFFREY GATES SLAUGHTER**



## **Introducing: 'Christmas at Bethlehem Inn'**

Take a grouchy innkeeper, an inquisitive wife, and a sharp-tongued mother-in-law, mix them with the traditional Biblical cast of Christmas characters including Joseph, the wise men and the shepherds, and what do you get?

'Christmas at Bethlehem Inn', a Christmas play exploring the questions, wonder and natural curiosity that must have been part of that miraculous night more than 2,000 years ago.

If you're looking for a fresh way to share the Christmas story...one that brings the story to life in a way you might never imagined, consider producing 'Christmas at Bethlehem Inn' this year.

You'll never look at the Christmas story quite the same again.

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My name is Jeff Slaughter and as a missionary to Europe, we pay our bills through financial support as well as various creative projects, one of which is this script. When you purchase 'The Christmas At Bethlehem Inn Package', you're investing in our ministry in Europe where we hold worship team training conferences, digital media conferences and organize outreach concerts and projects.

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- The Director's Guide
- Music MP3's
- The promotion package
- Admission to the 'Director's Chair Facebook Group' which is active September 1 - December 31.

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Performance rights are not granted until we acknowledge receipt of your payment via email.

***Thanks so much for your interest in Christmas at Bethlehem Inn!***

***If we can answer further questions, please email us at: [JeffKathyS@hotmail.com](mailto:JeffKathyS@hotmail.com)***



# CHRISTMAS AT BETHLEHEM

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**Christmas at Bethlehem Inn** by Jeffrey Gates Slaughter  
**Script time estimate:** estimated 45 minutes without music

**Theme:** *Jesus, the Son of God, comes at the most unexpected time, in the most unexpected places and to the most unsuspecting people.*

**Jacob:** *Innkeeper, sarcastic, harsh*

**Esther:** *Innkeeper's wife, sweet, kind-hearted*

**Anna:** *Esther's elderly mother, doesn't like son-in-law*

**Daniel:** *Jacob and Esther's son*

**Joseph:** *Earthly father of Jesus, kind and patient*

**Mary:** *Mother of Jesus*

**Ruth:** *A friend of Esther's*

**Three shepherds**

**Three wise men**

**Two Roman guards**

**One man in the marketplace**

**One woman in the marketplace**

**Several shopkeepers, shoppers, children playing in the street**

**Townspeople for the manger scene**

## Scene 1 - The Market

**Set:** *The play opens with an open-air market set up in front of the main stage set. Depending on your platform, the market could be set up on the floor between the stage and the chairs/pews. If there's not room for that, set the market up at the front edge of the stage in a way that tables, wares, etc. can easily be picked up and carried off at end of scene. Three to five lightweight tables should be sufficient, depending on the space you have to work with.*

**Props:** *The idea is to create a bustling, noisy market with easy-to-carry tables covered with brightly colored tablecloths, baskets of bread, fake foods, herbs, spices, etc.*

**Actors:** *Have 1-2 actors at each table, dressed in traditional costumes of tunics, sashes, sandals, etc. To add to the fray, you can add a couple of kids running around 'sword fighting' with sticks or chasing each other. Additional actors would be shoppers who come in from stage left or right, pretend to talk with the shopkeepers, purchase and carry their purchase off.*

**Background:** *If you can find some 'canned' background crowd noise it would give it a more realistic, full feeling. Could even add some Israeli style music just playing in the background - if you have a violinist who can play an Israeli tune, even better.*

**Action:** *Time of day for this scene is late afternoon. Market has been in full swing all day. To indicate this, you might have the lights low on the market with shop keepers and shoppers talking, purchasing, etc. as Esther and Daniel come from the back of the auditorium down one of the aisles. The closer they get to the stage, the louder the music/crowd noise gets.*

**Esther:** *(Walks hurriedly in with Daniel from the back of auditorium)* Oh, Daniel, I hope we're not too late. Your father won't be happy if we come home empty-handed.

**Daniel:** Do you think they might already be out of bread?

**Esther:** I hope not! Bethlehem is full of visitors from out-of-town right now. I think everyone is having a hard time keeping up with the demand.

**Man #1:** M'am, m'am - don't you and your husband have an inn? We're looking for a place to stay.

**Esther:** Yes, but we're full. I'm so sorry. *(Keeps walking.)*

**Woman #1:** You own an inn? Oh please, we're desperate for a place to stay. Do you think you'll have a room soon?

**Esther:** I wish we would but I really don't think so. There are just too many people coming in for the census. I'm so sorry. *(Keeps walking.)*

**Daniel:** Mother, why are so many people here right now? Bethlehem Inn has never been so full. I even had to give up my bed for the floor. And our floors are hard! *(Rubs his back.)*

**Esther:** Well Daniel, the Roman Caesar - Augustus - has decreed a census all across the Roman Empire.

**Daniel:** What's a census?

**Esther:** A census is a fancy word for 'head count'. The Caesar wants to know how many citizens there are in the entire Roman Empire. And to do that in Israel, everyone has to return to their family's city of origin and register.

**Daniel:** But ... why do they need to know how many people there are?

**Esther:** It's about money Daniel ... the Caesar wants to make sure that everyone is registered with the Roman government and paying their taxes.

**Daniel:** Oh. I think I heard Father complaining about taxes the other day. He doesn't like paying taxes, does he?



Esther: Nobody does son. But we don't have a choice.

Daniel: Well, it seems that this census is causing a lot of trouble.

Esther: It is for a lot of people. But we're blessed that our families are from Bethlehem. So we don't have to go anywhere to register.

Daniel: I think going somewhere else would be fun!

Esther: Maybe so, when it's not so crowded. Right now, not so much!

Daniel: Hey, I think that man over there has bread!

Esther: Good eye, Daniel. Here, take these coins and run get us two loaves, ok?

Daniel: Ok mother.

Esther: *(Turns around, sees someone she notices, and waves to them in the distance)*  
Shalom Ruth!

Ruth: Shalom Esther. I don't normally see you here this time of day.

Esther: We're full at Bethlehem Inn and I needed more bread to go with the soup tonight. Daniel and I are headed back for dinner.

Ruth: Your guest quarters are full too? We just ran out of beds last night. And my brother told me they have people sleeping on the roof and in the stables with the animals. I think everyone will be glad when this census is over.

Esther: Yes, Jacob is grouchier than usual with all the extra work to be done.

Ruth: That's pretty grouchy then!

Esther: Yes, but he's not complaining about the money!

Ruth: Ha! Neither is Simon! He keeps saying, 'Make hay while the sun's shining!'

Esther: Yea, well, the sun is shining but we're running out of grass to make hay, aren't we?

Ruth: Exactly!

Esther: Well, we better get going before we have a riot of hungry guests on our hands. Good to see you Ruth.

Ruth: You too Esther!

Esther: Hey Daniel, let's go. You're father is waiting!

Daniel: *(Runs to Esther.)* Ok Mother. I got the last two loaves of bread.

Esther: Great. We got here just in time. Now, let's get back to Bethlehem Inn!



## Scene 2 - No Room

Scene opens with Innkeeper sitting comfortably. Esther is offstage.

Anna is sitting and knitting something. Dan is kneeling on floor playing marbles.

Jacob: Has anybody seen my sandals?

Anna: Under the table.

Jacob: Oh, that's where I put them.

Anna: That's where you always put them.

Jacob: Has anybody seen my scroll?

Esther: On the table under the wineskin!

Jacob: Thank you sweetheart

Jacob: Has anybody seen my...

*(Knock at door.)*

Jacob: Oh, not again.

Esther: What is it now? *(enters from offstage)* Have you lost your teeth?

Jacob: No. Someone's at the door.

Anna: Well, at least he hasn't lost his hearing!

Jacob: *(Getting up)* I'm so tired of answering that door. You'd think a sign outside that said, "No Room" would give people a clue.

Daniel: Want me to get it Dad?

Jacob: No, Dan, you're too young.

Esther: Do you want me to do it?

Jacob: No, Esther, you're too soft. *(Looks over at Anna)*

Anna: Don't look at me - I'm too old.

Jacob: *(Gets up, grunting and moves toward door)*

Esther: Now, Jacob, be friendly.

Jacob: Oh honey, you know me. Friendly is my middle name. *(Opening door)*  
Good evening sir, how are you ma'm? *(Gets mean)* Can't you read? That signs says, "NO ROOM!". We don't have any room. We don't have a bed. We don't even have a sheepskin for you to sleep on. *(Pause)* In case you haven't noticed, this town is crawling with more people than ticks on a camel. Like I said, we're full. So, move your sorry caravan outa my yard. Your goats are eating my prize cactus. *(Yells out mockingly sweet)* Oh, and sir... make your holiday reservations early next year.



Anna: Oh, yea - I'm sure they'll be back next year. It's a wonder you have any guests at all at this inn.

Jacob: That's what they get for not reading the sign!

Esther: Honey, it's not their fault they have to come to Bethlehem.

Anna: And you could be a little more grateful. If it weren't for Herod's census, you'd be doing good to have two rooms filled this time of year.

Jacob: I'd be grateful if the Romans would get out of Israel. I'm sick and tired of their taxes and oppression.

Esther: Someday, Jehovah has promised...

Jacob: I know what Jehovah has promised. And we're still no closer to getting a King for Israel than we were hundreds of years ago.

Daniel: Dad, it says in the Holy Scriptures that the King will come from Bethlehem, our city.

Anna: "But you, Bethlehem, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. "

Daniel: Yea, that's the verse.

Esther: Isn't it amazing that God has chosen Bethlehem to be the birthplace of the great ruler over Israel?

Daniel: Just like King David. *(Throws pretend sling around)*

Jacob: *(Opens door, looks around mockingly)* Hello, any kings out there tonight needing a place to sleep? *(Slams door and laughs)* *(Knock on the door)* Ha! There's your king now!

Anna: Here we go again *(Jacob opens door)*

Esther: Honey, please be nice.

Jacob: *(Opens door)* Well, good evening Mr. and Mrs. That's a lovely donkey you have there.

Anna: Takes one to know one.

Jacob: Don't know if you folks noticed or not but this sign right here says, "No Room." That means we have *(Yells)* NO ROOM!

Esther: Jacob! *(Steps in front of him)* Please excuse my husband's irrational behavior. He's upset over his... his prize cactus. *(Look back at him)* I'm very sorry, but all of our rooms are taken.



Jacob: *(Peeks out behind door)* We can add your name to the waiting list. *(pulls out piece of paper that rolls out onto the floor)*

Esther: Have you tried the other inns in town? *(lady cries out)* Oh, my Lord. You're, you're...

Joseph: Please, do you have anything available? My wife's expecting.

Jacob: Expecting what? A hot bath and a soft bed?

Esther: No, King Solomon, she's going to have a baby! *(backhands him in stomach)*

Jacob: A baby? We sure don't have a place to put a baby.

Esther: Jacob, we've got to help them. She's going to have that baby soon.

Daniel: Dad, we can't just leave them out in the cold.

Jacob: But we don't have a room...

Esther: Dear, can't they stay in the stable out back? I saw Ruth at the market this morning and she said Simon has guests staying in their stable.

Jacob: The stable? You want her to have her baby in the middle of a cow, a donkey and a smelly old pig?

Esther: It's all we have.

Joseph: Please sir, it would be more than enough for us.

Jacob: I don't know... *(Mary cries out)*

Daniel: Dad, please!

Esther: Jacob! *(voice goes up)*

Anna: You better hurry up or she's going to have that baby on your front porch.

Jacob: OK! OK! Do whatever you have to do. Just get off my porch please. What would the neighbors think?

Anna: They don't think much now as it is.

Esther: Oh, thank you, sweetheart.

Daniel: Thanks Dad!

Jacob: Yea, yea, yea.

Esther: Now, the stable is kind of smelly, and dark, but you'll be dry and warm there. Dan, go get these nice folks some warm blankets and a jug of water. -

Jacob: Their names, Esther - and their money.

Esther: Oh, I'm sorry. This is Jacob, I'm Esther, this is our son Daniel and my mother, Anna.



Joseph: It's nice to meet you all. I'm Joseph and this is Mary.

Esther: Well, welcome to the Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary. Now, Dan will take you to your, uh, accommodations up the hill. There's plenty of water and hay for the donkey there. And don't worry about our animals, (whispering) they're much friendlier than my husband.

Jacob: Just watch your step! *(Kind of laughs a little) (Mary groans in background)*

Esther: I'm sorry, please don't mind him. *(Backhands him in the stomach again)*

Jacob: Have a pleasant evening. *(Closes door)*

Anna: A pleasant evening? Have some sympathy. The lady's going to have a child and you tell her to have a pleasant evening?

Jacob: Well, what else do you say?

Esther: Oh Jacob, you're impossible.

Jacob: Well, we better go to sleep before you give our beds away next!

Esther: Oh, you! *(Hits him playfully, they exit, lights down)*

### Scene 3 - The Stable

*Lights up from dark to dim.*

**Set change:** *Bring in props to set the stage as a stable. Feel free to use your imagination but some ideas for you include: a manger in the middle of the stage, a few bales of hay stacked around, and other barn props.*

Daniel: Here we are. I'm sorry about the smell.

Joseph: It's ok Daniel. We've been traveling for three days on a donkey. We're kind of used to the smell.

Daniel: Where are you from?

Joseph: We are from Nazareth ... it's a small town up north.

Daniel: Huh. Never heard of it.

Joseph: Nazareth isn't far from the Sea of Galilee.

Daniel: What do you do in Nazareth?

Joseph: I'm a carpenter ... I make things out of wood.

Daniel: Oh, well don't tell Father that. He'll have you doing all kinds of work around here. He's always saying, 'this place is falling apart.'



Joseph: Yes, well, the stable looks like it could use some work. But don't worry about us. We're just happy to have a roof over our heads.

Mary: Joseph ... I don't think it will be long now.

Daniel: Long for what?

Joseph: Uh .. Daniel, thanks for showing us the way here. We're pretty tired so we better turn in. See you tomorrow ok?

Daniel: Ok, goodnight.

Joseph; How are you Mary?

Mary: Well, I think that three-day donkey ride has encouraged our little one to come sooner than I thought. Oh Joseph... I don't know if I can do this. I wish Mother was here with me.

Joseph: I know, But remember, God is with us. I mean, literally, God is with us (points to the baby in her belly) and you're about to give birth to Him.

Mary: Yes. I remember the angel's words as if it were yesterday: "Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You will become pregnant, give birth to a son and name him Jesus. He will be a great man and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. Your son will be king of Jacob's people forever and his kingdom will never end."

Joseph: Yes, and then you found your voice and asked the angel how in the world that was going to happen.

Mary: Well, I didn't ask it exactly like that! But he did have an answer.

Joseph: I'll say. Something about the Holy Spirit coming to you and the power of the Most High overshadowing you. It sounded a bit scary.

Mary: Yes. But he told me that the holy child developing inside of me would be called the 'Son of God.' Joseph, why did God choose me - us - for this? We're just a couple of kids from a small town of 300 in the hills of Galilee. You'd think he would have chosen someone a bit more - regal.

Joseph: I don't know Mary. I don't know. *(pause)* But who are we to question God? The proof is right there. *(points to Mary's stomach)* We know that is a miracle.

Mary: Yes, we do. Me more than anyone. I didn't know what else to say to the angel but to agree with him. So what happens after he is born? I mean, the past several months have led up to this very night- but what will happen next? And years down the road?



Joseph: I don't know. But I do know that our faith has carried us this far and it will carry us the rest of the way.

Mary: Well, I think the rest of the way has just begun. I think it's time!

Joseph: *(leads down by her side)*. Don't worry. I'm right here.

## Scene 4 - The Star

*Lights up from dark to dim. Jacob and Esther are sleeping.*

**Set change:** *Take away barn props and return stage to Bethlehem Inn. Have Jacob and Esther sleeping on the floor on one side of the stage.*

Esther: Jacob?

Jacob: Hmm? What is it? *(Wakes from light sleep)*

Esther: I was just thinking.

Jacob: That's nice.

Esther: *(shakes him)*

Jacob: What?

Esther: I was thinking.

Jacob: Do you have to think so loud?

Esther: *(Takes pillow and hits him over head)*

Jacob: I give up. What are you thinking about?

Esther: About that young couple in the stable.

Jacob: What about them?

Esther: I don't know.

Jacob: You woke me up to tell me that you don't know what you're thinking? Can I go back to sleep until you figure it out?

Esther: It's just that well, I have this feeling about them.

Jacob: Oh, no. Here we go with the feeling again. Well, I have a feeling too and I'm feeling tired.

Esther: No, there's something really special about that young couple. They've been traveling for days, Mary is in labor and yet they are both at such peace.

Jacob: Some peace sure would be nice right now.



Esther: No, really, they have something very special Jacob.

Jacob: Sure they do. They have the only place to sleep in Bethlehem tonight! *(Turns over to sleep)*

*(Esther tries to sleep but can't. She gets out of bed, goes to window and looks out. A bright light shines down thru the window. Knock on the door.)*

Esther: Yes, who is it?

Joseph: It's Joseph, ma'm. Could I trouble you for some towels?

Esther: I'm sorry I didn't give you any when you while ago. How's Mary?

Joseph: She's fine... now.

Esther: You mean?

Joseph: Yes, she had the baby just about an hour ago. We have a son.

Esther: A son! What's his name?

Joseph: Jesus.

Esther: Jesus. What a beautiful name. I'm so sorry he had to be born in a stable.

Joseph: It's OK really. We're quite comfortable there. It's very quiet and we like that. Do you have other children beside Daniel?

Esther: No, he's the only child the Lord has blessed us with. This is your first?

Joseph: Uh, yes. Our first.

Esther: How long have you too been married?

Joseph: *(Awkward pause)* Did you see that beautiful moon out there tonight!

Esther: That's the strangest thing, Joseph. I don't think it is the moon.

Joseph: What do you mean?

Esther: Well, I couldn't sleep so I looked out the window up the hill and saw this bright light just shining down, but actually, I think it's some kind of star. *(Goes to the window with Joseph to look out)* Funny thing, though... it's as if the light is right up above this stable. Oh well, it's getting late and you must be tired. Is there anything else you might need?

Joseph: No, Esther. You've been very kind.

Esther: Do you have somewhere to place the baby?

Joseph: We thought we would lay him on the ground between us - on the hay.

Esther: I wouldn't do that... we've really been having a problem with mice up there. Would you like to use the manger?



Joseph: Do you think the cow would mind?

Esther: Who, Della? Nah! Just throw her some hay every once in a while and she'll leave you alone. *(Pause)* I was wondering... do you kids read the scriptures much?

Joseph: Well, yes ma'm we do. We find them rather interesting these days. Why do you ask?

Esther: Well, it's just that... Ah, here I go again. And I said I was going to let you get some rest.

Joseph: Well, good night. God bless you.

Esther: Good night. And God bless you too.

## Scene 5 - The Shepherds' Story

Jacob: Well, are you through thinking?

Esther: Don't you even want to know what they had?

Jacob: No, but I'm sure you're going to tell me.

Esther: It was a boy. They named him Jesus.

Jacob: Jesus, huh? Who knows, maybe he's that King we've been waiting for! *(turns back over, knock on door)* Doesn't anybody sleep in this town?

Esther: I'll get it.

Jacob: I'm coming with you. You're too nice.

Esther: *(Opens doors to group of shepherds)* Good evening.

Jacob: Uh... it's more like 'good morning'!

Sh#1: We know it's late and we're sorry to disturb you, but it's urgent.

Sh#2: Yes, we're looking for a baby born in Bethlehem tonight.

Jacob: A what?

Sh#3: A baby.

Esther: How could you, I mean how do you know there was a baby born here tonight?

Sh#1: So there is a baby here. Hey! The star led us right to the child!

Jacob: Star?

Sh#2: Yea! Right up there!

Esther: That's the light that woke me up while ago.



Jacob: But... uh... I don't understand.

Esther: Look Jacob, up there. There's a huge star right above... the stable.

Jacob: Huh? But where were you when you saw the... star?

Sh#1: We were in the fields south of Bethlehem just sitting around the campfire tellin' hunting stories. And all of a sudden we saw some big bright lights up in the sky.

Sh#2: Then a whole lot of angels appeared from nowhere and one of them said "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Sh#3: Then they just started singing their hearts out about peace on earth, and good will to men and all.

Sh#1: And that's when we started toward Bethlehem and spotted that star.

Jacob: Impossible!

Sh#1: That's what we thought.

Sh#2: But here we are - right at the place where they said we'd find the baby.

Sh#3: Yea, the baby! Where is the little guy? Can we see it?

Esther: It's not an "it", it's a "him" and I suppose if angels sent you here we certainly can't turn you away.

Joseph: I could.

Anna: You'd turn your own mother away.

Esther: Daniel, take these young men up to see Mary, Joseph and the baby.

Sh#1: Thank you ma'm.

Jacob: This can't be happening. Whoever heard of an angel choir out singing in the fields to a bunch of shepherds?

Jacob: *(Turns away to look up at the stable)* Just what kind of child IS this?

## **Scene 6 - The Wise Men From The East**

*Anna is sitting in living room knitting something. Esther comes in.*

Anna: Well, how's our little baby today?

Esther: He's doing wonderful. It's hard to believe he's already two years old.

Anna: Seems like yesterday Jacob was trying to throw them out on the street. Now they're practically part of the family.



Esther: Yes, it's wonderful that Joseph has been able to earn his rent by helping to repair the inn.

Anna: He is quite handy with a hammer and nail, isn't he?

Esther: It is a little strange though, that they seem to be in no hurry to leave Bethlehem. Surely they have family back in Nazareth.

Anna: I can't figure that one out either. But considering everything that happened the night that baby was born - the star, the angels, the shepherds - this is not your ordinary baby.

Jacob: *(Walks in as Anna says last line)* You still believe all the things those shepherds said? I bet those shepherds were friends of Joseph and Mary's just playing a trick on us.

Esther: Don't flatter yourself Jacob. Who would want to go to that much trouble to fool a fool like you? And besides, how do you explain the star. It's still here, you know, every night.

Jacob: Precisely. Something that appears every night ceases to remain a miracle. It's just a freak of nature. A celestial oddity.

Esther: You know Jacob, sometimes it's easier to believe a miracle.

Jacob: *(Knock, knock, opens door)* Yes, may I help you?

WM#1: I don't know if we are at the right place or not, but we're looking for a baby.

Jacob: I guess rumors are all over Israel now. Before long there'll be a big sign inviting everyone to come visit the 'star baby'. What the heck, it'll be good for business.

WM#3: Actually sir, we just rode into town. We haven't talked to anyone.

Jacob: Then why would you think there is a baby here? And don't tell me an angel told you.

WM#1: That's exactly what happened! We are Magi from the East. We saw a star and followed it to Jerusalem where we met King Herod.

Jacob: Right, and I just had lunch with Moses.

WM#2: It's true. We asked King Herod if he knew where the one was born king of the Jews. We told him we had seen the star in the east and had come to worship Him. Herod knew nothing about the baby's birth.

WM#3: In fact he called, all his priests and teachers of the law together and asked them where the Christ was to be born. They told him in Bethlehem and even quoted a verse.

Anna: What verse?

WM#1: Something like, 'you Bethlehem, in the land of... Judah...'



Daniel: "Are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."

All: That's it!

Anna: That should sound familiar, Jacob.

WM#1: Then Herod called us secretly and inquired of us the exact time the star had appeared.

WM#2: And He sent us to Bethlehem to make a careful search for the child. As soon as we find him, we are to report to him, so that he too may come and worship him.

Jacob: That'll definitely be good for business!

Esther: Stop seeing money in everything!

WM#2: Then we just followed the star until it stopped right over this place. It's a miracle, isn't it?

WM#3: And that, kind folks, is our story. Now, could we please see this baby King?

Esther: Certainly. I'll take you up the hill now.

## Scene 7 - The Nativity

*I would like to credit this scene to Michael Winters, who directed 'Christmas At Bethlehem Inn' for Glenview Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. This scene was not in the original script but after I saw Michael's production, I had to add it. Thanks so much Michael!*

The scene is simple but powerful: you choose a piece of music that fits your production. It can be a choral piece, a solo or ensemble, or even a congregational worship hymn or song. The scene is so universal that many Christmas songs would work here, so use what works best for your congregation and production.

Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus are seated in the center of the stage on bales of hay and/or wooden stools, surrounded by a few props. During the song, townspeople come and kneel/bow before Jesus. Some might bring gifts - flowers, a basket of bread, a pitcher of water, etc.

Also during the song, the Wise Men (who have just had their encounter with the innkeeper and his family) approach the manger. In Michael Winters words: "I wanted to make sure the Wise Men approached very humble and that they knew the Baby was the true king and not them."

As the townspeople pass, Michael also has some of them touch the baby to show that Jesus isn't out of reach to mankind.

He also has Mary pass the baby to Joseph so that he is included in the scene as well. "We had Joseph show the baby around like a proud papa would," said Michael.

The Nativity Scene should last the length of the song and be well-rehearsed so that it flows well and isn't awkward. If you want, you can have the innkeeper and his family stand back behind Joseph and Mary as onlookers, since they have just brought the Wise Men up to the manger.



## Scene 8 - The Innkeeper's Realization

*Joseph and Jacob are working on a carpentry project together.*

Jacob: So, what was in those packages from those Magi?

Joseph: Actually, they left gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Jacob: Whoa, those are some expensive gifts. They must be rich.

Joseph: Maybe so. At least they understand who Jesus is. You're still not sure are you Jacob?

Jacob: Well, I'll admit he's the first baby I've seen who came with his own star. And the first kid I've ever seen to call so much attention to himself. Shepherds, angels, Magi from the east... and King Herod for crying out loud? Next thing you know God Himself is going to show up!

Joseph: I wouldn't be surprised.

Jacob: What is it Joseph? I mean I like the little guy and all. He's got a real way with people even for a kid, but how in the world could you believe he's the Christ, like those shepherds said? (Pause) How did all of this get started?

Joseph: You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

Jacob: Try me.

Joseph: Ok. Well, almost a year ago, an angel of the Lord visited Mary and told her that she would be with child and give birth to a son, and that she was to give him the name Jesus. The angel said He would be great and be called the Son of the Most High. And that the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and that his kingdom will never end."

Jacob: Is that all?

Joseph: I'm serious Jacob. That's what the angel said.

Jacob: *(Long pause)* Joseph, I really like you so please take my advice, don't tell that story to anyone else. There ain't a soul on earth who'd believe a tale like that. A virgin birth to God's Son? You're crazy if you expect me to believe that.

Joseph: Jacob, you aren't the first person to call me crazy. And you certainly won't be the last. I couldn't have made this story up in my wildest imagination. And everything you've seen with your own eyes is proof that what I've told you is true.

Jacob: But it's all so... so unbelievable.

Joseph: So was Moses parting the Red Sea. And the Israelites marching around Jericho to bring the walls down. And Noah building a big boat before the great flood. It's not unusual for God to go outside of our understanding to turn our hearts to Him.



Jacob: You mean I'm not supposed to understand?

Joseph: Exactly. That's what faith is all about. Do you think Noah understood when God told him to go build an ark in the middle of the desert? Do you think Moses understood when God told him to go to Pharaoh and demand freedom for his people? Of course not, they acted on faith.

Jacob: Still though, that's Noah and Moses!

Joseph: So? They were men just like you. The difference in them and you is that they listened to God and obeyed Him. I wonder, Jacob - can you even hear Him?

## Scene 9 - The Wise Man's Dream

**Action:** *This scene opens with the three wise men asleep around a fire. Rooster crows to indicate morning.*

WM#1: *(Stretches)* Oh my back. I think I slept on a rock.

WM#2: I know! I can't wait to sleep in my own bed again.

WM#3: And eat real food again! The sooner we get home the better.

WM#1: I agree. But guys, something happened last night. I had a dream that God was warning us not to return to Herod.

WM#3: Not go back to the King? Are you sure? Won't he be angry?

WM#1: All I know is that after the dream was over, I woke up immediately - and knew it was a warning to avoid Herod and return home a different way.

WM#2: Buy why?

WM#1: I don't think God wants Herod to know where the baby is.

WM#2: But won't Herod send his soldiers after us if we don't return?

WM#1: I don't know. But we've seen too many miracles on this trip to worry about that. We just need to trust the dream.

WM#2: *(Pause)* It's just as well really. King Herod seems a bit insecure. Did you hear that he has 2,000 bodyguards? Who needs 2,000 bodyguards?

WM#3: Yes, and I heard some of his own religious leaders - the Pharisees and the Sadducees - complaining about him too. I don't think he's very popular.



WM#1: Are we agreed then, that we go home a different way?

WM#2: Yes. When do we leave?

WM#1: Let's go now.

*(Lights out.)*

## Scene 10 - The Escape

**Action:** *Anna is in her chair while Esther is standing at a table stirring something in a bowl, Jacob comes dragging in like he just woke up.*

Anna: Well look what the cat drug in.

Jacob: Good morning to you too mother-in-law.

Esther: *(Hands him a cup of water)* Are you ok?

Jacob: Yea. Just had another late night with Joseph.

Esther: I noticed. Did you two get that project finished?

Jacob: Yep. Thanks to him. I tell you what ... that Joseph is the handiest handyman I ever met.

Esther: Yea he's a smart young man.

Jacob: I'll say. He's also got a way with words.

Esther: So you talked?

Jacob: Oh we talked all right. We talked.

Dan: *(Comes running in all out of breath)* Father, Father, King Herod's soldiers are coming here. They're killing all of the baby boys under the age of two!

Esther: Oh, dear God. Quick! We've got to warn Joseph and Mary!

Daniel: They're already gone!

Both: What?

Dan: I went up to the stable before I came here. They're gone. Their donkey is gone and so are all of their things.

Jacob: Gone? Just like that?

Dan: Here, they left this note and some money.



Esther: *(Grabs the note)* "Dear Jacob, Esther, Daniel and Anna. Please forgive us, but we must leave immediately. An angel wamed us last night to flee to Egypt at once. We wanted to say good-bye but we absolutely must be on our way. Enclosed is our last month's rent. Thank you ever so much for your generous hospitality. We promise to tell Jesus all about your kindness when he's old enough to understand. We will never forget you. And Jacob, Joseph says it's not too late to listen. Love Joseph, Mary & Jesus."

*(Loud knocks on door)*

Daniel: That's them - Herod's soldiers! What if they know that we had a baby here?

Esther: He's right, Jacob. Everyone in the city knows there was a baby here. What will we tell them?

Jacob: Leave it to me, Esther.

Esther: Oh Jacob, please don't tell them. They'll kill the baby.

Jacob: Let me open the door Esther, before they break it down. *(Opens door)* Yes, what do you want?

Sol#1: We represent King Herod. It has been reported that there is a baby here. Where is it?

Joseph: *(Stammers a bit)* Well, there was a baby here. But the baby and its parents are gone now.

Sol#1: We know they were here yesterday. When did they leave?

Jacob: We're not sure. They were gone this morning when we got up.

Sol #2: Do you know which direction they went?

Jacob: Well, *(looks at Esther)* they are from Nazareth, and they came here for the census, so you draw the conclusion.

Sol#2: Hurry, let's check the road to Nazareth. *(Soldiers exit.)*

Esther: Oh Jacob, thank you. *(Hugs him)*

Dan: Yea, Dad! You were great!

Anna: Even I'm proud of you and that's scary!

Jacob: Well, I couldn't let those awful people lay a hand on, um, our friends now could I?

Daniel: Do you think they'll make it to Egypt?

Jacob: Are you kidding? Angels all over the place, a magic star, complete strangers coming from miles around to see that baby. Believe me, that's the safest baby in the world.

Anna: Sounds like Jacob's had a change of heart, Esther. What do you think did it?

Esther: Oh, I don't know. Maybe it was a star in the sky, a few prayers or just maybe a little baby in an old cow manger.





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