



THE REAL STORY OF CHRISTMAS



“The Real Story of Christmas”

A Readers' Theater by Cecile Scribner

Adapted from “The Real Story of Christmas” by W. Cleon Skousen

Presented in Elk Ridge, Utah, December 2009

Cast of Characters

Reader 1

Reader 2

Reader 3

Angel Gabriel

Zacharias

Mary (soloist)

Elisabeth

Joseph

Soprano Soloist

Soprano Soloist

Singers from Primary

Men's Trio (Three Kings)

Quartette

Piano

Violin

Flute

Trumpet

Trombone

(Or whatever instruments are available to you)

Musical Number: Sung by a husband and wife or a family or a choir. (*whatever Christmas Carol the family wishes to sing - just makes for a good beginning of the readers' theater*)

Reader 1: There never was a more exciting Christmas than the first one.

Reader 2: Let me give you the historical setting for this Christmas. Jesus was born in a conquered country. More than sixty years before his birth, the iron-shod wheels of Roman chariots had thundered through the streets of Jerusalem and conquered it. First, there was Pompeii and other Roman conquerors, but in the end Augustus Caesar placed in power a cruel and cunning Arab to rule the Jewish people. His name was Herod – Herod the Great.

Reader 3: Herod pretended to be a convert to the Jewish faith. He began the construction of a magnificent temple. He even married a Jewish princess named Mariamne. She bore him two sons. The people of Judea loved Mariamne and these sons, so Herod in his jealousy ordered them to be assassinated. For this and Herod's other crimes, the people deeply despised him.

Reader 1: In the year of the Roman's 752, when Herod was past sixty and the central portion of the new temple was practically completed, the real story of Christmas begins.

Reader 2: On a certain day an ancient Levite priest came to the temple to preside at the altar. His name was Zacharias. (*Zacharias acts this out*) He entered the room where the altar stood. It was called the Holy Place.

Reader 3: Zacharias had come to the Temple this day with a prayer which had been the burden of his soul for many years. He longed for a son. Although the time had long passed when he and his wife could expect a son, he nevertheless continued to present his supplication to the Lord.

Reader 1: As he approached the altar of incense, Zacharias suddenly stopped. He was almost blinded by the intense heavenly light and brilliant appearance of a glorious being. For the first time in more than 400 years of Hebrew history, a revelation had been granted to a priest of the Jewish people. Zacharias was frightened.

(music background)

Angel: "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard and thy wife, Elisabeth, shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. He shall be great in the sight of the Lord. . .and shall make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (*Luke 1:13*)

Reader 2: But Zacharias wasn't ready for this. It was impossible. He challenged the angel.

Zacharias: "Whereby shall I know this? I am an old man and my wife is well-stricken in years." (*Luke 1:18*)

Reader 3: The eyes that looked down on Zacharias must have been deep as eternity. Did Zacharias doubt the power of God? Had he forgotten the mother of Samson, the mother of Samuel and the mother of Isaac—all of whom received their children through a special blessing from heaven? Or did he doubt the authority of the angel?

Gabriel: *“I am Gabriel that stands in the presence of God; and I am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee glad tidings.” (Luke 1:19)*

Reader 1: And in solemn rebuke, the angel said to the doubting Zacharias,

Gabriel: *“Behold, thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak because thou believest not my words!” (Luke 1:20)*

Reader 2: Instantly the angel was gone. As Zacharias appeared before the waiting congregation, he could only make silent gestures to help them understand that he had seen a vision. *(end music)*

Reader 3: One hundred miles north of Jerusalem, nestled in a valley sheltered by the hills of Galilee, lay a modest peasant village called Nazareth. Here lived a certain daughter of Israel who was to become one of the most famous women in the world. Her name was Miryam. Today we call her *“Mary.”*

Reader 1: Miryam was a very popular name among the Jews. Perhaps this was because the prophets had predicted that this would be the name of the Messiah’s mother.

Reader 2: By the right of birth Miryam was a Jewish princess. She was a direct descendant of King David. In fact, only recently she had become betrothed to a young man who was also of the royal Davidic line. His name was Joseph. Poverty and the mad political scramble of ruthless world conquerors had left the natural heirs to the throne of David forgotten and unnamed.

Reader 3: It was probably in the month of August and just six months after Gabriel appeared to Zacharias that he also appeared to Mary of Nazareth. She was alone when the celestial vision opened before her.

Reader 1: As with Zacharias, she was deeply frightened. The sudden brilliance of the heavenly messenger momentarily overwhelmed her, and even before she could speak, the salutation of the glorious Gabriel fell upon her ears. *(music background)*

Gabriel: *“Hail, thou that are highly favored. The Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women!” (Luke 1:28)*

Reader 2: Instinctively, Mary drew back, but with comforting assurance, the angel quickly added,

Gabriel: *“Fear not, Mary, for thou has found favour with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive and bring forth a son. He shall be called Jesus, the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father, David.” (Luke 1:30-31)*

Mary: *“How shall this be?” (Luke 1:34)*

Gabriel: *“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore that which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35)*

Reader 3: The Son of God! Mary responded to this thrilling message with words which reflect the depth of her spirituality and the beauty of her character.

Mary: *“Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.” (Luke 1:38)*
(end music)

Reader 1: This heavenly harbinger must have thrilled as he stood before this beautiful girl. He knew she was a person of nobility. He knew that her identity and mission had been revealed to the prophets centuries before she was born. Before he left he confided to Mary that her aged cousin, Elisabeth, had also conceived and that already she was in her sixth month. *(harbinger: somebody or something that announces something)*

Reader 2: Mary desired to share this sacred knowledge with someone. Though she deeply loved Joseph and her own parents, it was Elisabeth she wished to talk to. Therefore, she made haste to go straightway and visit her. It was a difficult journey of a hundred miles over treacherous roads.

Reader 3: Sometime prior to Mary’s departure, however, the glory of God encompassed her and, for Mary, the miracle of new life began.

Reader 1: When Mary arrived at her cousin’s home, Elisabeth rose to meet her. The older woman stretched out her hands to this young girl and being moved by the Holy Ghost exclaimed,

Elisabeth: *“Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.” (Humbly)*
“And whence is this. . . that the Mother of my Lord should come unto me.” (Luke 1:42-43)

Reader 2: Realizing that Elisabeth already knew her great secret, Mary replied simply,

Mary: *“My soul doth magnify the Lord.” (Luke 1:46)*

Reader 3: During the following three months Mary stayed with Elisabeth to await the time when Elisabeth would be delivered of her child. And when her baby came, it was a male child just as Gabriel had predicted.

Reader 1: For Zacharias and Elisabeth this baby was a triumphant blessing. Relatives, neighbors and friends joined in their rejoicing and all of them gathered to witness the naming of this wonderful infant born out of season.

Reader 2: What followed next was a family dispute. Elisabeth said his name should be John. Indignant male relatives insisted he be named after his father. Zacharias, both deaf and without speech, motioned for a tablet and on it wrote, *“His name is John.”* Then to the astonishment of all, Zacharias suddenly began to speak. For the first time in nearly a year his tongue was loosed.

Zacharias: *“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.” (Luke 1:68)*

Reader 3: Then gazing proudly on his infant son and being filled with the spirit of prophecy, Zacharias declared,

Zacharias: *“Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.” (Luke 1:76)*

Reader 1: Later that same day, probably in the privacy of their own home, an angel came and ordained the infant John to the Priesthood. Of John the Savior himself would later say, *“Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” (Matthew 11:11)*

Reader 2: Now Mary returned to her home in Nazareth and there Joseph anxiously awaited her arrival.

Joseph: When I became aware that Mary was with child I was overwhelmed with grief. Under Jewish law our betrothal was almost as binding as marriage itself and faithlessness was punishable by death. What was I to do? I wasn't bitter against Mary, only sorrowful. I made the decision to *“put her away privily.” (Matthew 1:19)* This was like a bill of public divorcement. It seemed to be my only alternative. (*privily: secretly*)

Mary: During this moment of deep emotional strain, no word of explanation escaped my lips. I was without knowledge concerning the will of the Lord on this subject. Perhaps my sacred mission will require me to forfeit my betrothal to Joseph.

Reader 3: And then in the dark hours of the night the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream and said,

Gabriel: *“Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:20)*

Joseph: Who could describe the transitional joy that flooded my mind as this revelation brought to me a beautiful and sympathetic understanding of Mary's sacred calling?

Reader 1: And who will record the tender scene when he confided to Mary that now he shared her secret? Their marriage must have followed immediately, for the angel commanded it.

Reader 2: Joseph and Mary were man and wife by the time of the taxing or census ordered by Caesar. Since Bethlehem was originally the *“City of David,”* it was therefore the ancestral home of both Mary and Joseph and the place they needed to visit to register for the taxation.

Reader 3: They were of modest circumstances and Mary's delicate condition required that they travel slowly. Bethlehem was only six miles from Jerusalem and unaccommodated crowds from the National Capitol added to the congestion at Bethlehem. In fact, this was also the season for the feast of the Passover. This alone would bring tens of thousands to Jerusalem and nearby communities like Bethlehem.

Reader 1: As Joseph and Mary neared the end of this long journey they passed flocks of grazing sheep upon the hills. Here, their great ancestor, David had tended the flocks in his youth. Here, Ruth, their maternal ancestor, had gleaned the fields of grain. Every foot of this place that felt so much like home seemed saturated with sacred history.

Reader 2: (*Sigh. . ah*) But the City of David did not welcome them.

Joseph: Please, my wife is with child.

Reader 3: “No Room.”

Reader 1: “No Room.”

Reader 2: “No Room.” Overwhelmed with anxiety, Joseph was finally forced to accept what he normally would have rejected with disgust. A stable. His soul must have been harrowed to the quick as he led his trembling young wife into this humble abode made for cattle.

Reader 3: No other king was ever born into the world under so humble a circumstance. Yet this was the moment that would divide history. No doubt the ancient saints from Adam to Malachi waited tensely as they saw the great drama about to begin.

Reader 1: Something wonderful commenced the very moment Mary’s precious infant was born.

Soprano Soloist: “*Recitative*” from Handel’s Messiah:

*“There were shepherds abiding in the field, Keeping watch over their flocks by night.
And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them,
And the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.
But the angel said unto them,
Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
For unto you is born this day in the city of David, A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”* (Luke 2:8-11)

Angel: And this shall be a sign unto you. Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

Soloist (continuing):

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the Heavenly hosts, praising God and saying;”

All three Readers plus Angel: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (or the Choir could sing this from the Messiah: “*Glory to God in the Highest*”) (Luke 2:13-14)

Choir and Audience Sing: “*Far Far Away on Judea’s Plains*” Page 212 by John Menzies Macfarlane (add flute and/or violin)

Soloist: *Far far away on Judea's Plains, Shepherds of old heard the joyous strains,*
Choir: *(could be coming up from audience)*
Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the Highest.
Peace on Earth, goodwill to men; Peace on earth, goodwill to men!

(Choir continue) Sweet are the strains of redeeming love, Message of Mercy from Heaven above.
Add Audience: *Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the Highest.*
Peace on Earth, goodwill to men; Peace on earth, goodwill to men!

Choir: *Lord, with the angels we too would rejoice;*
Help us to sing with the heart and voice
Audience: *Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the Highest.*
Peace on Earth, goodwill to men; Peace on earth, goodwill to men!

Choir: *Hasten the time when, from ev'ry clime, Men shall unite in the strains sublime.*
Audience: *Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the Highest.*
Peace on Earth, goodwill to men; Peace on earth, goodwill to men!

Reader 1: When the vision closed, the shepherds left immediately to go into town and seek out the location of the child laying in a manger. And when they had gathered round, they found the babe truly wrapped in swaddling clothes and cradled in a manger.

Reader 2: There was nothing unusual in the nativity scene to impress them with its power. They simply beheld a humble Galilean peasant and his wife with a newborn child. Nevertheless, with the glory of the angels still fresh in their minds, the shepherds looked upon the sleeping child with devotion and awe.

Reader 3: Jehovah had entered mortality!

Audience: *“Oh Come All Ye Faithful” Page 202, Attr. to John F. Wade (trumpet and violin)*

Oh, come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant! Oh come ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him, Born the King of angels; Oh, come let us adore him,
Oh come let us adore him, Oh, come let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels. Sing in exultation. Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God, Glory in the Highest; Oh, come, let us adore him;
Oh, come, let us adore him; Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Quartette: *Yea, Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning. Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n. Son of the Father, Now in flesh appearing; Oh, come, let us adore him;*
Oh, come, let us adore him; Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Primary: *Sing one of these: “Stars Were Gleaming,” “Once Within a Lowly Stable” “Away in a Manger.”*

(Everyone sit down in place – Readers on stools)

Mary and another Soloist sing, “Mary’s Lullaby” (Pageant Edition) Text by Bertha A. Kleinman, Music by Wanda West Palmer (can order this online)

Mary: “All mine in your loveliness, Baby, all mine. All mine in your holiness, Baby, Divine. Sing on herald angels in chorus sublime; Sing on and adore, for tonight you are mine.

*Soprano Soloist: The wisemen are coming to worship their king.
The shepherds came kneeling their homage to bring.
Out yonder the star over Judah will keep, No harm can befall thee, then sleep, Baby, sleep.
Oh let (her) enfold thee, (her) baby tonight, while legions are singing in joyous delight.
Mary and Soprano Soloist: A new star has risen to hail thee divine, For you are a King
Mary: But tonight you are mine.*

*Soprano Soloist: Away spectered (unpleasant prospect) future of sorrow and plight,
Away to the years that must follow tonight. The pangs of Gethsemane let them be dim.
The red drops of Calvary, not Lord, for him!
Oh let (her) enfold thee, (her) baby tonight, while legions are singing in joyous delight.*

*Mary and Soprano Soloist: A new star has risen to hail thee divine, For you are a King
Mary: But tonight you are mine. All mine in your loveliness, Baby all mine,
All mine in your holiness, Baby, divine
Mary and Soprano Soloist: Sing on herald angels in chorus sublime; Sing on and adore
Mary: For tonight you are mine.”*

Reader 1: And where were the wise men? Although Christmas pageants have it otherwise, there were no Wise Men present on the night of nativity. In fact, their homeland was far away to “the East.” During the early hours of this first Christmas morning, they, like the Nephites, were in their own country rejoicing at the sudden appearance of a great new star in the heavens.

Reader 2: The new star was the sign by which they knew that the Saviour had been born. They promptly prepared to leave for the land of Palestine, but it was a long journey. It was weeks, perhaps even months, before the Wise Men arrived in Bethlehem.

Trio of Men: “We Three Kings” (use trombone if there is one)

*We Three Kings of Orient are; Bearing gifts, we traverse afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, Following yonder star.
Chorus: O ___ Star of wonder, Star of night, Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, Guide us to the perfect light.*

*Born a King on Bethlehem’s plain, Gold I bring, to crown Him again,
King forever ceasing never Over us all to reign. (Chorus)*

*Frankincense to offer have I, Incense owns a Deity nigh,
Pray’r and praising all men raising, Worship Him, God most high (Chorus)*

*Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume Breathes a life of gathering gloom,
Sorr’wing, sighing, bleeding, dying, Sealed in the stone-cold tomb, (Chorus)*

*Glorious now behold Him arise, King and God and sacrifice,
Alleluia, Alleluia, Earth to the heav'ns replies, (Chorus)*

Reader 3: By the time the Wise Men came, Jesus had already been presented in the temple when he was eight days old. At this time he was given the name “Joshua.” This was a common name among the Jews. The modified Greek equivalent for the name of Joshua is “Jesus.”

Reader 1: The new star led the Wise Men to the place where Jesus was, but it did not turn out to be a stable. Joseph and Mary had long since found better accommodations. Matthew says the Wise Men went into “the house” and there they knelt before the child and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Reader 2: Here, then, we conclude the real story of Christmas. All else that is added is man’s homemade invention—the pleasant, lighted tree comes down to us from the days of heathen Rome, the holly wreaths and mistletoe from the ancient, mystic Druids, the exciting visit of St. Nicholas from fourth century Christian tradition and the happy, jolly Santa Claus from pure modern imagination.

Reader 3: But with it all, the most important thing still survives—the spirit of peace on earth, good will toward men. Never at any other season does peace come closer to a universal reality than at Christmas time. More friends are remembered and more enemies forgiven than at any other time of the year. It is but a shadow of things to come.

Reader 1: Not far from us and surrounded by his legions of heavenly hosts, this same Jesus works today toward the time when he will come back to the earth. It will be a glorious day, perhaps much nearer than we think, and when it arrives, men will call it the Millennium—a Christmas season of peace on earth that will last a thousand years.

Audience with Soloists: “Joy To The World.” Page 201 by Nahum Tate (all instruments)

*Quartette: Joy to the World, the Lord is come; let earth receive her King!
Let ev’ry heart prepare him room, And saints and angels sing,
And Saints and angels sing, And Saints, and Saints and Angels sing.*

*Soloists at all mikes – Audience join as they know the words. (add trumpet)
Rejoice! Rejoice! When Jesus reigns, And Saints their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains, Repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat, the sounding joy*

*No more will sin and sorrow grow, Nor thorns infest the ground;
He’ll come and make the blessings flow Far as the curse was found,
Far as the curse was found, Far as, far as, the curse was found.*

*Rejoice! Rejoice in the Most High, While Israel spreads abroad,
Like stars that glitter in the sky, And ever worship God,
And ever worship God, and ever, and ever worship God.*



Crippen Family - Christmas Song



Evan Mickelsen -
part of quartette



Primary Girls (Holman, Stephens, Spencer)



Randy Jones
part of quartette



Marielen Christensen
Reader



Kent Carter - One of Three Kings
Robbyn Thompson - soloist



Lele Neria - One of Three Kings



Ilene Dykstra - violinist



Michael Brockbank - Reader
Back: Dixie Linn as Elisabeth, Sydnie Eppley
as Mary, Stuart Spencer as Joseph, Bill Linn
as Zacharius, Sherelda Crippen

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Ken Baguley, Onna Oliver (soloist),
Chris Crippen (trumpet)



Three Kings
Lele Neria, AJ Christensen, Kent Carter



Terry Gunn as Gabriel, Dixie Linn
as Elisabeth, Sydnie Eppley as Mary



Stuart Spencer
as Joseph



Robbyn Scribner -
Soprano Soloist



Linda
Goodwin -
Angel Cookie
Lady



Tara Chappell



Onna Oliver, Chris
Crippen, Neil
Dykstra, Lele Neria,
Megan Mayfield,
Evan Mickelsen,
Dennis Wintch
(Reader)

**Elk Ridge,
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Primary Girls

