



The Message of Christmas

- a Christmas play script by Jan Scott -

Isaiah 7:14

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Matthew 1:18

"When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

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The Message of Christmas

by *J.F. Scott*

CAST:

Narrator - able to read or speak with good expression

Old Testament Prophet - dressed as Old Testament Prophet or separate men for each prophet may be used: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, and David. Read passages from a scroll.

New Testament Writer - suggest a younger man dressed in Biblical clothes, or separate men for each of the books used: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul. Read passages from a scroll - or Bible.

Angel Gabriel

Mary

Joseph

Shepherds

Angels for Angelic Host

Wise men

King Herod

Rabbis

ACTION: May be done with the characters speaking or as a tableau - with no speaking by characters - or even with slides of the scenes appropriate to each Scripture passage.)

MUSIC: Suggestions for appropriate Christmas carols are made. These may be changed. Choir, duet, solo, instrumental decisions should be customized to the group giving the performance.

SUGGESTED OPENING: Welcome and introductory remarks are given by the pastor, followed by congregational singing or the choir singing a carol such as "The First Noel" or "O Come All Ye Faithful."

The Message of Christmas

Narrator:

Have you ever asked yourself, “Why celebrate Christmas? Is it just an excuse to put up holiday decorations? Or a way for merchants to make money?”

What does Christmas mean to you anyway? Does it mean Christmas trees with twinkling lights? Perhaps you think of snow and an old fashioned sleigh. Or church bells ringing out in the night. Is it whispered secrets and mysterious packages? Or is it music and memories, friends, family and laughter? Maybe to you Christmas is nothing more than a chubby old man in a red suit and a reindeer with a shiny nose.

What is Christmas?

The true meaning of Christmas is the wonderful message of God’s love and plan of redemption for mankind.

His heavenly plan was drawn up before the creation of the world. Down through the ages, God gave prophetic glimpses of His great plan to provide a way of salvation for sinful men.

Did you know that Christ’s coming is specifically referred to over 330 times in the Old Testament? His birth, His life, His rejection, His death and His resurrection were all prophesied. These prophecies were made hundreds and sometimes thousands of years before He came. God gave unmistakable proof of the identity of His Son to anyone willing to study His Word.

Let’s look at just a few of these prophecies.

Isaiah prophesied almost 700 years before the birth of Jesus that the promised Messiah would be born of a virgin.

O.T. Prophet (Isaiah):

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” - Isaiah 7:14

Narrator:

In the first chapter of Luke we read of an angel sent to a virgin in a little village in northern Israel.

[Scene: house interior: Angel Gabriel with Mary]

N.T. Writer (Luke):

“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name *was* Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said,”

Angel Gabriel *may speak this part or N.T. Writer may read it:*

“Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”

N.T. Writer:

“And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her,”

Angel Gabriel or N.T. Writer

“Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Narrator:

We read about the angel’s appearance to Joseph in the first chapter of Matthew:

[Scene: house interior, Joseph asleep, Angel Gabriel standing]

N.T. Writer (Matthew):

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying,”

Angel Gabriel or N.T. Writer *continues*

“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. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

N.T. Writer:

“Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

Music:

“O Come, O Come, Immanuel”

Narrator:

It was to Micah, some 700 years before the birth of Jesus, that God revealed where the Messiah was to be born:

O.T. Prophet (Micah):

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

Narrator:

But there was a problem. Mary and Joseph were in Nazareth, half the length of Israel from Bethlehem. So God worked in the heart of a greedy, pagan king. In the second chapter of Luke, we read:

N.T. Writer:

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.”

[Action: Mary and Joseph journey to Bethlehem]

“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.”

Music:

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

Narrator:

And so it came to pass that the promised Redeemer was born as a little baby - and yet He was indeed the Son given by God, He was Immanuel - God with us - just as Isaiah had prophesied some 700 and 30 years before.

O.T. Prophet:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

Narrator:

Luke tells us of the birth of the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, the King of Israel, Who was born, not in a palace or even a humble cottage, but in a stable. For He came as the Lamb of God:

[Scene: manger: Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus]

N.T. Writer:

“And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Music:

“Away in a Manger”

Music:

“Hark, the Herald Angels”

Narrator:

The Son of God had been born on earth. And God celebrated by hanging a special star in the heavens. Then He sent out birth announcements: He filled the skies over Bethlehem with angels proclaiming the glad tidings of the birth of the Savior. In the second chapter of Luke, we read:

[Scene: outdoors, night: shepherds in the field with angel]

N.T. Writer:

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock 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. And the angel said unto them,”

Angel Gabriel or N.T. Writer continues:

“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. And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

[Action: other angels join]

N.T. Writer:

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,”

Angels: (in unison) or N.T. Writer continues

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

Music:

“While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night”

N.T. Writer:

“And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another,”

Shepherd #1 or N.T. Writer continues:

“Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.”

[Scene: shepherds go to stable, worship baby Jesus]

N.T. Writer (Luke):

“And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.”

Music:

“Silent Night” *and/or* “O Holy Night”

Narrator:

Meanwhile in Jerusalem, some wise men came seeking the new born king of the Jews. In the second chapter of Matthew, we read:

[Scene: throne room: wise men visit King Herod]

N.T. Writer (Matthew):

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying,”

Wise man #1 or N.T. Writer continues:

“Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.”

[Action: old rabbi opens scroll]

“And they said unto him,”

Jewish Rabbi or N.T. Writer may continue to read:

“In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.”

N.T. Writer (Matthew):

“Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said,”

King Herod or **N.T. Writer** *may continue to read:*

“Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.”

N.T. Writer (Matthew):

“When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.”

Narrator:

Yes, the wise men traveled to Bethlehem, where the shepherds had been busy telling everyone of the angels and of the birth of the Messiah. By the time the wise men got to Bethlehem, someone had opened their home to Mary, Joseph and the new born baby and provided them with a more comfortable place to stay. Imagine having the baby Jesus in your own home! How wonderful! Yet it's even more important to have Him in your heart.

So, the wise men found the baby and worshiped Him and gave Him gifts as Matthew tells us:

[Scene: house: wise men visit Mary, Joseph]

N.T. Writer (Matthew):

“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”

Narrator:

But God has an enemy. One who wanted to destroy Jesus. And this adversary controlled the heart of a very wicked king. God knew of the danger. He had warned of it some 600 years before through the writings of Jeremiah:

O.T. Writer (Jeremiah):

“Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.”

Narrator:

And so, god sent a warning to the wise men and to Joseph. We read in the second chapter of Matthew:

N.T. Writer (Matthew):

“And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.”

[Scene: house: with Mary, Joseph, Jesus, Wise men. Action: wise men leave]

“And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.”

[Action: Mary, Joseph, & baby Jesus also leave]

“And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child’s life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.”

Music:

“Born To Die” or “Ring the Bells”

Narrator:

Yes, Christmas was God's gift of love to a lost and wretched world. But the message of Christmas does not stop with the birth of a sweet, little baby. For the baby was God in human flesh, born to die - so that mankind might have eternal life.

Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. He went about doing good; preaching, feeding the hungry, comforting the hurt and hopeless, healing the sick and raising the dead. He opened the eyes of the blind and unstopped the ears of the deaf. He gave cripples the ability, not only a walk, but the leap with joy. He did every miracle that God had set out as proof of His eternity. We find one such prophecy of His work in Isaiah 35:

O.T. Prophet (Isaiah):

“Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.”

Narrator:

Yet He was rejected by those He loved, as had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah:

O.T. Prophet (Isaiah):

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

N.T. Writer:

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”

Narrator:

When the day of decision came, Luke tells us:

N.T. Writer:

“And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this *man*, and release unto us Barabbas:”

[Scene: darkness - shadow of a cross]

[Piano: soft background music: "The Old Rugged Cross"]

Narrator:

He, Who had done only good, was rejected by His people, whipped unmercifully, spit upon, mocked by Roman guards, and finally nailed to a rough wooden cross - not because He had done anything wrong, but because WE have. We have failed to meet the standard of God's perfect holiness. This failure is called sin. And the penalty for sin is - and always has been death.

Because He loved us, Jesus was willing to pay our penalty Himself. He was willing to die in our place.

Jesus could have saved Himself. He could have called ten thousand angels. He, who spoke the stars into being, could have destroyed His persecutors with a single command. But He loved us. And so He yielded to the blows and insults of spiteful men and He died according to God's plan.

Some 750 years before, Isaiah wrote:

O.T. Prophet (Isaiah):

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Narrator:

In the fifth chapter of Romans, we read:

N.T. Writer (Paul):

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Music:

"For God So Loved the World"

Narrator:

And so He was buried. But the grave could not hold Him and after three days, He rose from the dead. This too, was according to prophecy, for over one thousand years before, David, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote:

O.T. Prophet (David):

“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

Narrator:

Jesus, Himself, had foretold His death and resurrection. He promised to give one particular sign that He was indeed the Messiah, the King of Israel, and Immanuel, God incarnate, God with us.

In Matthew, we read:

N.T. Writer (Matthew):

“But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

[Scene ten: flashing, sparkling lights - strobe lights]

[Piano: triumphantly: “Up from the Grave He Arose”]

Narrator:

When the followers of Jesus went to visit His tomb, they found not the dead body they expected, but an angel. In Mark, we read:

N.T. Writer (Mark):

“And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.”

Music:

“He Is Lord of All”

Narrator:

No, Jesus was not there in that cold, dark tomb. He had risen! He had triumphed over death. The creator of all life could not be bound by the power of hades or of the grave.

Jesus was God’s gift of love.

N.T. Writer (John) *or children in unison* (if children do scriptures, they should give the reference):

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

N.T. Writer (John) *or children in unison*:

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Music:

“Go Tell It on the Mountain”

Narrator:

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven. He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father. He is our great high priest and He is seated, because the work of redemption is complete. There is no more offering for sin possible.

In Hebrews, we read:

“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

This then is the Christmas message: That because of His great love for us, God gave His only Son, Jesus, Who was born to die to pay for our sins, so that all who will accept Him as their Saviour may have eternal life.

Jesus is God’s gift - the first Christmas gift - not earned - not deserved - but freely given out of love by the grace of the great and almighty God.

N.T. Writer (John) *or children in unison*:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Narrator:

Is He your Saviour? Is He the Lord of your life? Have you ever asked Jesus to come into your heart? If not, why not do so today? Let the true message of Christmas bring joy and peace and light to your life.

Music:

“Joy to the World”