

Mary, Joe and the Angel

A simple telling of the Christmas story. A narrator reads the rhyming text while a group of actors do the actions, some of which occur several times.

Feel free to change any of them or add your own as best suits your group.

Once there was an angel, (Say 'Flap flap' and flap arms)
And a girl called Mary. (Smile and wave at the audience)
The angel came to see her, (Say 'Flap flap' and flap arms)
And it was all a bit scary. (Look scared)

Mary was in the kitchen (Smile and wave at the audience)
Having a cup of tea, (Mime drinking, say 'Slurp!')
When the angel appeared and said, (Say 'Flap flap' and flap arms)
'Don't be scared, it's only me!' (Look scared)

Mary nearly fell over (Wobble a bit)
She was so surprised! (Look amazed)
The angel smiled and said, 'Mary – (Say 'Flap flap' and flap arms)
You can believe your eyes.' (Rub eyes)

'You're going to have a baby! (Hold baby)
You're going to be a mum. (Push out tummy and pat it, as if pregnant)
And this is good news for everyone, (Thumbs up)
So don't look so scared and glum.' (Look scared)

The angel then appeared in a dream (Sleep and make snoring noise)
To Mary's boyfriend Joe. (Wave)
And told him not to be scared, (Look scared)
'Go and marry Mary – hurry up! Go!' (Point as if saying 'Go!')

A few months went by and then, (Look at watch on wrist, and tap it)
Mary and her husband Joe, (Wave)
Went to register in Bethlehem (Mime writing an X in the air)
It was a long, long way to go. (Walk on the spot and wipe brow as if tired)

They walked a hundred miles (Walk faster on the spot and wipe brow lots of times)
And got very very weary. (Yawn)
And some time after they arrived (Look at watch on wrist, and tap it)
Mary had her baby! (Hold baby)

More angels came and sang (Say 'Flap flap' and flap arms)
And they lit up the night sky. (Look amazed)
Some shepherds saw and heard them (Listen with hand to ear)
So they just had to come and say, 'Hi!' (Wave at the audience and smile)

They worshipped this new baby (Kneel down)
And thought that he was great. (Stand and put thumbs up looking happy)
One day he would be king (Mime putting a crown on your head)
But till then, they'd have to wait. (Look at watch on wrist and tap it)

Mary and the Angel

Teach the audience/congregation the following response to the key words in bold. Then invite them to join in as you tell the story. You could get a few volunteers out front to lead the actions too.

Kitchen – Mime chopping veg and saying ‘Chop! Chop! Chop!’

Bread – Mime spreading butter on your hand as if holding bread

White - Look shocked **Excited** - Rub hands together, look excited

Wedding – Make sound of wedding bells and mime pulling on bell rope ‘Ding dong!’

Mary was very **excited**, because very soon she was going to get married. One day, while she was in the **kitchen** making some **bread** and thinking about the **wedding**, she suddenly saw a bright light appear outside in the hall. She ran out of the **kitchen**, still carrying the bread and thinking about the **wedding**, and almost bumped into a very tall man, wearing dazzling **white** clothes, with a very bright face.

Mary wasn't sure whether to be frightened or **excited** at meeting this person - he certainly was very **white**.

"Don't be afraid!" said the man in **white**, "I've got good news for you!"

Mary did start feeling afraid and she went very **white**.

"God wants to help you, Mary," the man went on, "you are going to have a baby - and God wants you to call him Jesus. He will be the Son of God - and he will be a **King** who will be in charge forever."

The man seemed very **excited** about this - but Mary wasn't so sure. What about her **wedding**? She wasn't even married yet.

"This child will be a miracle baby," said the man, "he will be God's baby - different to any other person."

Mary was so amazed that she dropped the **bread** on the floor, and ran back into the **kitchen**. But the man in **white** didn't seem to mind, he said goodbye and when Mary looked again he had gone.

For a long time she sat in the **kitchen**, with the **bread** in her hands, thinking about the man in **white**, and about her **wedding**, and about God's baby. And the more she thought - the more she felt both nervous and yet **excited**.

Christmas Crowd Story

Suitable for an outdoor or large event, the responses are fairly noisy, like those in a pantomime. Teach everyone in the audience the responses before telling the story. You may like to have a few volunteers out front to lead the responses too.

Baby – Divide audience in two (1&2): 1. "Gurgle, gurgle," 2. "Howl, howl," 1. "Gurgle, gurgle," 2. "Howl, howl."

Camels – All say "Brrrr" and make lips vibrate for camel sounds

Shepherds – "Baaa!"

Wise Men – Stroke chin

Stable – Animal noises

This is the story of Christmas
2000 years ago,
With camels and wise men and shepherds,
But no sign of any snow.

Come back with me to Palestine
Back to the Middle East,
With camels and wise men and shepherds
And the ancient Prince of Peace.

Late one dark, dark night
Some shepherds came to town,
They came upon a house
And nearly broke the front door down.

They'd come to see the baby
The one out in the stable,
They'd heard that he was special
And didn't think it was a made-up fable.

They went around the back
To the stable and the hay
And there amongst the cow dung
A tiny baby lay.

Later on some rich folk
Came riding on their travels,
They were very, very, very wise men
And they all rode on camels.

They'd come to see the baby
Those wise men were pretty clever
"We won't forget this child," they said,
"And you should call him Trevor."

They didn't call him Trevor
But they were right about one thing,
No one forgot the child that night –
He turned out to be a king.

And his name was... (wait for all to shout) JESUS!

The Nativity

Animals - Animal sounds

Baby - Cradle baby in arms

Angel - Look amazed

Star - Look through telescope

Bethlehem - Hand over eyes, look round

These response stories might be useful in a class or workshop as an easy way to get the group into doing some drama. Just teach them the responses and then tell the story. They may like to do it as one large group, or you could divide them into small groups. You might also tell them the key words, but then ask them to think up an appropriate noise and action. You could give each group one word to respond to.

Mary and Joseph had travelled all night. It was a long journey, and Mary was very uncomfortable because she was about to have a **baby**. When they got to **Bethlehem**, which was the place they were heading for, they tried to find somewhere to stay the night - but everywhere was full. So Mary had her **baby** in a stable, where **animals** lived, and they wrapped the baby in pieces of cloth to keep him warm and then they laid him down in the trough that the **animals** ate from. They called the **baby** Jesus, and he was the Son of God.

That same night, while Mary had her **baby**, there were some shepherds nearby in a field and they were looking after their sheep. An **angel** appeared to them in the sky, looking very bright, and they were all afraid. But the **angel** told them not to be frightened, and told them about Mary's **baby**. Then a huge crowd of **angels** appeared in the sky, singing beautiful songs and praising God.

When the **angels** went back to heaven the shepherds decided to go and visit the **baby**, so they went to **Bethlehem**, looked high and low, and found Mary and Joseph.

They knew that this was the **baby** Jesus, because the **angel** had told them that he would be wrapped up in pieces of cloth and lying in an **animal** trough. They told Mary and Joseph about the **angels** and everyone was amazed.

Then the shepherds went back to their field talking, laughing and singing praises to God, just like the **angels** had been doing.

Not long after this some men who studied the **stars** came looking for Jesus from another country, because they had seen a special **star** in the sky which showed them that this **baby** was a king. First they went to King Herod in a place called Jerusalem, but he didn't know anything about it. He hadn't seen the **star** or heard any **angels**. So he asked some of his advisors and they told him to look in **Bethlehem**. So the men set off again and they saw the **star** they had been following, and it made them very happy.

The **star** stopped over a house and when they went in they found Mary and Joseph there with Jesus, so they quickly took out some presents, gave them to him and then worshipped him. Then they got up and left, and didn't go back to King Herod because an **angel** told them not to, instead they went back home to their own country.

The Inn

Dark and stormy - Storm noises **Teeth** - Mime cleaning teeth **Door** - "Creak"
Hair - "Doiing!" **Knock** - Knock once
Tired - Yawn **Shed** - "Ugh!"

It was a **dark and stormy** night, and the manager of the Bethlehem Inn was very **tired**. The hotel was full and he'd had a long hard day, and all he wanted was a nice rest. So he shut the hotel **door** and climbed the stairs to his luxury bedroom. Just as he got into bed he remembered that he hadn't cleaned his **teeth**, so he got out, cleaned his **teeth** and staggered back.

Outside it was still a **dark and stormy** night - and suddenly there was a sharp **knock** on the **door**. The manager sat up and listened. There it was again - one sharp knock. The manager wasn't sure who it might be and he was very **tired**, but he got out again, re-cleaned his **teeth**, and went down the stairs. As he reached for the **door** there was another **knock**. The manager's **hair** stood on end, but he plucked up his courage and opened the **door**. Outside it was **dark and stormy** - but there was no one there. So he quickly shut the **door**, and ran up stairs to bed. Suddenly there was another **knock**. The manager's **hair** stood up again. And so did he. He was so frightened that he cleaned his **teeth** again, and went to the **door**. There was no one there - but outside it was very **dark and stormy**. He stepped outside to look round, and suddenly felt a hand touch his shoulder. "Aah!" he jumped and turned round. There was a man - looking very white. He had a woman with him - and she looked **tired** and frightened.

The man's name was Joseph - and he asked if they could have a room for the night. The manager told them to go away, and he shut the **door**. Half an hour later he was still awake - although he was **tired**, he couldn't sleep. Suddenly - there was another **knock** on the door. This time his **hair** didn't stand on end, but he jumped up and ran down the stairs. It was Joseph again. Every hotel was full - and could they please stay in the dirty old **shed** at the back of the hotel? The night was still very **dark and stormy**, so the manager gave in and very kindly let them sleep in the old **shed** out at the back.

An hour later there was yet another **knock** on the **door**. The manager couldn't believe it. This time it was a group of excited shepherds. Could they see the baby please? The manager was about to strangle them all when they heard a baby's cry - coming from the old **shed** at the back. They all rushed outside - through the **dark and stormy** night - and there they saw the baby, wrapped up in an old sheet where he had just been born in that dirty old **shed**. The mother looked very **tired**. Joseph looked amazed. The shepherds all knelt down - and the manager wondered just what on earth was going on.

Shepherds and Kings

Baby - Hold baby and look shocked
Decree - Stamp fist of one hand on the flat of another
Straw - "Poo!" Hold nose **Sky** - Sweep hands out above head
Sore - "Ouch" **Tired** - Stretch
Back - Indicate over shoulder with thumb

Jesus was born in Bethlehem
At a time long ago way **back** when
Caesar was in charge and he issued a **decree**
He said, "I want to know how many people are under me."

So everyone had to go to their place of birth
So a young couple came from Nazareth.
The **decree** said "Go" so they travelled all day
And when they arrived there was nowhere to stay.

They found an inn and knocked on the door
The owner was **tired** and his head was **sore**.
They said, "We've come to give Caesar our autograph."
And the innkeeper said, "There's a room round the **back**."

Round the **back** of the place they found a cave
There was no soft bed and nowhere to shave.
There was just smelly **straw** and spiders and mice
And when the couple saw it they had to think twice.

The innkeeper said, "It's the only place free.
Everywhere's full 'cause of Caesar's **decree**."
The couple took the place and they spent the night
They were **tired**, and sore, but they made it through all right.

The couple were called Mary and Joe
And when the morning came they had a **baby** in tow.
Mary gave birth in the middle of the night.
In the **straw** and the dung, it was quite a sight.

Some shepherds came by to wet the **baby's** head.
They were quite amazed - this is what they said,
"We saw angels in the **sky** and they sang us a song.
They said, "Peace on earth, and hope for everyone."

The **baby** grew a little and some men dropped by
They'd followed a star way up in the **sky**.
The men were rich and they'd bought presents.
Gold and myrrh and frankincense.

Everyone knew when they came to see
This was no ordinary pregnancy.
This **baby** had come to change the planet
And way **back** then, that was how God began it.

A Wise Man Wonders

I look back on it every year around this time. And I can't help but wonder – was it our fault? Did we start it? We'd been on that road all that time. Carefully following the charts, cutting a new path, drawing on Balaam's ancient prophecy. And what did we do? Fall at the last hurdle. We were looking for a good king so we went to see a bad king instead. Some might say we weren't to know, couldn't have imagined the fallout from that visit. But we can't deny what happened.

We weren't there afterwards, didn't hear the screams or smell the blood. We were just told. Stopped by a gasping, wild-eyed messenger as we journeyed back, I remember clambering off my camel, twisting my ankle as I fell, and being sick in the road. The other two, bantering happily a second before about the new king, turned and stared back at Bethlehem, their mouths twisted and hanging open like gashed windows. No one spoke for quite a while. Eventually we rode on in silence. Herod had worn a mask of mock wonder when we visited him, swore blind he wanted to worship this new king. Promised on his mother that he would go if we just popped back and let him know the whereabouts.

We didn't pop back and we didn't tell him, and he didn't go. But he sent troops instead. And the troops brought a death wish. A killing curse. And when they'd finished children lay stone-still in the streets. The future of Bethlehem cut down. The babies' crying replaced with that of their mothers. So I wonder – what would have happened if we hadn't dropped by on the palace? If we'd stayed away from the sick, paranoid king. Would he have heard another way? Would he have perpetrated slaughter anyway? I'll never know, but I think on it each year around this time. I remember the wonder, bubbling up like water from a new well, the holy tension as we knelt beside that vulnerable child in the dust. And then the growing horror as we journeyed home and heard that news.

That was three decades ago now, but the memory lingers, like an open wound. My travelling companions died a while back, but I have heard it said that the Bethlehem baby has grown up – the one boy not cut down that night. There are tales about him being extraordinary. And something is nudging me to saddle up again and pay him a visit. Perhaps there'll be some kind of healing for me in doing that... kneeling down to worship him one more time... I wonder what he feels about the innocent dying in someone else's place? I may well go.

Manger Town

News presenter: 'We go over live now to Colin Cribbage at the sight of the discovery.'

Reporter: 'Thank you Kirsty, yes I'm here at what might well be the discovery of the century. Behind me is the dig where, for the last three months, teams of archaeologists have been scraping and brushing and dusting away to unearth what might possibly be the remnants of the Christmas manger, the animal trough where the baby Jesus first slept when he was born. Somehow strangely preserved. Most folk thought there would be nothing left to find, but amazingly there is a frame, still intact, and bits of a first century mobile toy, that must have been suspended somehow above the manger. Fragments of a jar that may have held some Myrrh have also been unearthed, though some think it may actually have contained first century chutney.'

Toy models of the manger are already in the pipeline, Toys-R-Us, Halfords, Superdrug, Tesco, Harrods and most cathedral shops will have them on the shelves in time for Christmas. The *Great British Bake Off* winner is working on an edible version, hopefully without a tough crust or soggy bottom, and a team are due on *Dragons' Den* with a proposal to set up a spin-off global merchandising business. Disney/Pixar are working on a movie version, *Finding Jesus*, and we're assured they have plans for a stage musical next year.

What does this mean for the rest of us? Well, Brian Air are offering cheap flights linked with a site-by-site Chigley Tour for next spring. Free tickets are available for a few lucky Lottery winners who have four numbers or more on each week's lottery draw up to Christmas. You'll be able to stand here and see for yourself what I'm looking at right now, a few bits of wood from the first century. You'll be able to take a selfie with the manger, whilst munching some local Kentucky Fried Turkey and looking forward to a night out at the newly developed string of casinos and festive theme parks. I'm told that Manger Town has already been granted planning permission. There was a young couple with a new baby in temporary residence on the site but I'm assured they'll find somewhere else to stay. They say this is the one place on earth where it really will be Christmas every day. Back to you Kirsty.'

The Christmas Shop

Christmas Eve. A couple walk the aisles of a supermarket gathering up the food and frills for a cracking Christmas. Early on in their travels they spot the Christmas baby and scoop that into the trolley. Of course they must have the Christmas baby, what is Christmas about after all? Other things get added. Crackers, decorations, cake, mince pies, mulled wine, turkey, stuffing, sprouts ('Really? You really want the sprouts? You know what they do to you...') Little by little the trolley fills up and it's clear there's going to be a problem. It's not big enough. They um and ah for a while, shift a few things around ('Don't squash the Yule Log!') and then the solution becomes clear. Put the baby to one side and pick it up later. Of course. No problem. Why didn't we think of that earlier? Returning it to the shelf makes just enough room for one of those embarrassing Christmas jumpers, a large box of Quality Street and a few bits of extra tinsel. Perfect. On into the queue ('I don't think we'll risk the twelve items or less till, darling...') then it's wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait... ('We're going to miss the repeat of the 1974 Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show...') wait, wait, wait... then a jolly festive chat to the check-out woman in the flashing Santa hat, load up the bags, wheel them to the car in the trolley and off. Christmas sorted.

Meanwhile, at the end of the day the shelves are cleared. Some of the stock is passed onto the food banks. Other bits are just placed out back with the bins. And later that night, as Christmas Eve is dying under the glimmering stars, and the sound of parties and tellies echoes from street to street, a couple of folks of indeterminate age wander past the supermarket skips and hear a noise. They stop and come closer. There it is. The Christmas baby. They scoop it up, pull off one of their coats though the night is cold, and wrap it around the tiny child. They scuttle to an all-night drop-in, where a few prostitutes and homeless folks are getting festive soup and coffee. There they nurse the child and tell the story of the Christmas baby. And the few stragglers kneel, coo and wonder.

Becoming Flesh (1)

A rhythm.

He can hear a rhythm.

One beat after another.

Ba-dum ba-dum ba-dum.

A heartbeat just a little slower than his own.

Comforting, reassuring, reliable, as he makes this voyage, an exile of sorts, sailing in this amniotic sea, on his way to another world.

Cramped, confined. He was destined for a bigger space than this. A bigger world.

And sounds, so many sounds.

Clangs. Bashes. Sighs. Laughter.

The voices muffled, coming from all around. Loud, quiet, some going on and on.

Words-words-words, words-words-words, words-words-words...

Today she seems happy, and his world expands when she relaxes.

He sways a little, she must be walking, taking him somewhere.

Familiar greetings ring out, voices warm and welcoming, the sound of smiles.

Then silence.

He feels his world tighten, constrict a little.

The voices change, becoming shocked, jarring, angry growls.

His world tightens again. She doesn't like it, she recoils, he recoils too. Just a little.

Voices grow louder still.

Questions, questions, questions.

Sharply asked with no pause for a reply.

Her heartbeat is going faster. Quickly, quickly rapping out its urgent, snappy rhythm.

Ba-dum ba-dum da-dum ba-dum da-dum ba-dum da-dum ba-dum da-dum ba-dum da-dum.

He doesn't like it.

Where are those soft smiling voices now?

A sob and he starts to sway again, she's moving quickly, the muffled voices fade away to nothing.

Quiet.

The sway slows and stops.

A little bump as she comes to rest somewhere.

Another sob or two, and then another sound.

Music. He likes music. Singing, she's singing.

That's better.

A peaceful song, he can feel her relax again, and the song takes him to another place.

The dawn of time, ancient, ageless.

For a moment he is no longer in that confined sea, but in an endless, bright place of space.

Stars spark up from nothing, angels dance, his Father speaks, sing-song words of wonder.

Planets come to life. Dust piles become people. There is light, laughter and splendour everywhere.

She stops singing. He is suddenly back again, on that amniotic sea.

And he senses something, this world will soon pass. He is going to leave it behind.

Enter another place, where he will have to learn again.

How to be, how to live.

And he will at last see her, face to face.

The heartbeat, the mother who is carrying him.

Becoming Flesh (2)

There has been more anger, more growling, he feels it as she feels it.
Different voices now, and different kinds of movement, as if she has been taken hold of, moved around by others.
Each time she slips away, moves quickly and sends him swaying, though he is bigger now, and has less space.
And he is getting to know another voice, at first angry too, raised, questioning. Like the others.
But not so much now.
He is getting to know that voice well, perhaps a special voice to her.
There have been many conversations.
And little by little that familiar voice has changed. Softened. Sometimes there is even the sound of smiling in it.
He sometimes feels squashed when he hears that voice, and another faint heartbeat, slightly out of sync with hers.
Ba-du...ba-du...ba-du... ba-du...
The two heartbeats bumping up against one another.
As if the two hearts are pressed close, and that's what's squashing him.
He has to jiggle about to get comfortable.
He has to do that a lot now and sometimes she doesn't like it.
Tells him to calm down, to be still, to settle.
She talks to him a lot these days.
He doesn't know the words but he gets the warmth, the care.
She likes him. He can tell, and more than that. A deeper thing.
She talks to him about something wonderful that is happening.
He can tell from the way she is on the inside.
A kind of peace, a kind of glow almost.
He likes it.
He likes her.
It makes him kick about, his legs quite strong now.
But she doesn't like that so much, and her voice changes for a split second.
She still sings these days, and her songs take him back to the beginning each time.
To a world in the making, and a time of peace and perfect pleasure.
He wasn't little then, not like this.
And as strong as his legs are now, they were stronger then.
He could do anything then.
Make anything, go anywhere, running, leaping, dancing, exploring.
He was free, and the world was endless.
And full of possibilities.
What a world that was.
Ouch.
She's trying to hold him still, he must have been kicking again.
Flapping his arms, flexing his fingers at the memories.
Be calm now, she's telling him, I'm trying to sleep, don't you know?
He doesn't know.
So he kicks again and does one of his perfect smiles.
He wants to be free once more.
He's getting ready for the world.

Becoming Flesh (3)

Swaying, so much swaying, he feels a bit strange. A little queasy.
The movement goes on, and it's not the same, but it won't let up.
It's not like before, not as if she were moving like she normally does.
And there's another sound too.
Rhythmic, but a different pitch, clop clop, not like her steps, like something else.
As if some other being were travelling with her.
Perhaps that's what the strange swaying is all about.
It goes on. And on. This journey is not short.
At times she gasps and he feels a pressure, as if she is trying to hold him, support him.
Like a big version of his own little perfect hand. Trying to reach inside that amniotic sea and steady his boat.
The other voice is there too.
The one he has grown to know well.
Not angry, but serious, concerned, hurrying.
Other voices come and go, and other clop clopping sounds too.
And then everything stops.
And for a while nothing much.
Then something squeezes him, and he hears her gasp.
More squeezing, more gasping.
He sways as she changes position.
The other voice is talking a lot now.
More squeezing and the sounds are growing louder.
What's going on?
He is moving, the sea he's been sailing is disappearing.
Something is gripping him very tightly indeed.
Ouch! A bright light. Very bright. Really bright.
And loud noises.
The voices boom at him.
He feels something tugging at him, feels a strange coldness on his skin.
Where's the sea gone? Where's his boat and the world he knew?
He opens his eyes wide, then his mouth.
And he lets out a huge yowl!
And he sees other mouths and eyes, not yowling.
Smiles.
And tears.
Water running down these strange big faces.
Where's his cosy world gone? Where is it?
Oh that's better, large hands bundle him into big strips of something.
He's warm again and he feels the press of soft safe skin against him.
This is so different. Why didn't they warn him?
It's big out here. It's bright. So bright.
These faces look funny.
But he thinks they like him.
They make a lot noise, but it's all right, he knows those voices.
It's going to be all right.
He looks up, there is darkness out there, a huge canvass with a big light in the middle, shining down.
His memories of making that world are fading now by the second.
Everything smells funny, it's a new life.

The Night Before Christmas (Revisited)

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
All of us wrapped up in nightgown and cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,
When, what to my wondering gaze should appear,
But two pairs of eyes, brimful of fear.
With a faint little smile they beckoned to me,
Waved up at the window, as they hid near a tree.
So gathering my wits I flew down the stairs,
And the family followed; wondering what could be there.
With caution we drew back the rusty old lock
And pushed back the door to see what we'd got.
And there on the lawn with faces so white
And bodies that trembled in the cold of the night,
Were two frightened souls clutching each other.
Like Husband and wife, or sister and brother.

They took a step forward, in silver moonlight
"Would you have a room to spare for the night?"
The man whispered the words, and his voice was so frail
That he must have been treading an awfully long trail.
"Our house is all full, and ready for morn
When Christmas will come with the first light of dawn."
I was sorry to tell them and turn them away
I felt like the innkeeper on that first Christmas day.
As they turned to go my heartbeat went wild
For the young girl was clearly expecting a child.

"Wait!" we all cried, and shocked ourselves so.
"You can't walk away – where will you go?"
"We'll find somewhere soon," the man said with a smile,
"We've been knocking on doors for a good long while."
And we watched as they melted back into the night
And quite, quite soon had gone from our sight.

With thoughtful frowns we slipped back inside
And no sooner had done so – St Nicholas arrived.
Down the chimney the jolly man came with a bound,
Bringing with him an awfully big sound.
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.
A bundle of Toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler, just opening his pack.
His eyes- how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;
As he scrambled to leave his head reappeared
“Did you get my best present, I don’t see it round here?”
“Which present was that?” I asked with surprise,
And the glint of a sparkle sprang to his eyes.
“The new-born child,” he said with a smile
“The one who makes Christmas worth all the while.
The child once born in the dark and the night,
The child who one day will set the world right.”
But we all shook our heads and looked to the door.
“We sent them to where they’d come from before.”

For a moment his rosy cheeks turned white
“They’ll still be around out there in the night.”
Then he brightened again, gave his beard a shake,
and said,
“Why not ask them in – see what difference they make?”
And he called out to us as we ran from his sight,
“Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night.”

The Josiah Kyle Show

Josiah Kyle walks on, suited, suave and confidently brash.

JOS. Today on the Josiah Kyle show we have a young couple in dire straits. Young Joe is worried, let me tell you. He's been hearing rumours round the town. Rumours about his fiancé Mary. Let's bring them on and see if there's any truth in the gossip. Ladies and gentleman, a big hand for Mary and Joe. (Applause as they enter and take a seat)

JOS. Now, Mary, you claim that you have never even kissed another man?

MAR. That's right.

JOS. And you've never been intimate with another man?

MAR. That's right.

JOS. In fact, you claim you've never kissed *any* man. At all. Ever. Not even Joe here.

MAR. That's right.

JOS. Hmm. (Thinks) And yet you Mary... and correct me if I'm wrong here... you say you've never even kissed a man and yet Mary – you're pregnant!

(Gasps from the audience)

JOS. That's right ladies and gents. This woman, who claims to be as pure as the driven snow, is with child!

MAR. How d'you know? Who told you?

JOS. Your cousin told us, she was only too happy to talk about your... situation. She's excited about it. Well, she's pregnant herself. We had her on the show last week, after her husband was so shocked about their pregnancy that he was struck dumb. She wasn't though. She was very chatty, and your name came up. So, do you still claim you haven't slept with someone?

MAR. Yes. Absolutely.

JOS. Even though the newspapers claim different?

MAR. Absolutely.

JOS. Even though your neighbours, many of them here in the audience, tell us otherwise?

MAR. Yes.

JOS. So it must be Joseph's baby then?

MAR. No.

JOS. But if you haven't been with anyone else... Look, make it easy on yourself. Wouldn't it be better just to say that it is Joseph's? He seems a nice enough chap. What have you got against him?

MAR. Nothing, I want to marry him. I love him.

JOS. Is he not good enough for you? Are you after someone richer?

MAR. No!

JOS. Someone cooler? Funnier? Better Looking?

MAR. No!

JOS. But... and again, correct me if I'm wrong... ladies and gentlemen he's only gone and broken off the engagement. (More gasps from the audience)

JOE. No I haven't. I'm still thinking about it.

JOS. All right. Well, you both took a lie detector test earlier. How d'you think it'll turn out Mary?

MAR. I'm telling the truth.

JOS. Joe, what do you think?

JOE. I don't know what to think.

JOS. Well let's see, I have the results in this envelope here. (He opens it.) Mary have you picked a name for the baby?

MAR. Yes. Jesus.

JOS. And if it's a girl?

MAR. It's a boy.

JOS. How can you be so sure? Have you had a scan?

MAR. No. I had a message. From an angel.

JOS. An angel! Oh this gets better and better. And what about poor Joe? He doesn't get an angel.

JOE. Actually... I did.

JOS. You saw an angel too?

JOE. I had a dream. That's why I've decided, I'm not breaking off the engagement.

(More gasps from the audience)

JOS. Well, Joe, I can tell you this... (looks at the card) the results of the lie detector test... confirm that Mary is... telling the truth! (Even more gasps) Yes ladies and gentlemen, that's what this show is all about. Getting to the truth! So you heard it first here. Mary hasn't had any other relationships and yet somehow – she's pregnant. See you tomorrow when we'll be meeting three very wise men, who claim they've seen a message in the stars about a whole new king. Will Prince Charles ever get to sit on the throne? Join me and find out tomorrow.
End with audience applause.

What If – A Festive Retelling

Now this is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. An angel appeared to Joseph, her fiancé, in a dream and told him, 'Do not be afraid, for the child is born of God's spirit.' So being a rich man and having all the right connections, Joseph decided to throw a big party at the local palace to celebrate the birth publicly. He invited the great and the good, the rich and the famous and the place was full of celebrities.

And it was while they were partying that the time came for Mary to have her baby and she laid him in a manger, because there was plenty of room in the palace. The manger was made of gold and studded with diamonds and pearls. A thing of great beauty. And she wrapped the child in swaddling bands made of precious rare silks and the people gathered round and were amazed at the sight.

There were at that time shepherds in the nearby hills looking after their sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terribly frightened, but the angel reassured them. 'Don't be afraid!' he said. 'I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Saviour has been born tonight! This is how you will recognise him: You will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped in strips of cloth!'

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, 'Come on, let's go and see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.' But then the angel reappeared and said, 'I wouldn't get your hopes up. The manger's in a big palace full of celebrities. I doubt they'll want some smelly shepherds sniffing around.'

The shepherds ran to see the baby anyway and it was just as the angel had said. The baby was in a big palace full of celebrities and nobody wanted a bunch of smelly shepherds sniffing around. So they went back to their sheep and grumbled about the privileged few. As they were talking three wise men dropped by looking tired and miserable. 'What's up?' the shepherds asked.

'We heard about the new king and have come to find him,' they said. 'We've brought gold and frankincense and myrrh for him, but we couldn't get in.' The shepherds were amazed as the wise men were clearly rich. 'We weren't on the guest list,' they said sadly, 'and the doorman thought our presents were a bit inappropriate. So he took them and tucked them behind a massive pile of other bigger gifts. Shame. We came a long way. We really wanted to see him.'

'So did we,' said the shepherds and they invited the wise men around their fire, so they could warm themselves and break bread together. And somewhere, in another dimension, two angels watched from afar. And one said to the other, 'This can't be right. I think we'd better try this another way.'

Nativity Scene

As the title suggests, this is a Christmas sketch, and one that looks at the materialism that so often dominates the "festive season". It is fairly lighthearted, but begins to point us to the reality of Christmas, and a Saviour who will return one day.

The two characters (1 & 2) are dolls dressed in typical nativity costume. They are both rather fed up...

1. Ere, can we move yet?

2. I'm not sure, have all them people gone?

(1 looks cautiously round)

1. Yea. (Sighs) Thank goodness for that. These nativity scenes are hard work.

2. Plastic baby again I see.

1. Well, you can talk, what were you before a shepherd - a Cindy Doll?

2. Action man actually - if you must know.

1. (Peeping inside 2's shirt) Ooh, have you got one of them little cords that you pull to...
(1 Pulls at 2's collar. 2 slaps his hand)

2. Yes, I have, if it's any business of yours. Anyway, what are you normally? I mean, when you're not posing as Mary...

1. Mary!! I'm a wise man, mate.

2. Cor, they must be scraping the barrel. Well, what's your normal job?

1. Oh, I don't like to brag.

2. Oh go on, tell me.

1. Well... I'm really – ahem... Thor!

2. Get out! You haven't got the body.

1. It's not all physique ya know.

2. Huh, try telling that to Aidan Turner.

1. It's about mental power too, (Taps his temple) psychopathic.

2. You can say that again! This must be a bit of a let-down, then - from fighting Loki to standing in camel's dung.

1. Well, they bought little Dougal a *Star Wars* Light-sabre for Christmas, he doesn't want to know me anymore.
2. I know what you feel like - I was replaced by a pregnant gerbil.
1. Christmas is always the same, innit - it's all clothes, toys, socks, bubble bath, James Bond and Cliff's greatest hits.
2. And every Boxing Day it's the same - all left overs and hangovers.
1. It's like they're addicted to it.
2. It's all part of their religion, you know.
1. Eh?
2. I heard them talking about it the other day. They have this annual creed and every year they recite it:
He says - I believe it's gonna be another expensive year.
To which she replies - I trust you'll stay sober this time.
This is usually followed with the response - I don't believe the price of that whiskey in Tesco's.
Then comes a real giveaway - Heaven knows what we're gonna buy the kids.
And he then replies that God knows as well.
You see - it's all a religious ceremony.
2. These humans are crazy. (Pause) D'ya think he was ever real - that baby.
1. Well, he's been plastic as long as I've been standing here.
2. No, I mean in reality, you know, in that Christmas story.
1. Oh yea, a long time ago - when he was first born. It was all very real then. Christmas was a vital event. It involved priests and kings, and sheep and angels, the sins of the world - and a very frightened young mother.
2. And now?
1. Now? Well, if you look carefully into it - you can see a king who's gonna come back one day. But for a lot of people it's just... like that baby. Plastic.
2. And like us.
1. You speak for yourself - I'm an Avenger.
2. Really? Well you'd better watch out, coz it looks very much like young Dougal's about to leave his bubblegum all over you.
1. WHAT!

(Both freeze looking up in horror)

The Camel Rap

This sketch involves one narrator and a group who illustrate the sketch with the instructions in *italics*. The group are quite rebellious, rather like teenagers, and the narrator often resembles a teacher struggling to keep control.

Once there was a camel

All say: "Brrr!" and do camel impressions

Who was into rapping.

Group put on sunglasses and rap: "Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Do the camel rap! Do the camel rap! Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Do the camel rap! Brrr!"

Although he wasn't that good at it.

Group look fed up about this. 'Ohhhhh!'

His name was Conan.

"CO – NAN – CO - NAN!" They chant this

Conan the camel.

"CO - NAN - THE - CAM - EL!"

Yes, yes, alright. (To the group) Now Conan was...

"CO - NAN – CO - NAN!"

(Narrator sighs) Now Conan...

"CO - NA ..." They stop as the narrator gives them a withering look

Now Conan was way ahead of his time - because in those days there was no rapping.

"Hey! Hey!... Hey? No rapping?"

No rapping.

"Ohh!" They all adopt fed up childish poses

And camels weren't cool.

"Ohhhh!" They pull off sunglasses and dispose of them, mutter: "'s'not fair!" "I don't wanna do this anymore." "It's boring." etc...

Group turn their backs to the audience and slouch on each other in a fixed pose

But camels did have the hump...

"You can say that again!"

So that people could sit on them!

Group pose of all sitting on each other

Especially people who were kings.

"What? Rappin' kings? Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Do the Camel rap! Do the camel rap!"

No, no, no! Nobody rapped in those days. Instead, kings went on long journeys - to visit babies.

'Ahh!' Group hold babies in arms

And 1 king travelled for 2 years, with 2 other kings, and 3 camels just to find 1 baby. In a stable - wrapped in a...

"Wrapped? Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!..."

Shh! Or you'll wake the baby.

"Where?"

Behind you!

Group turn to look at imaginary baby. Say "Ahh!" to audience. Look again and say "Ahh!" a second time

And this baby was wrapped – shhhh! (to group) - in an old cloth, inside an old smelly stable

Group sniff loudly and say "Phaw!"

Even though he was a new king.

"Another king?"

Yes - but the most important one of all.

"Really?"

Yes. because one day -

Group take one step towards narrator. "Yea?"

This king -

"Yea?" Group take one step towards narrator.

Will be running things

"Yea?" Group take one step towards narrator.

Forever.

The group then walk off saying, "Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! The forever king! The forever King!"

Some Christmas Dialogues

Based on Matthew 1&2; Luke 1.

In the following four scenes a narrator guides the story through, though you may like to drop some of the descriptive narrative, depending on how much you act the scene out. The scenes can be read as a radio play too, without the need for learning lines.

A Birth in Bethlehem

The scene was set over Bethlehem. The small, sleepy town was about to play host to the greatest awakening of all time. In a dark, dusty cave, a tired couple fell to the straw, exhausted by the journey and the night. The place was little more than a shed, a few slats of wood fronting a cave set in the hills.

Mary whispered: I'm so tired...
Joseph replied: Don't worry; I'll make a bed.

Their voices were strained, their throats dry from the travelling and their bodies weary from the long day. Joseph busied himself with a makeshift bed of hay and blankets.

Mary: I think the baby's coming... Joseph! I can't - not here!
Joseph: We'll be all right - you'll be all right, we'll get through it somehow...
Mary: You might! But will I... And the baby... it's so dirty here...
Joseph: Lie down. Here, there's a bed of straw, it's clean. Come on.

Joseph Proposes, Mary is Pregnant

It had not always been this way - Joseph so supportive and concerned. Mary's pregnancy was no ordinary occurrence and when Joseph first heard of it nine months ago he was far from the willing partner.

Joseph: Mary - my beloved, I'd like you to... No, that's no good. Can't say that. Think, think. How do people propose? I know! Mary, my love, I want you to... No, that won't do either. My dearest Mary? No I can't say that! Mary! Will you marry me? Marry me! No, no, no. I definitely can't do it like that. Mary... Will you be my wife?

Mary, on her way to break the difficult news to Joseph, faltered in the doorway as she overheard this. She dropped her head and turned to leave. Joseph realised she was there and hurried over.

Joseph: Oh... Mary... I... I've something to marry you... I mean, something to tell you.
Mary: Yes, I heard.
Joseph: Mary, I want to... I mean - I'd like to... or rather, I want you to... well, will you? Be my wife, I mean.
Mary: Joseph, please listen to me first. Something's happened. Something that may make you change your mind.
Joseph: What do you mean?
Mary: I mean... I mean... I'm pregnant.

There was a pause as the idea slowly sank in.

Joseph: But I...
Mary: Look, I know what you must think.
Joseph: I'm sorry, I don't think I understood you. For a minute then I thought you said...
Mary: I'm pregnant.
Joseph: Yes... that's what I thought you said!

Mary: Listen Joseph...

Joseph: But how could you? I mean, you and me, we're supposed to be... Well, you never said anything. How could you do something like that? And what about your mother - does she know?

Mary: Joseph, listen to me. It's not what you think.

Joseph: Do I know him? The father, I mean, do I know him?

Mary: You could say that, yes.

Joseph: Good friend of the family, is he?

Mary: Joseph, please...

Joseph: And what about God? I don't suppose you've even considered Him in all of this? You do realise He knows? You can't hope to hide it from Him, you know.

Mary: Oh yes, He knows all about it, Joseph.

Joseph: Well, I'm glad somebody does...

Mary: You see - He is the father.

Joseph: What?

Mary understood little of this herself. All she knew for sure was that God had promised her a child, and that this child would be unique, ruling over the house of Jacob forever.

Mary: God is the father of my child, Joseph. Or perhaps I should say - I am the mother of His son. There's no other man involved - it's God, His Spirit I suppose. That's all.

Joseph: And this... child?

Mary: He's going to be the Messiah, Joseph. We're to call him Jesus. Can you believe it - our child, the Messiah!

Joseph: I don't know, I don't know if I do believe it? You say - 'Our child' but it isn't, it's not mine anyway. Not if it's God's.

Mary: No. But He has chosen us - both of us, to bring up His Son.

Joseph: But the disgrace, what about my reputation, my family, my friends? What will they say? And what about you - once you start to show... well it's unthinkable. You know what people will say - and what they'll do! It'll be dangerous for you to just go out of the door. This is disastrous.

Mary: I don't think it is. I'm scared, Joseph. Just like you. But I can't stop this now. No one can. I've decided. Now it's up to you. It's your choice, Joseph.

Mary looked at him long and hard. She loved this man dearly, and had longed for the day when they would be married. Now all of that seemed to be slipping away, out of her limited reach. She turned and left him.

Joseph: Mary! Wait! Give me some time. This is such a shock! Mary! Please!

Joseph ran out into the bright daylight, but she had moved swiftly and the dusty brushing of her heels against the street was already fading into the distance.

Now here they were, miles from home in Bethlehem, come to register for the Roman Census, and barely a corner of the town free in which to lay their heads for the night. Meanwhile, on the hills above the town...

The Shepherds

Jake: Luke, are all the sheep safe?

Luke: Dunno.

Eli: Well go off and check 'em Luke, make sure they're all there... Off you go, that's a good lad. Of course, you know what'll happen. He'll get to fifteen and fall asleep again. Same thing, every night, he never learns does he?

Jake: Poor lad. Shepherding's not a bad life - but I'm not sure he's cut out for it...

Luke: Lads, lads, have you seen what's going on up there?
 Eli: Not them vultures again is it?
 Jake: If it is they got very big harps and they've learnt to sing.
 Eli: Sing?
 Luke: Aye. Come with me I've got a shock for you. Look!
 Eli: My goodness! Them's not vultures - them's...
 Luke and Jake: Yes?
 Eli: Angels!
 Jake: Wow! You're kidding!
 Luke: What's an angel?
 Eli: A spiritual being believed to be a celestial attendant or messenger of the omnipotent deity.
 Jake: Pardon?
 Eli: One of God's assistants.
 Luke: Ooh listen - what's that they're singing about?
 Jake: Sounds like 'Glory to God in the forest'. Why forest?
 Luke: No, it's glory to 'God in the Highlands', must be something to do with the hill dwellers.
 Eli: No you daft dollop of sheep's doin's, they're singing highest. 'Glory to God in the highest', and if I'm not mistaken... aye, they're singing about a new baby what's been born.
 Luke: Oh great I love babies, let's go find him.
 Jake: Oh sure, that should be easy, after all there's only been about fourteen million new babies born tonight.
 Eli: Hang on they ain't finished yet, they're singing about him being... I don't believe it.
 Luke: What?
 Eli: Well, unless I'm much mistaken...
 Luke: Yes?
 Eli: Well they seem to be singing about him being in an animal trough. Poor little mite.
 Jake: Shouldn't be too difficult to spot then.
 Luke: Perhaps he's been abandoned there.
 Eli: No, listen. 'Peace on earth', that's what they're singing now. Aye, I think we'd better go find this baby, see what's going on. Come on lads. Oops! Careful where you're treading now...

The shepherds left the hillsides and, their flocks forgotten, came stumbling into the town, searching for the mysterious child. When they found him he was indeed wrapped in rags and lying in an animal trough. In hushed amazement they came in, gazed in silence then ran into the night, stopping regularly to tell everyone they met about the wonder of the new child. As one Shepherd returned home...

A Shepherd Tells His Mother

Luke: Ma, Ma! You're not going to believe this!

Luke's mother was a wise old bird. Not easily ruffled, or indeed, hoodwinked.

Mother: Luke, do you know what time it is?

Luke: Ma, come here. Come here. Look, look!

Mother: Where are you?

Luke: Out here, on the step. Look at that sky! Look at that sky!

Mother: Very nice, now do you want a snack before you turn in?

Luke: Mum! The sky!

Mother: We're all out of figs but I could do you your favourite – fish and grapes.

Luke: That star, Ma. Look - I've seen him.
 Mother: Him? Him?
 Luke: The Messiah! That's his star; he's in a stable.
 Mother: The Messiah, in a stable? Come on, Luke, you've had a hard day...
 Luke: He's a beautiful baby boy, Mum. Scrunched blue eyes and no teeth!
 Mother: Sounds like your father.
 Luke: Ma! I'm serious. He's amazing!
 Mother: And I suppose He's got a nice gold cot and a purple nightshirt with a big 'M' on the front!
 Luke: Mum! Listen, will you...
 Mother: Mind you, all this talk of babies makes me wonder about your cousin, she shouldn't have gone to register in that state. I hope she's not had it yet. She didn't need to go... Joseph's the one they want.
 Luke: Ah! That's the other thing, Mum. I've seen Mary too...
 Mother: What!
 Luke: And she is all right.
 Mother: You've seen her - in the town - in Bethlehem? She's safe then?
 Luke: Oh yes. She was in er... she was in... The stable.
 Mother: 'The Stable'? Don't think I know that one, dear, is it an inn?
 Luke: No, not exactly. It's not 'The Stable' so much as 'a stable'.
 Mother: A... stable... a stable... with cattle and sheep? And... dung! Look at your feet!
 Luke: Exactly. Sit down, Ma.

The Wise Men

Meanwhile, somewhere in the East, thousands of miles away, three wise men were watering their camels. Studying the movement of the planets they had been struck by an extraordinary phenomenon.

Balthasar: You know, I'm sure I had it here somewhere.
 Melchior: What are you looking for now?
 Balthasar: The map! I'm sure I had it, honestly. I put it in when I packed the Frankincense...
 Gaspar: Oh no, don't say you've forgotten the presents as well!
 Balthasar: No, no, of course not... look - here's the incense. Whoops! No, that's my underarm body-balm.
 Melchior: Twelve months! Twelve months we've been on the road.
 Balthasar: Eleven.
 Melchior: What?
 Balthasar: It's eleven actually, eleven months and thirty days. It's only the 24th today, 25th tomorrow, then it'll be twelve months. You know, I think we might have taken a wrong turn somewhere.
 Gaspar: How can you take a wrong turn following a star?
 Balthasar: True. At least we can rely on that star.
 Melchior: Thank goodness for that star.
 Gaspar: You can say that again, can't go wrong there...
 Melchior: Wait a minute, what are you two doing? It's this one - isn't it?
 Gaspar: Is it? I thought it was this one!
 Balthasar: No, it's this one!
 Melchior: Next time an expert in astronomy might come in handy.
 Balthasar: I think you mean astrology.
 Gaspar: Isn't it archaeology?
 Balthasar: No! Be quiet! Anyway, what do you mean - next time? There won't be a next time - this is an historic occasion - the King of kings an' all that. Which reminds me, I had a dream last night.

Melchior: Another one?

Balthasar: Actually it was very funny. You'll never guess what happened.

Melchior: Correct. I won't.

Balthasar: Oh come on, guess. You'll love it, it's hilarious.

Melchior: Okay - you dreamt that it took us a whole two years to find the King.

Balthasar: Oh, be serious... Okay I'll tell you. I dreamt... I dreamt... You'll love this... I actually dreamt that a bunch of stupid shepherds found him before we did.

Melchior: That's not funny - it may be true.

Balthasar: Oh, don't be ridiculous. This is the King we're talking about. He wouldn't make himself available to any old riff raff, would he? I mean - shepherds, they'd leave a nasty trail on his carpet. And how would they ever get in his palace. No, mate. It takes wise men to find him. Not simple folk.

Melchior: Well, perhaps we should have brought a wise man with us then?

Balthasar: Very funny. Strange dream though - it all seemed to be in a stable. Ugh, yes, I remember now. A dirty old shed, it was. Isn't it funny how dreams can be so distorted? Must've been that camel's cheese.

Melchior: Might be the truth.

Balthasar: WHAT! The King of Kings - born in a cattle shed - amongst all that... muck! What kind of king is that?

Melchior: A very unusual one, I guess. With no high and mighty aspirations – unlike one or two people I could mention.

Gaspar: Careful!

Melchior: Just explaining that's all. He obviously wants to be accessible to ordinary people.

Balthasar: Ah, but if he's that accessible, then why's it taken us twelve months to get lost behind this star. I mean that star.

Gaspar: Yes! They call us wise men.

Melchior: Ah well, there's wisdom and there's wisdom.

Balthasar: Oh well that's cleared that one up then!

Melchior: What I mean is – if he really has come for ordinary folks, then we'd better make sure we're not too wise to go looking for him. A king who comes to simple people can be a bit much for the wise to swallow...

Gaspar: But what about these gifts then? They won't be much good to a peasant king!

Melchior: Oh I think they'll be all right.

Gaspar: What? Gold, frankincense and myrrh? It's a strange mixture.

Melchior: Well... I get the feeling this is no ordinary baby.

Balthasar: You get a feeling? From a star!

Melchior: This one's different, believe me.

Gaspar: Yes but why gold, Frankenstein and myrrh?

Balthasar: Gold because he's a king.

Gaspar: And the Frankenstein?

Balthasar: Frankincense! It's what they use in temples, it's religious. And I reckon he's gonna be a great spiritual leader.

Melchior: Fair enough, but not myrrh. That's a spice for putting on dead bodies.

Balthasar: Perhaps his death will be significant.

Melchior: You're death'll be significant in a minute.

Balthasar: Come on. That star's on the move again, and I think we've got a long way to go yet...

Melchior: Isn't it this way?

Gaspar: Or this way?

Balthasar: No! Concentrate!

And so the wise men continued on their journey – a voyage across a vast continent that would take them two years and ultimately result in the death of numerous children.

Simeon and Anna – Jesus is Circumcised

When Jesus was eight days old Mary and Joseph took him to the Temple to be circumcised, as was the custom. As they stood in the Temple courts an old man named Simeon approached them, his eyes wide and sparkling with anticipation. He took the child and said,

Simeon: I have waited and waited for this moment. Like a tree growing and twisting, being battered and weathered by the storms of a lifetime – yet this moment makes it all worthwhile. Lord, I can die in peace now, now that I have seen this child. The deliverer – the saviour. Who would have thought that a tiny fragile baby like this could be the salvation for everyone? But my eyes have seen it, and still see it. A living, crying, breathing gift from God.

He held the baby aloft, his old eyes wet with tears, and then he turned to Mary and Joseph.

Simeon: This child will be a mixed blessing to you. Some will love him – others will hate him. And their hatred will be a white-hot blade piercing your souls. But it will all be for the good – no one will be able to stand before this man and pretend. No one. He is the embodiment of truth – and he will be the success and the failure of many. You are blessed.

Joseph: Blessed!

Simeon: Oh yes.

Mary: But you just predicted trouble for us...

Simeon: Not trouble – conflict – there's a difference.

At that moment an old prophetess called Anna approached. She had been living in the Temple for decades – fasting and praying.

Anna: Praise God!

Joseph: What now?

Anna: I've been in this Temple for years – but I've never seen anything like this.

Joseph: We've just brought our child to be circumcised...

Anna: Just? Just!? But this is no ordinary child – look! He's the pride of Israel – he's the child of the nation! The whole world will glory in him one day. Praise God! Look, everyone, look! The baby!

Simeon: You'll not stop her now. She's been waiting too. She'll tell everyone.

Mary: But we don't want a fuss!

Simeon: Your whole life will be a fuss from now on. This is just the beginning. God bless you both. You've made a weary man very happy.

Simeon and Anna slipped away and left them. Mary and Joseph took the boy and moved into a rented house for his early childhood. Eventually the wise men from the east came sweeping out of the night and arrived, banging on their front door with torches, servants and bags of treasure. But they made one mistake; they visited the local king and told him of the powerful new baby. Soon the streets were swimming with soldiers, the night air thick with the stench of newborn blood. King Herod sent a task force to wipe out every child under the age of two. But he failed. One baby disappeared into the night with his parents. One baby made it safely to Egypt, where he stayed until the mighty Herod was dead.