

1998 Christmas Play

Introit

Narrator Picture the scene. A dark windy night. There's no-one around at all. But keep in mind that somewhere nearby Mary and Joseph are travelling, hoping to get to Bethlehem before all the rooms are taken. Mary is expecting a baby any moment now. This is to be no ordinary baby – it will be God's own son. They know this because an angel visited both Mary and Joseph and told them all about it. But just when they were expecting to have a quiet birth at home in Nazareth, some government official came and ordered them to travel to Bethlehem to register for taxation. So shortly we will meet them on the road, but let's first meet some other characters who are also out late at night.

The scene at the start is on a wild night with no signs of life. The kings are lost and are shouting to each other from different places in the church.

King 1 Hello, Hello, is anyone out there?

King 2 Hello, who's that? Where are you?

King 3 Hello, I'm over here!

King 4 And there's a group of us over here!

Kings appear from all over the church and assemble on the stage

King 1 Well hello. I'm lost. Do you know where we are?

King 5 Not really. There's a group of us, and we are following that star (*points towards the sky*). According to him (*points at King 6*) it is supposed to be leading us to a great king about to be born.

King 6 Well, don't blame me. You read the books as well. You agreed that we should follow the star.

King 7 We've been following the same star and for the same reason, but now we're lost.

King 8 Quiet! Are we all following the same star?

All the kings nod and agree.

King 9 And we're all lost as well?

All the kings nod and agree again.

King 6 Great! At least we're not the only ones who can't follow a star.

King 7 How about we sing a song to cheer us up. I made this one up as we walked along, "We three kings of Orient are, bearing gifts we travel so far ..."

King 8 I bet it doesn't say anything about getting lost!

King 9 At least it will cheer us up – look at those people over there (*points towards congregation*). Let's see if they can help.

During song, kings walk around aisles shaking hands with members of the congregation. They end up at the back and wait.

Carol **We three kings ...**

Later that night ...

Narrator Now we are about to meet Mary and Joseph. They are not too far from Bethlehem, but the journey is not easy.

The same late night in the deserted countryside. Mary and Joseph come up the aisle from the back during the wind sounds. During the dialogue the kings should move forward.

Joseph It's a rough night. Are you all right?

Mary I'm fine, but I am looking forward to arriving in Bethlehem.

Joseph There's no sign of the lights yet, but it shouldn't be too far now.

Mary I do hope there will be a room for us — our baby won't be long coming.

Joseph I am sure that God will provide something suitable for us. He has taken great care of us since the Angel told us that we are to have His Son. He has given me a lot of strength to cope.

Mary I often think about what the angel said to me, about how we shouldn't be afraid.

Joseph Quiet! There are some people coming towards us.

Kings come onto stage with a lot of noise, and gather near Mary and Joseph.

King 10 Hello, don't be worried, we're friendly enough.

King 11 We're just lost.

Joseph Well, it's a dark and windy night, easy enough to get lost I guess. Where are you heading to.

King 12 We're not sure. We're following that star. Is there a city somewhere near? We're looking for a king that is about to be born.

King 13 Apparently he is going to be King of the Jews, and we have come to worship Him. I guess we should be looking for Jerusalem.

Joseph Well, you are on the right road. We passed it a few hours ago. We are heading for Bethlehem ourselves.

King 14 Ah yes, we passed through Bethlehem an hour or so ago.

King 15 Before we got lost!

King 10 It's very busy there, some sort of government thing. Lot's of people. I was actually with some friends and they decided to stay the night. I thought they took over the last empty inn.

King 16 (*looking at Mary*) And you're close to having a baby, aren't you?

Mary That's right. A very special baby. (*Turns to Joseph*) Oh, I do hope we aren't going to be too late to get a room.

Joseph Please don't worry – as I said, I am sure it will be all right.

King 17 You had better go. Thanks for putting us straight about how to get to Jerusalem.

Joseph Yes, we had better get on. Good luck, I hope you find your new King.

Mary and Joseph leave by the side chapel.

King 18 Awfully nice people. I hope they find somewhere to stay.

King 12 Not much we can do about it. We had better be getting along ourselves.

- King 10** Funny how they are expecting a baby when we are looking for a baby King. The star seemed very close – I wonder ...
- King 12** Stop wondering! The King of the Jews will be born in a palace.
- King 19** And He wouldn't be born in a small town like Bethlehem.
Kings move off and during the song they slowly walk to the back.
- Carol** **Oh little town of Bethlehem**

Even later, near some shepherds

- Narrator** The night is not completely deserted. We are now going to meet some shepherds watching their sheep. So far everything is normal, but soon their lives will not be the same again.
The same late night in the deserted countryside. The shepherds should assemble on the stage. Shepherd 1 then appears on the stage from behind.
- Shepherd 1** Everything looks okay. The sheep seem happy enough.
- Shepherd 2** They don't seem to feel the cold.
- Shepherd 3** Nor would I if I had a nice furry coat like them!
- Shepherd 4** Am I seeing things, or is that a group of kings coming towards us.
- Shepherd 1** Well, I'll wash my socks by night! Have you ever seen anything like that? (*Calls out to the kings*) Hello over there, are you okay?
The kings quickly walk down towards the front.
- King 10** Well, hello.
- King 7** Don't tell them we're lost – we are supposed to be wise kings, and they're only shepherds.
- King 6** Don't be silly. They may know the way in these parts.
- King 8** I don't understand how we got lost so quickly after that nice chap and his wife told us where to go.
- King 9** The star isn't being much help to us now. Since we got here it hasn't moved, seems stuck over Bethlehem. Goodness knows why it can't lead us on to Jerusalem.
- Shepherd 3** Are you guys lost?
- Kings 11,15** Nope!
- Other Kings** Yep!
- Shepherd 4** Where are you heading?
- King 10** Jerusalem we think. We have been following that star because she (*points to King 13*) thinks it will lead us to a new King to be born to the Jews.
- King 13** Well you think so too! The trouble is that the star has led us here from a long way away, quite good really, but now it seems to have stopped. We think we ought to be looking for Jerusalem.
- Shepherd 2** A new King, cool! Better than the present one I am sure.

- Shepherd 1** You're not too far lost. Keep on heading in that direction (*points to back of stage*) and you will get there soon enough.
- King 12** Thanks. I'm sure that we won't get too lost now. A nice chap and his wife gave us some instructions back there, and I don't know how we lost our way so quickly.
- Shepherd 2** That's right. They passed us a while ago. Really nice people I thought, but the poor lass looks as if she is about to have a baby.
- King 14** Yes, that's them.
- King 17** And they are heading for Bethlehem.
- King 12** And that's where the star has stopped.
- King 18** Do you think that they know something we don't!
- King 7** Never mind – we had better be on our way. (*Looks at shepherds*) Thanks – keep yourself warm now.
- All Kings** Thanks
Kings leave through the side chapel.
- Shepherd 3** That was really cool, meeting some real kings.
- Shepherd 4** Get on, you. They weren't real kings. Real kings wouldn't get lost.
- Shepherd 1** But they looked so rich. Did you see the gifts they were bringing?
Shepherds turn their backs to the congregation and sit down. Fade in and out sheep sounds.
- Narrator** So the kings head for Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph head for Bethlehem, and the shepherds make themselves comfortable for the night. When Mary and Joseph arrive in Bethlehem they find their worries confirmed: there are no rooms left. A kindly innkeeper offers them his stable, which they accept because there was no other room.
- Carol** **As with gladness men of old**

Jerusalem in the early hours of the morning

- Narrator** Now we follow the Kings. They have arrived in Jerusalem, and they have gone straight to Herod's palace. The arrival of a large group of Kings from the East creates panic in Herod's palace – after all, they have to appear ready to welcome such important visitors, even if they have rushed out of bed and are still wearing their pyjamas!
A group of Advisors (still in their pyjamas!) is gathered around a table looking at scrolls. Another advisor rushes in.
- Advisor 1** Quick everyone, here they come.
Kings are led in by a second Advisor. The other Advisors bow.
- King 6** Many thanks for agreeing to see us.
- Advisor 2** That's fine. Apparently you are looking for someone who is about to be born as King of the Jews.

- King 7** Yes, we have been following a star that has told us that a new King is to be born, and we have come to worship Him.
- Advisor 3** Don't you know that Herod is the King?
- King 8** Yes, but he was most interested, and said that you would be able to work out where this new King is to be born.
- Advisor 4** Herod knows nothing. He thinks he is the king of the Jews, but if he knew anything at all about the Law of Moses and the prophets he would know who this new King is.
- Advisor 5** It's all in these scrolls. Look here (*they look over the table*). Isaiah tells us that we will be given a child who will be called "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace", and who will reign for ever with justice and righteousness.
- Advisor 1** And Isaiah tells us that this King will suffer for our sins, like a lamb taken to slaughter.
- Advisor 2** Jeremiah here tells us that God will give a special King from the line of David, who will save our nation.
- Advisor 3** Herod doesn't come from the line of David.
- Advisor 4** The prophet Zechariah tells us a lot about this King. He will be so humble that He will come riding on a donkey, and He will be sold for thirty pieces of silver. We will also mourn for Him, because he is going to be killed by His people.
- Advisor 5** And Isaiah tells us that He will die for our sins, so that God will be able to forgive us all.
- Advisor 2** The prophet Jeremiah tells us that because of this God will be able to make a new promise to us, not like the promise we have now. We understand this to mean that religion will change. No more following rule after rule which no-one can keep – God is promising to put His Spirit within us to help us.
- Advisor 3** And finally, the answer to your question is given here by the prophet Micah – the King will be born in Bethlehem.
- King 9** Bethlehem! Of course! We came through Bethlehem, and the star seemed not to move after that.
- King 6** Come on, let's get back there.
- Advisor 3** Won't you stay the night?
- King 7** No, we had better not. We are so close now.
- Advisor 4** Herod said that when you find the King you are to come back and let us know where he is.
- King 8** Of course, you have been most helpful. Thank you.
- Advisor 5** You're welcome. Now we are off back to bed.
- King 9** We'll see you on the way back.
- First the kings, and then the advisors, leave the stage.*

Back in the fields

- Narrator** The kings are finally on their way, and we now return to the shepherds.
- The scene takes us back to the shepherds. The angels gather at the back of the church.*

Shepherd 1 I can't stop thinking about those kings. This will be a night to remember.

Shepherd 2 I wonder how they got on. They didn't come back in any case!

Shepherd 3 Guys, look at the star. It's getting brighter. What's happening?

Angel Gabriel steps forward. The shepherds fall to the ground.

Gabriel Don't be afraid. I have some great news. There is a new King born today, one who will be the Saviour, Christ the Lord, in Bethlehem. Go quickly, quickly. You will find him lying in a manger.

Angel choir appears from all sides and assembles to sing.

Song **Hosannah**

Shepherd 5 Do you think that this is the baby of that nice couple we met earlier on the road?

Shepherd 6 Come on, let's find out.

Stable scene

Cast continues to sing "Hosannah" whilst the stable scene is assembled. Once it has been assembled the Kings appear from the back. The first lines come from the back.

King 8 Look, the star is directly over that place where all the light is coming from.

Kings 11,15 Quick, quick!

The kings rush to the front of the stage.

King 13 Oh no, look, those shepherds! They got here before us!

King 9 And look who the parents are – those nice people who told us the way to Jerusalem.

The kings stop before they get too close. They bow, and one by one present their gifts at the feet of Mary and Joseph and then sit around the shepherds.

Narrator And so Jesus, the Son of God, came into this world – worshipped by wise men and shepherds, exalted by the angels, and feared by the powers of this world. And we will now conclude our presentation by singing a new song – please join in the chorus.

Song **Come on and look for the King**