

The Events surrounding the Birth of Jesus
First performed at South Brisbane Ecclesia Sunday School 2010

Scene 1 Zechariah in the Temple

Scene backdrop: In Temple

Narrator 1: There was a priest named Zechariah, he had a wife called Elizabeth. They were upright in the sight of God. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well on in years.

Narrator 2: Once when it was Zechariah's turn to serve as priest, he was chosen by lot, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

Zechariah: *(enters, prays before altar, then pours oil)*

Narrator 1: When the time for burning the incense came, an angel of the LORD appeared to Zechariah, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

Angel 1: *(appears on right side of altar)*

Zechariah: *(is startled and jumps with fright)*

Angel 1: Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.

Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God.

Zechariah : How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well on in years.

Angel 1: I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."

Zechariah: *(bows down to ground)*

Narrator 1: When his time of service was completed, Zechariah returned home. After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion.

Scene 2 Mary & Gabriel

Scene backdrop: In garden

Narrator 1: In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

Mary: *(standing doing spindling)*

Angel 1: Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."

Mary: *(looks puzzled)*

Narrator 1: Mary was troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

Angel 1: Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end."

Mary: How will this be, since I am a virgin.

Angel 1: The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.

Mary: I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said. *(kneels)*
(angel exits)

Narrator 1: At that time, Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, to the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth.
(packs her bag and leaves stage)

Scene 3 Mary & Elizabeth

Scene backdrop: Zechariah & Elizabeth's Home

Mary: Knock, knock.

Elizabeth: Mary ! *(holds her pregnant tummy)*

Narrator 2: When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed:

Elizabeth: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!
But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.
Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

Mary: My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants for ever, even as he said to our fathers.

Narrator 2: Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

(Mary hugs Elizabeth, grabs her bag, and leaves waving goodbye).

(A pregnant Elizabeth wanders off stage, and then shortly reappears without the pregnant tummy, with a baby in her arms)

Narrator 2: When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbours and family were so happy for her *(enter Zechariah and other family members)*

And when it came time to name the child they were going to name him after his father Zechariah,

Relative 1: He's so cute, he looks just like you Zechariah.

Relative 2: You will have to call him Zechariah

Elizabeth: No! He is to be called John.

Relative 1: There is no-one among your relatives who has that name.

Relative 2: What do you think Zechariah ? Shouldn't he be called after you?

Zechariah: *(gestures for writing tablet – family member passes it to him - he writes on it)*

Narrator 1: Zechariah wrote "His name is John". Then immediately he began to be able to speak and he praised God

Zechariah: Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.

Narrator 1: The neighbours were all filled with awe, and everyone in the hill country of Judea talked about all these things.

Relative 3: Look ! It's a miracle – Zechariah can speak again ! What is this child going to be ?

Relative 4: Yes, the Lord's hand is with him. What will he be ?

Scene 5 Joseph and Gabriel

Scene backdrop: Bedroom

Narrator 1: Now Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

Joseph : *(walking around talking with himself, very "in shock")*

What do I do.....what do I do. If I say anything, Mary will be publicly disgraced... she may even be stoned....I will just divorce her quietly...that should prevent her being hurt... *(kneels and prays)* O Lord, you know our hearts and minds, and you know the truth. Please help me to do the right thing in this situation with Mary...Amen.

(lies down to sleep)

Narrator 1: After Joseph had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

Angel 1: *(enters)* Joseph !

Joseph: *(mumbles in his sleep)*

Angel 1: Joseph. Son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

(angel disappears, Joseph stays asleep)

Narrator 1: When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son.

Scene 6 Mary & Joseph in Bethlehem

Scene Backdrop: Village streets

Narrator 2: In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

(Mary and Joseph walk in, Mary has big tummy and leaning heavily on Joseph)

Joseph: Mary, we will hopefully find somewhere to rest soon.

Mary: Yes – I don't think I can walk much further.

Joseph: Knock Knock

Innkeeper 1: Yes, hello

Joseph: Have you any room for the night ?

Innkeeper 1: Sorry, we're all full. Everyone is in Bethlehem for the census.

Joseph: Thank you. (door closes – he returns to Mary)

Mary: That was our third try. Oh Joseph, I am so tired and sore.

Joseph: Look, here's another place. Knock knock.

Innkeeper 2: No room left, Sorry.

Joseph: Oh

Mary: Let's pray – God knows our needs, but let's just ask him to help us.

Joseph: Yes of course.

(Mary and Joseph bow their heads)

O Lord. We are your children, you know our needs. Please Father help us find somewhere to stay, so that Mary can be comfortable, and please Lord, if your son is to be born tonight, Please be with us. Amen

Right, here's the next inn. Let's try here.

Knock knock.

Innkeeper 3: Hello, what may I do for you young couple ?

Joseph: We are in need of a room

InnK 3: I am so sorry, I would love to give your poor wife a bed to rest in, but we have none. We are completely booked out.

Joseph: Everywhere is full. Where can we go ?

InnK3: Well.....if you don't mind, I would be happy for you to use my stable. You could make a bed with the straw in there.

Joseph: Thank you that would be wonderful. Please show us the way.

(Mary, Joseph slowly follow the innkeeper).

Narrator 1: While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born. Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths, and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Scene 7 Shepherds & Angels

Scene backdrop: 1. Fields at night with sheep 2.Stable Song: Red Book 42 - 1st and last verse

Shepherds: *(standing with crooks in hand, talking together)*

Narrator 2: And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. *(grab each other, shaking,)*

Angel 2: Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Narrator 2: Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

Angels: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.

(song)

Narrator 2: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

Shepherd 1: Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

(other shepherds nod, and all walk off).

Narrator: So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

On stage: *(Nativity scene with M, J, baby, shepherds) Song 'Away in a Manger' (All)*

Narrator 2: When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Scene 8 Simeon, Anna and Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus in Temple

Scene Backdrop: Temple

Narrator 1: On the eighth day, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

Narrator 2: When the time of their purification, about 40 days was over, Joseph and Mary took baby Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

(Mary & Joseph stand in temple, looking around)

Narrator 1: Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

Simeon: Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

Narrator 1: Mary & Joseph marvelled at what was said about him.

There was also a prophetess, Anna, she was very old. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying.

Anna: *(Coming up to them – talks to Simeon, M, J, and then holds baby.)*

Narrator 2: Anna gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

Scene 9: _____ Magi

Scene Backdrop: 1. Herod's court 2. Home of Joseph.

Narrator: Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,

(curtains are closed. Herod is standing in front of stage)

Magi 1: *(bows low before Herod)* "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

Herod: What is this? I have not heard about it ?

Narrator: When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And he called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

Herod: Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.

Magi: *(bow and leave Herod)*

Narrator: After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

(curtains open to show Mary and Joseph in their home)

Magi 3: Knock knock

Joseph: Yes, hello. How may I help you ?

Magi 2: We are from the east. We have been looking for the one who has been born king of the Jews. We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.

(Magi enter and bow down before Mary and baby Jesus.)

Joseph: This is my wife Mary, and here is the Son of the Most High, born to my wife when she was a virgin.

Magi 1: We have come to worship the Son of the Most High God. We have gifts. Here is a gift of gold. *(steps forward and places gift and kneels down)*

Mary: Thank you

Magi 2: Here is a gift of incense. *(steps forward and places gift and kneels down)*

Mary: Thank you.

Magi 3: And here is a gift of myrrh. *(steps forward and places gift and kneels down)*

Mary: Thankyou. May our Lord bless you.

Narrator: And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, the Magi returned to their country by another route.

(Magi leave)

Mary: Well, that is something to remember. But for now, it 's bedtime Jesus.

(Mary, Jesus, Joseph lie down)

Scene 10: Angel tells Mary and Joseph to Flee to Egypt.

Mary and Joseph and Jesus are asleep. Joseph is restless in his sleep.

Narrator 1: When the Magi had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream

Angel 2: Get up !

Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him. *(angel exits)*

Joseph: *(sits up)* Mary. *(goes over to her and wakes her up)* Mary. An angel of the Lord has just told me in a dream to get up, and take you and Jesus to Egypt. Herod is going to try and kill Jesus.

Mary: What !

Joseph: Come Mary, Up. Pack only what we absolutely need. I'll pack the gifts from the Magi. We must leave right now.

Mary and Joseph quickly pack one bag. Joseph carries it. Mary picks up Jesus. They leave.

Narrator 1: And so, Jesus lived in Egypt with his parents until Herod died. Then an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and told him to

Narrator 2: Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel , for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead.

Narrator 1: So Joseph took Jesus and Mary back to Israel. But when he heard that Herod's son was ruling in Judea, he was afraid to go there. He was warned in another dream to withdraw from that area, and so they went and lived in a town called Nazareth.

Narrator 2: And the child Jesus grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

Cast

Narrator 1 –

Narrator 2-

Zechariah –

Elizabeth –

Angel 1 –

Angel 2 –

Joseph –

Mary –

Relative 1 –

Relative 2 –

Relative 3 –

Relative 4 –

Innkeeper 1 –

Innkeeper 2-

Innkeeper 3 –

Shepherd 1 –

Shepherds –

Simeon –

Anna –

Magi 1 –

Magi 2 –

Magi 3 –

Herod –

Angels –

Relatives -