

A Family Christmas Play

Act 1: John the Baptist, the Announcer of Jesus

Characters: Zecharias, another priest named Elam who is a friend of Zecharias, Gabriel, Worshipper 1, Worshipper 2, Worshipper 3, Elizabeth, Friends and Neighbors

Props: Priestly garment, bowl holding incense, altar of incense, flashlight (to illuminate Gabriel)

Script:

Scene 1	Zechariah and Elam
<i>Actors</i>	<i>Zechariah, Elam</i>
<i>Props</i>	<i>Priestly trappings/garments</i>
<i>Scene setup</i>	<i>Zechariah is getting ready to go into the Temple and offer incense, and is talking with his fellow-priest Elam as he does so.</i>
NARRATOR	Priest Zechariah was on duty at the Temple, and God had caused the casting of lots, like rolling dice, to come out that Zechariah would get his once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to go into the Holy Place and offer incense for the people.
ZECHARIAH (to Elam)	Elam, I'm nervous! What if I mess up in there? I'll probably drop dead or something!
ELAM	Don't be so dramatic Zech. Priests have been going in there to burn incense every day for hundreds of years and no one has dropped dead yet. Just follow the procedure and you'll be fine.
ZECHARIAH	I won't be fine! I'm not brave, I'm nervous! What if I forget something!

ELAM	Hey buddy, we'll all be outside praying for you; and besides, you've been trained for this all your life. You'll do the right thing. Just go in there, put the incense on the altar, let its smoke start to rise, say your prayer, and get out of there... simple.
ZECHARIAH	That's easy for you to say Elam; your turn hasn't yet come up to do it.
ELAM	Well, if you don't want to, just tell the High Priest. There's lots more of us just waiting for our turn -- any of us would be thrilled to have the chance to do what Yahweh has chosen you to do today.
ZECHARIAH	I know, I know; and I want to do it -- I'm just scared, that's all.
ELAM	<i>(patting Zechariah on the shoulder)</i> . You'll be fine Zech, you'll see.

Scene 2	Zechariah and Gabriel
<i>Actors</i>	<i>Zechariah, Gabriel, Worshipper 1, Worshipper 2, Worshipper 3</i>
<i>Props</i>	<i>Alter of incense, flashlight</i>
<i>Scene setup</i>	<i>Zechariah is entering the Temple's Holy Place to offer incense on the incense altar, outside in the Temple court are worshippers. Gabriel is at stage right ready to appear, and the flashlight person is positioned to illuminate Gabriel.</i>

NARRATOR	<i>(in a hushed voice)</i> Priest Zechariah, still nervous, enters the temple’s Holy Place with his incense.
ZECHARIAH	<i>(slowly enters the temple, crosses to the altar of incense, sprinkles incense on it, then bows down on one knee beside the altar and says a prayer for the people)</i> Oh Yahweh, God most high, please let this incense be a pleasing symbol to you of the prayers of Israel rising to You now. Oh Yahweh, please overlook our sinfulness and turn your face and your heart toward your chosen people, who now are praying for your favor and glory. Amen.
GABRIEL	<i>(while Zechariah is praying Gabriel enters from stage right, and stands beside the altar. A bright flashlight is shined on his body, leaving his head and face in shadow. When Zechariah finishes praying he opens his eyes and stands up to leave -- when he sees the angel standing next to the altar -- Zechariah clutches his chest in terror when Gabriel speaks).</i> [Luke 1:13-17 (NIV)] “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

	<p>with the Holy Spirit even from birth. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."</p>
ZECHARIAH	<p>Is this true? This is too amazing to be true! My wife and I are way too old to have children. We couldn't have children when we were lots younger, and we sure can't have children now. How can you convince me that what you said will happen?</p>
GABRIEL	<p><i>(after a long pause while Gabriel sternly stares at Zechariah, then announces with gravity and sternness, and a little anger).</i> [Luke 1:19-20 (NIV)] "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."</p>
NARRATOR	<p>At that instant Zechariah could neither speak nor hear. While this is going on, the crowd of worshippers in the Temples outer court are waiting for the priest to come out, and wondering why it is taking him so long.</p>

ZECHARIAH	<i>(Zechariah starts trying to speak. He opens his mouth and tries several times to speak but nothing comes out except maybe wheezing or a faint grunting sound, but no words. While this is going on the flashlight is turned off and Gabriel exits stage right. Zechariah's attempts to speak continue during the dialog between the worshippers)</i>
WORSHIPPER 1	What's taking him so long? No one has ever been in there so long before? Do you think he's all right?
WORSHIPPER 2	I don't know! He could be dead or something! Remember when Yahweh killed Nadab and Abihu for offering unauthorized fire?
WORSHIPPER 3	Well, fortunately if that happens tomorrow's priest can drag his body out of there -- oh wait! Here he comes now!
ZECHARIAH	<i>(After trying several times, Zechariah slowly leaves the Temple's Holy Place. When he gets to the worshippers they ask him what's wrong but he can't hear them, nor can say anything. He makes motions pointing to his mouth and throat and ears, and then motions to "shoo them away", and he leaves them.)</i>
WORSHIPPERS	<i>(As they leave they talk to each other, frustrated by Zechariah's bizarre behavior)</i> Worshipper 1: What's gotten into him?

	<p>Worshipper 2: Who knows? You'd think a priest would be more polite than not answering us.</p> <p>Worshipper 3: It looked like something was wrong with him. He looked like he'd seen a ghost or something.</p>
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Scene 3	Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Neighbors at John's Circumcision
<i>Actors</i>	<i>Zechariah, Elizabeth, Neighbors</i>
<i>Props</i>	<i>2 smart phones, one for a neighbor and one for John. The phones need to not be on silence so their ringing/beeping can be heard when they receive text messages. Baby crying sound track file to play from the Prop's phone.</i>
<i>Scene Setup</i>	<i>Elizabeth and neighbors are talking in the foreground, the baby, offstage, will start crying as the Narrator speaks; Zechariah is sitting off by himself in a chair, not a part of the conversation because he can't hear or speak.</i>
NARRATOR	Priest Zechariah finished his duties in Jerusalem and returned to his home in the hill country of Judea. Soon his wife Elizabeth was pregnant, and nine months later their son was born. This entire time Zechariah could neither speak nor hear. Eight days after John's birth neighbors gather with the family for the baby's circumcision and naming ceremony. <i>(Prop starts the baby crying soundtrack)</i>

NEIGHBOR 1 to other neighbors	What are they going to name him? Zechariah, after his father?
NEIGHBOR 2	Probably so. That's traditional after all.
NEIGHBOR 1 to Elizabeth	Lizzie, is he to be named Zechariah?
ELIZABETH	His name is John.
NEIGHBOR 2	<i>(shocked and indignant)</i> What! No one in your family is named John! You can't name him John! It just isn't done!
ELIZABETH	<i>(tired and not wanting to argue)</i> Ask Zechariah, he'll tell you.
NEIGHBOR 2	How? He obviously can't hear, and he hasn't said a thing ever since he returned from Jerusalem months ago!
ELIZABETH	<i>(frustrated she has to state the obvious)</i> Write him a note silly.
NEIGHBOR 2	Anyone got a pencil? <i>(Prop fades out the baby crying soundtrack)</i>
NEIGHBOR 1	Just text him.
NEIGHBOR 2	Oh, yeah. <i>(writes a text to John. John's phone rings/beeps when the text arrives.)</i>
JOHN	<i>(looks down, reads the text, sends a text back)</i>
NEIGHBOR 2	<i>(receives the text, reads it. With a sense of wonder and amazement the neighbor says to the others).</i> Zechariah says his name is John.

ZECHARIAH	<p><i>(Jumps up and exclaims)</i>. [Luke 1:68-79 (NIV)]</p> <p>“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people! He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us-- to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham, to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. <i>(turning to the baby)</i> And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”</p>
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Act 2: Mary Gets Pregnant With Jesus

Scene 1	Mary and Gabriel
<i>Actors</i>	Mary, Gabriel, Joseph, Joseph's Mother
<i>Props</i>	<i>Chair, bed, flashlight to illuminate Gabriel</i>
<i>Scene setup</i>	<i>Mary is sitting sewing. Gabriel is at stage right but not yet illuminated by the flashlight.</i>
NARRATOR	Six months after Elizabeth had gotten pregnant with John, the angel Gabriel appeared to an unmarried teenaged girl named Mary.
GABRIEL	<i>(enters stage right, flashlight is turned on. Mary, looking down at her sewing sees the light out of the corner of her eye, looks up and is startled to see Gabriel standing there). [Luke 1:28 (NIV)]</i> "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you!"
GABRIEL	<i>(Mary's eyes go wide and she puts her hand to her mouth in astonishment. Gabriel continues).</i> [Luke 1:30-33 (NIV)] "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor 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 forever; his kingdom will never end."
MARY	OK, I understand, and I don't doubt it will happen -- but how will it be done? I'm not yet married?

GABRIEL	This isn't going to need a husband. God is going to make you pregnant by a miracle. God is sending through you the deliverer he promised at the beginning. One who would come to earth by woman, who would destroy Satan. Here is how God will do this. 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. You'll be encouraged to know God is already doing miracles. Your old cousin Elizabeth is already six months pregnant with a son. Nothing is impossible with God.
MARY	I am the Lord's servant. May it all happen to me just as you have said.
<i>(prop man)</i>	<i>The flashlight is extinguished and Gabriel exits stage right</i>

Scene 2	Joseph and Gabriel
<i>Actors</i>	<i>Joseph, Gabriel, Joseph's Mother</i>
<i>Props</i>	<i>Bed, flashlight</i>
<i>Scene setup</i>	<i>Joseph is asleep in bed. Gabriel is at stage right but not yet illuminated by the flashlight.</i>
NARRATOR	Sometime later as Mary was alone in the garden, on her knees pulling weeds and listening to a meadowlark chirping in the olive tree in the corner of the garden, she gradually noticed a change. The first thing she noticed was the meadowlark had stopped singing. She couldn't remember when that had happened -- it couldn't

have been too long, maybe just a few minutes ago. That's when she noticed the normal background sounds of the garden, the crickets chirping and the frogs croaking in the distant pond -- all those sounds were gone also! Paying more attention now she listened for the gentle shushing of the breeze through the bushes and trees -- and realized everything was silent. It was like a great hush had fallen over the world. She didn't stand up, she didn't want to move or breathe. She thought she should be afraid, but she wasn't. She felt herself go ever so still... waiting... waiting... for what she didn't know. She just knew she had to be still... and wait. Time passed, not long, just a bit; but it felt different. It felt like both a short time, and a very long time. Gradually she realized the shadow of her kneeling form was sharper than other shadows, and the shadow gradually became sharper still, as if she alone was illuminated from above by a light more pure, more sharp, than all the other lights. And she felt a weight settle on her. It was heavy and light all at once. It eased down on her like the world's heaviest, softest, warmest blanket -- and yet its touch, draping her body and spirit all at once, was the most pure, deep sense of love she had ever known; a sense of being loved she had never imagined could be felt. She drifted, enfolded in that all encompassing love, and without thinking

	<p>understood it was Yahweh Himself holding her. She never wanted it to end. She was perfectly at peace, perfectly, secure, perfectly cradled in His arms, perfectly loved. The next thing she realized was that it was over. A tear drop hitting her knee brought her back to the present. She was still kneeling in the turnip row, the meadowlark was singing again, and she could hear the frogs, and the bees, and the sound of the gentle breeze. And she knew. She knew what was different. He was with her. He was in her. God Himself, the Son of the Most High, now entering His world -- through her. She thought again to herself, I am the Lord's servant. May it be done to me as the angel said.</p>
NARRATOR	<p>Later that month Mary told Joseph, her fiancé, that she was pregnant. Joseph was shocked and hurt. Mary's explanation was so fantastic and amazing that she didn't tell him. When Joseph asked Mary who the father was she said, "No one. God is the father." Needless to say, Joseph didn't know how to answer that so he just left. He figured Mary didn't want him anymore; but since he still loved her he decided to take her to some relatives, divorce her in secret, and arrange for her to live with them. That way her reputation in their Galilee village wouldn't be ruined, or worse. That night he went to bed with a heavy heart.</p>

GABRIEL	<i>(Joseph asleep in bed. Gabriel enters stage right, moves next to the bed, and the flashlight illuminates him).</i> [Matthew 1:20-23 (NIV)] "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."
JOSEPH	<i>(In the morning Joseph wakes up and comes to breakfast, where he encounters his mother.</i>
JOSEPH'S MOM	Good morning Son. How did you sleep?
JOSEPH	<i>(sits down at the table, thoughtful, pondering his dream)</i> It was weird Mom. I had the strangest dream.
MOM	What was it?
JOSEPH	Well, you know how I've been trying to figure out what to do about Mary, her being pregnant and all?
MOM	Yes, your Dad and I are supposed to meet with your uncle tomorrow to finalize arrangements for the divorce.
JOSEPH	Well, what I didn't tell you before was when Mary told me she was pregnant and I asked her who the father was, she said it was no man, only God, and that she's still a virgin.
MOM	Well honey, she's probably so ashamed, that was the best thing she could come up with at the time. She's made a huge mistake that'll change

	her life forever, and we're all just trying to do the kindest thing for her without bringing our whole family down in disgrace.
JOSEPH	<i>(more heated, jumps up)</i> That's the thing Mom... it's true! That's what my dream was about!
MOM	Calm down Joseph! Sit down! <i>(Joseph sits, she sits too)</i> Now, tell me about this dream.
JOSEPH	First off, you know how most dreams, if you remember them at all, are sort of vague, hazy, jumbled memories?
MOM	Yes, that's how I experience dreams -- I think that's how dreams work.
JOSEPH	<i>(getting heated again)</i> Not this one Mom! Everything about this dream is vivid and precise, as if I'm seeing it and reliving it right now exactly as I lived it last night! God's angel Gabriel, did you ever think the Gabriel the prophet Daniel wrote about was still around? Well, he is! And he's scary! Anyhow, he told me just what Mary had told me, that her baby is from God... <u>is</u> God! The baby is who Isaiah prophesied would come, Immanuel, with us is the God! Anyhow, Gabriel told me to go ahead and marry Mary and begin living with her.
MOM	<i>(stunned, quiet)</i> What are you going to name this child?
JOSEPH	Jesus. The angel said to name the child Jesus, Yeshua, God saves.
MOM	So what are you going to do now?

JOSEPH	I'm going to go see Mary this morning and tell her what happened. This week, before Sabbath, I'm going to finish our rooms. Next week, first thing after Sabbath, I'm going to bring Mary home to be with me as my wife. She said she's about a month pregnant so if anybody asks I'll just say the baby is God's, which is the truth -- and of course they'll all think he is mine. That's OK, I'll do my best to protect this child and raise him as his Dad -- which will be interesting because I think he's God, my God.
NARRATOR	Joseph 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. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Act 3: Bethlehem

Characters: Joseph, Mary, innkeeper, shepherds, angel, heavenly host

Props: door, manger, cloths, sheep flashlight

Scene 1	Arrival at Bethlehem
<i>Actors</i>	<i>Joseph, Mary, Innkeeper</i>
<i>Props</i>	<i>doorway, manger, blankets/cloths</i>
<i>Scene setup</i>	<i>Joseph and Mary have just completed their journey to Bethlehem, and are about to knock on the door at one of the inns.</i>
NARRATOR	Joseph and Mary have just completed their 80 mile journey from Nazareth, in Galilee, to Bethlehem, 15 miles south of Jerusalem.
JOSEPH	Hey Honey, how're you doing?
MARY	Glad to get off that donkey! Between his sharp backbone and Jesus running laps in my belly I don't know if I can walk!
JOSEPH	Come on, I'll help you. Just a few steps more and we'll get a room at the Inn.
JOSEPH	<i>(knocks on the door, which the innkeeper opens)</i> Hello Sir, may we rent a room?
INNKEEPER	I'm sorry Sir, we're full; it's the census, you know -- all full. <i>(Mary slumps down, sits on the ground at Joseph's feet, obviously exhausted and not feeling well)</i>
JOSEPH	<i>(agitated, worried)</i> What about the other inns, do you think we'll have a chance with any of them?

INNKEEPER	<p>I can tell you right now, both of them are full too. One's owned by my cousin, and one by a friend. All three of our inns have been full for days, and people are still arriving every day. They're pitching tents in the village square and in some fields on the south side of town. I'm really sorry - - you can blame Caesar Augustus for this mess!</p> <p><i>(Mary groans)</i></p> <p>What's wrong with your wife? It isn't contagious is it?</p>
JOSEPH	<p>No Sir. She's pregnant, and I'm afraid she's nearing the time to give birth. We don't have a tent, and I'm afraid if I don't get her into some shelter she's going to have her baby on your doorstep.</p>
INNKEEPER	<p>Look, the only shelter no one's claimed that I know of is the stable behind the inn. It's a cave really, but there aren't too many animals there at the moment. If you want to at least get something over your head, you two could camp out there.</p>
JOSEPH	<p>I appreciate that Sir. We'll go there.</p> <p><i>(to Mary, helping her up)</i> Come on Mary, lets find this stable and get you off your feet. <i>(Joseph and Mary exit stage left)</i></p>

Scene 2	Jesus' Birth
<i>Actors</i>	<i>Joseph, Mary</i>
<i>Props</i>	<i>manger, blankets/cloths, a hay bale</i>
<i>Scene setup</i>	<i>Joseph and Mary entering the stable.</i>
JOSEPH	<i>(helping Mary to enter the stable, helping her to lie down).</i> Here it is, home sweet home!
MARY	<i>(exhausted, not feeling well)</i> Yuck! It smells like, you know... animals and stuff!
JOSEPH	<i>(trying to be cheerful)</i> Well, it's their home too! Hopefully it'll only be for this one night. We're on the Inn's waiting list. When the census is finished and folks start to clear out, we can get a room; hopefully before Jesus comes.
MARY	<i>(wincing)</i> I don't think that's going to happen Joseph.
JOSEPH	Why not?
MARY	Because He's coming now!
JOSEPH	<i>(agitated)</i> Are you sure? Now?
MARY	<i>(resigned)</i> Yes Joseph, I'm sure; Jesus is coming tonight, and the way things feel, He's coming fairly soon. Please get a fire started and clean out that manger, we'll make that His crib.
JOSEPH	<i>(frantically rushing around trying to get things ready, talking to himself)</i> A fine husband you are Joseph! Can't even take care of your wife in her time of need! And what about Jesus! Lord of everything, should be born in a palace, should be

	treated like Solomon, but no! He's being born here! And it's all your fault! What a mess!
MARY	<i>(panting, in labor)</i> Joseph, that doesn't help! Please calm down. Besides, Jesus is God. If Yahweh wanted him born in Herod's palace in Jerusalem, do you think anything on earth could have stopped it? It's obvious, Yahweh wants His Son to be born here, in this stable, and right now! <i>(she goes into hard labor and the scene ends)</i>

Scene 3	Shepherds, Jesus' First Worshippers
<i>Actors</i>	<i>Joseph, Mary, Shepherds, Angel, Angelic Host</i>
<i>Props</i>	<i>Sheep, sheep sounds file on Prop's smart phone, flashlights</i>
<i>Scene setup</i>	<i>Off to the side Joseph, Mary, and Jesus are in the stable; Jesus is in the manger. At center stage the shepherds are standing out in the field keeping watch over a flock of sheep.</i>
NARRATOR	[Luke 2:8-10 (NIV)] "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. But the angel said to them."
ANGEL	<i>(a flashlight illuminates the angel; the shepherds see the angel and cry out in fear, shrinking back and throwing up their arms).</i> "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

	Savior 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	[Luke 2:13 (NIV)] “Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying”
HEAVENLY HOST	[Luke 2:14 (NIV)] “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” <i>(the heavenly host repeats this three times, and then exits stage left)</i>
NARRATOR	[Luke 2:15 (NIV)] “When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another...”
SHEPHERDS	[Luke 2:15 (NIV)] “...Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about!” <i>(excited, the shepherds hurry off, exiting stage right)</i>
NARRATOR	[Luke 2:16 (NIV)] “So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.”
SHEPHERDS	<i>(cautiously, tentatively entering the stable from stage left, they speak to Joseph)</i> Is it He? Is it the Christ, the Lord?
JOSEPH	<i>(with a sense of wonder, reaching over and patting the baby)</i> Yes guys, its Him. I don't understand very much about this, but this baby is God Himself, called the Son of the Most High. This is the Messiah, the One God promised from

	<p>the beginning. I want to introduce you to the Lord.</p> <p><i>(the shepherds look on in stunned silence, then one by one come to the manger, kneel, spend a few moments gazing at the baby, then quietly leaving)</i></p>
NARRATOR	<p>[Luke 2:17-20 (NIV)] “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. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”</p>
END	

Character Assignments

Zechariah, Elam, Gabriel, Worshipper 1, Worshipper 2, Worshipper 3, Neighbor 1, Neighbor 2, Mary, Joseph, Joseph's Mom, Inn Keeper, Shepherd 1, Shepherd 2, Shepherd 3, Angel, Heavenly Hosts, Narrator

	Zechariah	Elam	Gabriel	Elizabeth	Worshipper 1	Worshipper 2	Worshipper 3	Neighbor 1	Neighbor 2	Mary	Joseph	Joseph's Mom	Inn Keeper	Shepherd 1	Shepherd 2	Shepherd 3	Angel	Heavenly Hosts	Narrator
Zechariah																			
Elam																			
Gabriel																			
Elizabeth																			
Worshipper 1																			
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Worshipper 3																			
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Narrator																			