

The Innkeeper's Family (full version)

CHARACTERS: 1 F adult, 1 M adult, 3 children, ranging in age from 4-9

PROPS: Keep away object

COSTUMES: Biblical

SETTING: None specified

RUN TIME: Approximately 7 minutes

At rise. Children playing keep away with an object.

WIFE: *(Offstage voice of innkeeper's wife.)* Boys! Jehosheba! Stop that playing! You'll break something and Jehovah be praised we need every pot, jar, bowl and pitcher we have. *(Entering)* We haven't had this many customers since ... since the census 11 years ago. We're filled to overflowing. I won't have a moment's rest for the next week. Work, work and more work. But I'm not complaining. We need the business to keep you three fed and clothed. Have you done your chores?

Daniel, did you feed the animals?

DANIEL: Yes, I helped father mend the gate. *(Husband enters)*

HUSBAND: He did and he was very good help indeed.

WIFE: Jehosheba, Did you fill all the jars with water?

JEHOSHEBA: Yes, it took me over 50 trips to the well!

WIFE: Ehud? Did you clean the stable?

EHUD: Yes

WIFE: All of it this time?

EHUD: Yes, mother, all of it.

HUSBAND: Then off to bed. We had to give your room to a family from Jericho so the three of you will have to sleep in the stable.

ALL: *(Ad lib with groaning)* The stable! Not the stable.

EHUD: The stable smells.

HUSBAND: It smells does it? I thought you cleaned it. All of it?

EHUD: I did! It's just...

WIFE: That stable was good enough for a king to sleep in so it will do for the three of you.

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JEHOSHEBA: Did a king really sleep there or did you and father just make that up?

WIFE: Your father and I are not making it up. A king really slept there. He was born there. On a night every bit as crowded as this one. Let me tell you, we were so busy I didn't sleep for a week. Thank God there is a Sabbath.

DANIEL: Tell us the story again.

WIFE: *(Like they are making a ridiculous request)* Do you see all the work your father and I have to do? Does it look like we have time for stories?

ALL: *(Adlibbing, pleading)* Please, please

HUSBAND: I think we have time for one short story before bed.

ALL: Yeah!

WIFE: A story. Maybe I better sit down. *(Raising a hand to heaven in a voice resigned to hard work)* Jehovah knows it might be the only rest I get for the next 3 days. If it weren't for the Sabbath I would work myself to death. *(Daniel gets a chair; mother sits on chair and children around her.)*

HUSBAND: Eleven years ago, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

WIFE: The Romans, they like to count everything.

HUSBAND: Everyone had to go to his own town to register. So a man named Joseph came from the town of Nazareth in Galilee because he belonged to the house and line of David. He came to register with Mary, who was expecting a child. We told them we had no room. But Mary was about to give birth on our doorstep.

WIFE: What could we do? I would have given her our bed but we had already given it to another family.

HUSBAND: I told them they could stay in the stable. In no time at all the baby was born. We wouldn't have thought a lot about it, we were so busy with all the customers!

WIFE: *(Loudly protesting all the work)* The laundry! The cooking! The cleaning! Good thing we have a Sabbath or I would have worn my fingers to the bone during the census. I wouldn't have thought another thing about it except for the shepherds.

HUSBAND: Your mother and I were trying to rest, not sleep, just rest.

WIFE: Then this knocking on the door, in the middle of the night. Your father yelled "We're full. Go away" but they just kept knocking. If we hadn't been afraid it was Romans we would not have answered the door. But it wasn't the Romans. It was shepherds.

HUSBAND: They told us they had been watching the sheep when 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, (*Changes to an "angel voice"*) "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."

HUSBAND: In case they didn't understand a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

HUSBAND: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, (*Changes to shepherd voice*) "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

WIFE: (*Jehosheba begins tugging on her sleeve*) So they went door to door and inn to inn looking for this baby. And he was here. In out stable. In our manger. Stop tugging. Already. What?

JEHOSHEBA: Aunt Eunice says no king was ever born in a stable. She says those shepherds might have had wine in their water.

WIFE: (*Mock outrage*) What does your Aunt Eunice know? She wasn't there. I was. You think a Jewish king born in a stable is unbelievable. What about the Romans? The Romans believe that Romulus and Remas, (*Sarcastically*) the founders of the mighty Roman Empire (may God deliver us soon from their iron hand) they believe that Romulus and Remas were raised by a she-wolf. Which is harder to believe? A Jewish king born in a stable or a Roman emperor raised by wolves. Aunt Eunice wasn't there. Back to the story.

HUSBAND: I was a little curious so I went out to the stable with them. Your mother went too. I thought the story ... questionable. Unbelievable. Why announce the Messiah to a bunch of shepherds? Why not at the temple? But there was something about it ... I believed them about the angels, about the baby. Your mother too. The shepherds told everyone in town. I don't know how many of the citizens of Bethlehem believed but most of them came by to see for themselves the next day.

WIFE: Cluttering up the courtyard, the stable, the entire street. I was never so busy. The inn was full and then all those extra people coming in and going out. The poor mother, Mary was her name, could get no rest. The comings! The goings! In our stable.

DANIEL: But why would Jehovah want his son, the Messiah, a king of kings to sleep in a hay trough?

WIFE: Your father may be an innkeeper, not be a rabbi but still he is a wise man. Listen and learn.

HUSBAND: We talked about Moses. God chose a slave child to be raised in Pharaoh's palace so he would know how to lead. Perhaps God decided to have his son raised by poor people so he would know how to serve.

WIFE: A servant, you may ask? The Messiah – a servant? Yes!

HUSBAND: The prophet Isaiah said he would be. "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.

After the shepherds went back to their flocks we talked with this Joseph. He was a good man, a humble man. A carpenter. He wondered why God chose him and Mary to raise his son.

WIFE: And not just a king, although raising a king would be a job. But the son of El Shaddai, the son of the living God.

HUSBAND: Joseph did not know why God picked him. He could have picked any man in all of Israel. Why not a rabbi? Why not a priest? Why not the high priest himself? Why a carpenter from Nazareth? It is not up to us to question God. It is up to us to accept and do.

HUSBAND: Joseph was a humble man. He prayed that night. I could tell it was not the first time he prayed for wisdom to raise the baby they named Jesus. I would imagine it was not the last time either. Raising God's own son would require lots of prayer and hard work. (*Thoughtfully, with wonder*) God had chosen a simple man of trade and an ordinary girl. We don't ask why. We do as we are told.

WIFE: (*Changing voice to one of motherly authority*) Speaking of which. You need your rest. There will be more work tomorrow with all these guests. Off to bed and no more complaining about sleeping in the stable.

ALL (*Ad libbing*) Yes, mother, good night, father... (*Children exit*)

WIFE (*Contemplating*) How Joseph could have seen this: this road to Bethlehem, a stable filled with hay,

HUSBAND: Yes, such a strange way to save the world.

Innkeeper's Wife

CHARACTERS: One female adult, 3 children, ranging in age from 4-9

PROPS: Keep away object

COSTUMES: Biblical

SETTING: None specified

RUN TIME: 6 minutes

At rise. Children playing keep away with an object.

WIFE: (*Offstage voice of innkeeper's wife.*) Boys! Jehosheba! Stop that playing! You'll break something and Jehovah be praised we need every pot, jar, bowl and pitcher we have. (*Entering*) We haven't had this many customers since ... since the census 11 years ago. We're filled to overflowing. I won't have a moment's rest for the next week. Work, work and more work. But I'm not complaining. We need the business to keep you three fed and clothed. Have you done your chores?

Daniel, Did you feed the animals?

DANIEL: Yes, helped father mend the gate.

WIFE: Jehosheba, Did you fill all the jars with water?

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JEHOSHEBA: Yes, it took me over 50 trips to the well!

WIFE: Ehud? Did you clean the stable?

EHUD: Yes

WIFE: All of it this time?

EHUD: Yes, mother, all of it.

WIFE: Then off to bed. We had to give your room to a family from Jericho so the three of you will have to sleep in the stable.

ALL: (*Ad lib with groaning*) The stable! Not the stable.

EHUD: The stable smells.

WIFE: It smells does it? I thought you cleaned it. All of it?

EHUD: I did! It's just...

WIFE: That stable was good enough for a king to sleep in so it will do for the three of you.

JEHOSHEBA: Did a king really sleep there or did you and father just make that up?

WIFE: Your father and I are not making it up. A king really slept there. He was born there. On a night every bit as crowded as this one. Let me tell you, we were so busy I didn't sleep for a week. Thank God there is a Sabbath.

DANIEL: Tell us the story again, mother.

WIFE: (*Like they are making a ridiculous request*) Do you see all the work I have to do? Does it look like I have time for stories?

ALL: (*Adlibbing, pleading*) Please, please

WIFE: A story. Maybe I better sit down and tell you the story again. (*Raising a hand to heaven in a voice resigned to hard work*) Jehovah knows it might be the only rest I get for the next 3 days. If it weren't for the Sabbath I would work myself to death. (*Daniel gets a chair; mother sits on chair and children around her.*)

Eleven years ago, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. The Romans, they like to count everything. And everyone went to his own town to register.

So a man named Joseph came from the town of Nazareth in Galilee because he belonged to the house and line of David. He came to register with Mary, who was expecting a child. We told them we had no room. But Mary

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was about to give birth on our doorstep. What could I do? I would have given her our bed but we had already given it to another family. Your father said they could stay in the stable.

In no time at all the baby was born. I wouldn't have thought a lot about it, we were so busy with all the customers! (*Loudly protesting all the work*) The laundry! The cooking! The cleaning! Good thing we have a Sabbath or I would have worn my fingers to the bone during the census. I wouldn't have thought another thing about it except for the shepherds.

Your father and I were trying to rest, not sleep, just rest. Knocking on the door, in the middle of the night. Your father yelled "We're full. Go away" but they just kept knocking. If we hadn't been afraid it was Romans we would not have answered the door. But it wasn't the Romans. It was shepherds. They told us they had been watching the sheep when 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, (*Changes to an "angel voice"*) "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."

In case they didn't get it a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, (*Changes to shepherd voice*) "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." (*Jehosheba begins tugging on her sleeve*) So they went door to door and inn to inn looking for this baby. And he was here. In our stable. In our manger. Stop tugging. Already. What?

JEHOSHEBA: Aunt Eunice says no king was ever born in a stable. She says those shepherds might have had wine in their water.

WIFE: (*Mock outrage*) What does your Aunt Eunice know? She wasn't there. I was. You think a Jewish king born in a stable is unbelievable. What about the Romans? The Romans believe that Romulus and Remas, (*Sarcastically*) the founders of the mighty Roman Empire (may God deliver us soon from their iron hand) they believe that Romulus and Remas were raised by a she-wolf. Which is harder to believe? A Jewish king born in a stable or a Roman emperor raised by wolves. Aunt Eunice wasn't there. Back to the story.

I was a little curious so I went out to the stable with them. Your father went too; he thought the story ... questionable. Unbelievable. Why announce the Messiah to a bunch of shepherds? Why not at the temple? But there was something about it ... I believed them about the angels, about the baby. Your father too. The shepherds told everyone in town. I don't know how many of the citizens of Bethlehem believed but most of them came by to see for themselves the next day. Cluttering up the courtyard, the stable, the entire street. I was never so busy. The inn was full and then all those extra people coming in and going out. The poor mother, Mary was her name, could get no rest. The comings! The goings! In our stable.

DANIEL: But why would Jehovah want his son, the Messiah, a king of kings to sleep in a hay trough?

WIFE: Funny you should ask. Joseph asked himself that same question that night. We talked, mostly your father. He may be an innkeeper, not a rabbi, but still he is a wise man. We talked about Moses. God chose a

slave child to be raised in Pharaoh's palace so he would know how to lead. Perhaps God decided to have his son raised by poor people so he would know how to serve.

A servant, you may ask? The Messiah – a servant? Yes! The prophet Isaiah said he would be. "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.

After the shepherds went back to their flocks we talked with this Joseph. He was a good man, a humble man. A carpenter. He wondered why God chose him and Mary to raise his son. And not just a king, although raising a king would be a job. But the son of El Shaddai, the son of the living God. Joseph did not know why God picked him. He could have picked any man in all of Israel. Why not a rabbi? Why not a priest? Why not the high priest himself? Why a carpenter from Nazareth? It is not up to us to question God. It is up to us to accept and do.

Joseph was a humble man. He prayed that night. I could tell it was not the first time he prayed for wisdom to raise the baby they named Jesus. I would imagine it was not the last time either. Raising God's own son would require lots of prayer and hard work. (*Thoughtfully, with wonder*) God had chosen a simple man of trade and an ordinary girl. We don't ask why. We do as we are told. (*Changing voice to one of motherly authority*) Speaking of which. You need your rest. There will be more work tomorrow with all these guests. Off to bed and no more complaining about sleeping in the stable.

ALL (*Ad libbing*) Yes, mother, good night... (*Children exit*)

WIFE (*Contemplating to God*) How could Joseph have seen this: this road to Bethlehem, a stable filled with hay, such a strange way to save the world?

The Innkeeper's Wife (Condensed version)

CHARACTERS: One female adult, 3 children

PROPS: Keep away object

COSTUMES: Biblical

SETTING: None specified

RUN TIME: 5 minutes

At rise. Children playing keep away with an object.

WIFE: (*Offstage voice of innkeeper's wife.*) Boys! Jehosheba! Stop that playing! You'll break something and Jehovah be praised we need every pot, jar, bowl and pitcher we have. (*Entering*) We haven't had this many customers since ... since the census 11 years ago. We're filled to overflowing. I won't have a moment's rest for the next week. Work, work and more work. But I'm not complaining. We need the business to keep you three fed and clothed. Have you done your chores?

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DANIEL: Yes, helped father mend the gate.

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JEHOSHEBA: Yes, it took me over 50 trips to the well!

WIFE: Ehud? Did you clean the stable?

EHUD: Yes

WIFE: All of it this time?

EHUD: Yes, mother, all of it.

WIFE: Then off to bed. We had to give your room to a family from Jericho so the three of you will have to sleep in the stable.

ALL: (*Ad lib with groaning*) The stable! Not the stable.

EHUD: The stable smells.

WIFE: It smells does it? I thought you cleaned it. All of it?

EHUD: I did! It's just...

WIFE: That stable was good enough for a king to sleep in so it will do for the three of you.

JEHOSHEBA: Did a king really sleep there or did you and father just make that up?

WIFE: Your father and I are not making it up. A king really slept there. He was born there. On a night every bit as crowded as this one. Let me tell you, we were so busy I didn't sleep for a week. Thank God there is a Sabbath.

DANIEL: Tell us the story again, mother.

WIFE: (*Like they are making a ridiculous request*) Do you see all the work I have to do? Does it look like I have time for stories?

ALL: (*Adlibbing, pleading*) Please, please

WIFE: A story. Maybe I better sit down and tell you the story again. (*Raising a hand to heaven in a voice resigned to hard work*) Jehovah knows it might be the only rest I get for the next 3 days. If it weren't for the Sabbath I would work myself to death. (*Daniel gets a chair; mother sits on chair and children around her.*)

Eleven years ago, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. The Romans, they like to count everything. And everyone had to go to his own town to register.

So a man named Joseph came from the town of Nazareth in Galilee because he belonged to the house and line of David. He came to register with Mary, who was expecting a child. We told them we had no room. But Mary was about to give birth on our doorstep. What could I do? I would have given her our bed but it was already taken by a Roman centurion. Your father said they could stay in the stable.

In no time at all, the baby was born. I wouldn't have thought a lot about it, we were so busy with all the customers! The laundry! The cooking! The cleaning! I wouldn't have thought another thing about it except for the shepherds.

Your father and I were trying to rest, not sleep, just rest. Knocking on the door, in the middle of the night. Your father yelled "we're full. Go away" but they just kept knocking. If we hadn't been afraid it was Romans we would not have answered the door. But it wasn't the Romans. It was Eli and his sons and brother Uziah. They told us they had been watching their sheep when an angel of the Lord appeared to them and said, "Christ the Lord will be found as a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger in Bethlehem" So they went door to door and inn to inn looking for this baby. And he was here. In our stable. In our manger. Stop tugging, already. What?

JEHOSHEBA: Aunt Eunice says no king was ever born in a stable

WIFE: *(With mock outrage)* What does your Aunt Eunice know? She wasn't there. I was. You think a Jewish king born in a stable is unbelievable. What about the Romans? The Romans believe that Romulus and Remas, *(Sarcastically)* the founders of the mighty Roman Empire (may God deliver us soon from their iron hand) they believe that Romulus and Remas were raised by a she-wolf. *(Ehud begins tugging on her sleeve)* Which is harder to believe? A Jewish king born in a stable or a Roman emperor raised by wolves. Aunt Eunice wasn't there. I was. Ehud, what is it?

EHUD: But why would Jehovah want his son, the Messiah, a king of kings to sleep in a hay trough?

WIFE: Funny you should ask. Joseph asked himself that same question that night. He wondered why God chose him and Mary to raise his son. And not just a king, although raising a king would be a job. But the son of El Shaddai, the son of the living God? Jehovah could have picked any man in all of Israel. Why not a rabbi? Why not a priest? Why not the high priest himself? Why a carpenter from Nazareth?

Your father may be an innkeeper, not a rabbi, but still he is a wise man. They talked about Moses. God chose a slave child to be raised in Pharaoh's palace so he would know how to lead. Perhaps God decided to have his son raised by poor people so he would know how to serve.

A servant, you may ask? The Messiah – a servant? Yes! The prophet Isaiah said he would be. "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.

Joseph was a humble man, a good man, an ordinary carpenter. He prayed that night. I could tell it was not the first time he prayed for wisdom to raise the baby they named Jesus. I would imagine it was not the last time either. Raising God's own son would require much prayer. God had chosen a simple man of trade and an ordinary girl. We don't ask why. We do the tasks God sets before us. *(Changing to a mother's voice of authority)* Speaking of tasks. There will be more work tomorrow with all these guests so you need your rest.

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Off to bed and no more complaining about sleeping in the stable.

ALL: Yes, mother, good night... (*Children exit*)

WIFE: (*With contemplation, to God*) Your plan, Oh God. This road to Bethlehem, a stable filled with hay, such a strange way to save the world.

Elizabeth

CHARACTERS: 1 F

PROPS: baby, cradle

COSTUMES: Biblical

SETTING: None specified

(*Woman enters carrying a baby; she speaks softly and tenderly when talking to the baby, almost in awe*) John, child of my old age. Sleep well tonight. (*places baby in cradle*). Until you came I was barren. (*remembering with pain*) A curse and shame to any Israelite woman. I understood when Rachel cried out to her husband – give me children or I die. Like Hannah, I was loved by my husband, but that could not fill the empty, aching void within my heart.

(*mood lightens*) The day your father, Zachariah came home from serving at the temple he could not speak. Still he managed to tell me he had spoken with the angel Gabriel, that we would have a son, us in our old age. He said our son was to be dedicated to God even from my womb. (*looking at the baby*) You, John, would turn many of our people back to God. Our son would come in the spirit and power of Elijah.

I laughed – not like Sarah, in disbelief, but for joy and knowing that if God ordained it, he would make a way. I spent my months in seclusion, praying and meditating on how we should bring you up. Then Mary, my young relative came.

She should have been home, preparing to be married. She had just been betrothed to Joseph. When she walked through the door, you gave me such a kick. It was as though you spoke, "Mother, what good is it for you to bear Messiah's forerunner unless someone else bears Messiah?" (*joyfully*) The realization broke on me like a wave of the sea and washed over me, bringing chills of joy. Mary's baby was the Messiah!

We laughed and cried together. (*remembering with laughter*) I thought your father would burst from not being able to speak. I'm sure he wanted to compare notes with Mary about Gabriel's visits.

She returned home and in due course I had you. I am a doubly blessed woman – blessed with a son of my own and blessed to be alive when the Messiah will come. The Messiah – the hope and consolation of Israel. The counselor, Prince of Peace, Mighty God. How wondrous. (*picking up baby from cradle*) Mary's time is close. The Messiah could come at any time (*pause to cradle child closer*) Maybe even tonight.

Elizabeth and Zechariah

CHARACTERS: 1 M, 1 F

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COSTUMES: Biblical

PROPS: Baby

SETTING: Israel, just before Christ is born

AT: Rise. A room in a Jewish home. A cradle is the central feature with a stool beside it. Elizabeth enters carrying a baby.

ELIZ: John, child of my old age. Sleep well tonight. *(Places baby in cradle)*. Until you came, my life was one of longing and emptiness *(She sits on the stool. Remembering the shame and heartbreak)* I understood when Rachel cried out to her husband – give me children or I die. *(Zechariah enters)* But now, like it was with Sarah it is with me, a child born to me in my old age. It is a time of gladness!

ZECHARIAH: *(Laughing, playfully)* Elizabeth, it is time to let our son get some rest.

ELIZ: Yes, he has quite a task set before him. Tell me again what the scriptures say.

ZECHARIAH: *(Quoting)* 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. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. *(Pause)* He will be great in the sight of the Lord.

ELIZ: *(Smiling)* Yes, in time he will be. But he is such a tiny thing now. *(With pride)* Our John, our joy and delight. As Gabriel said, many will rejoice because of his birth. And they did. This house was filled to overflowing with singing and praises to God. And you made up a song. Sing it for me. *(Zechariah shakes his head “No”)* Then at least repeat the words. *(Zechariah starts to decline; mischievously)* You never know when an angel may take the power of speech from you again.

ZECHARIAH: *(Chuckles.)* Very well. *(Zechariah pauses to collect his thoughts. He speaks to God using a commanding voice, yet not loud enough to disturb the baby. Elizabeth keeps one hand on the baby but her eyes never leave her husband as he speaks. She nods in affirmation of the words)* "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:

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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.

Zechariah pauses, steps closer to the cradle and places one hand upon the baby

And you, my child, *(Elizabeth begins smiling broadly and steals a glimpse or two at John)* 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."

ELIZ: We have a son, one ordained by El Shaddai himself! But I fear it will not be so easy with Mary. Her time must be at hand and with her having to travel to Bethlehem for the census.... If John were older I'd suggest we go meet them ourselves.

ZECHARIAH: *(Face becomes clouded)* She is young, Elizabeth. God is with her.

ELIZ: But the place is crowded with not only those registering from the house of David but also all the Romans. The Romans are not kind to us Jews.

ZECHARIAH: I do not fear the Romans in this instance but King Herod himself. Herod never hesitated to put anyone, including his own family, to death when they threatened his throne. If word gets out of a Messiah – a future, rival king – Herod might act violently to protect his throne.

ELIZABETH: Yes, Herod might do that. He had his brother in law the high priest killed.

ZECHARIAH: And we both know who it is Herod will find and where he will be found.

ELIZ: *(Concerned)* Then Mary, Joseph and the baby will all be at risk. *(With dawning horror)* Do you think that puts our John in danger?

ZECHARIAH: *(Far away)* It could. *(Snaps back to the present)* My time of service is over at the temple. Rather than stay here I thought we might move into a quiet place in the desert....

ELIZ: *(Quietly, no opposition evident in her voice)* Move? Away from our home? Our families? Before seeing Mary's child?

ZECHARIAH: Yes. I think we might endanger them by even visiting them. Everyone knows what a miracle John is.

ELIZ: When?

ZECHARIAH: I feel we must do so right away, Elizabeth, if you think you have gained enough strength.

ELIZ: God has given me a son in my old age. He will give me whatever strength I lack. (Not whiny, matter-of-fact) But Zachariah, it's lonely and harsh in the desert. It's not a hospitable place.

ZECHARIAH: Exactly. A perfect place to raise our only son, Elizabeth. If Herod comes looking for the Messiah it will not be to worship him. I fear for our son's safety. We did not wait all these years to see harm come to him.

ELIZ: Of course we did not. Our son has a vital mission and no sacrifice is too great to see that he fulfills his destiny.

ZECHARIAH: Moses, young David spent years in the wilderness. And Elijah. Elijah hid from Ahab in the desert.

ELIZ: *(Almost dreamy)* Yes, Elijah. *(In the present)* And our John will come in the spirit and power of Elijah

ZECHARIAH: We waited for years for him to be born. A few more years and Herod will be dead. Is that too much?

ELIZ: No, nothing is too much. *(Resolutely)* Nothing is too much for either our son or our God. I'll start to gather a few things. *(She rises, gives John a lingering caress and exits. Zachariah smooths the hair on John's head tenderly then looks upward)*

ZECHARIAH: Thank you for John. Lord, make us the kind of parents he needs, ones who will bring him up in the nurture and admonition of your name. And we ask that you be with Mary and Joseph as you are with your son. Your son who was with you from the beginning, by whom all things were created. Who is coming now in a body of flesh and blood. *(Drops his head to gaze at John)*

(Toward the audience but not at the audience) The Messiah – the hope and consolation of Israel. The counselor, Prince of Peace, Mighty God. *(With awe)* How wondrous. *(Picking up baby from cradle and looking at him intently)* Our Messiah will be here soon. *(Pause to cradle child closer)* Maybe even tonight. *(Zechariah bows his head until it gently rests against the John's tiny forehead)*

The Light of the World

CHARACTERS: 3 M, 1 F, 5 either

COSTUMES: see below

PROPS: see below

SETTING: Bare stage

NARRATOR: (puppet) Optional; Have puppet holding a book made from black poster board folded

in half to look like a book cover. Title the book “The Story of the Light of the World” in glow in the dark paint.

KING: crown and robe

PRINCESS: Beautiful princess dress and crown, rag costume with bandages

PRINCE: Simple street clothes OR Biblical

DARK MAN: All black including a black hoodie or ski mask that hides the face, apple, chains (human)

3 MESSENGERS: optional scrolls

STAR CARRIER: A glowing star with a candle inside

At rise: NARRATOR and KING siting on throne, dimly lit

NARR: Once upon a time there was a king. And the king said

KING: Let there be light (*Light brightens*)

NARR: And there was light. The king saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. He called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” The king ruled over his kingdom of light and it was all good. Then the King adopted a daughter and made her a princess. (*PRINCESS enters and is further illuminated*) She had everything she needed.

NARR: One day darkness entered the kingdom. (*DARK MAN enters holding out an apple to PRINCESS. PRINCESS takes off her crown, trades it for apple and bites the apple. It is bitter and she drops it in disgust. KING looks horrified*)

NARR: The princess traded away her birthright for a lie and in doing so, sold herself as a slave to the darkness. (*DARK MAN wraps chains around her wrists binding them*) She threw away her birthright and became a poor, blind, miserable commoner. (*PRINCESS and DARK MAN exit into darkness*) The darkness surrounded her and though she cried pitifully over what she had done, she could neither regain her royal status nor free herself from slavery.

VOICE of PRINCESS: (*calling out, afraid*) Where is the light? Where is my father the king? I am afraid. Help me!

NARR: The more the princess tried to save herself, the more she stumbled. Her beautiful clothes became rags and many wounds were all she got for her efforts. (*PRINCE enters to KING*) The king was sad. His son, the prince, too grieved.

KING: She has traded away her birthright and now she suffers. She cannot find her own way from the darkness. She cannot buy her own freedom.

PRINCE: Then I will save her, though it cost all I am and have. (*exits*). *PRINCESS re-enters, disheveled and dressed in rags with wounds and bloody bandages including one over her eyes. She collapses in a miserable heap under a dim red light held by DARK MAN.*

NARR: So the king sent messengers on ahead so the princess would be ready to be saved by the

prince.

MESSENGER 1: The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the LORD binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds of the princess. (*PRINCESS examines her wounds and winces as she moves because they are so painful. When she speaks, it is with desperate pain, shame and remorse*)

PRINCESS: I want to be healed.

MESSENGER 2: The prince will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths He will guide them; He will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things the prince will do; He will not forsake his princess.

PRINCESS: I want to see again.

MESSENGER 3: The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Prince will be your everlasting light, and your King will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the Prince will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end.

PRINCESS: Yes, let my sorrow end.

NARR: And so the prince stepped down into darkness. *SONG Light of the world you stepped down into darkness. STAR CARRIER appears holding a lighted star over the PRINCE. Slowly they make their way toward the PRINCESS during the song.*

NARR: A star served as a beacon of light, drawing those who were wise to the prince. Through this prince all things had been made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. His light shone in the darkness, and the darkness could not overcome it. (*DARK MAN forces PRINCESS to take his red light, he sabotages the reconciliation, whispering lies in the princess' ears and pulling her back when she reaches for the PRINCE.*)

Yet, though the world, including the princess, was made through the Prince, the princess did not recognize him. The darkness blinded her. If she would only receive him, he would give the right to become a child of the king once again.

PRINCE: (*Reaching toward her and gently calling for her*) You are a child of the light and a child of the day. You not belong to the night or to the darkness, but you are a princess, daughter of the king who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light. (*DARK MAN puts the PRINCESSES hands over her ears*)

NARR: But the princess closed her ears as well as her eyes.

PRINCE: (*more urgently*) I have come into the world as a light, so you do not have to stay in darkness. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. Believe in my light while you have the light, so that you once again may become a child of the king. (*As PRINCESS starts to reach for the PRINCE, DARK MAN gets between them and jerks her back to her misery*)

NARR: But the princess did not leave the darkness. (*DARK MAN moves slyly behind the prince, He pantomimes nailing his feet to a cross.*)

PRINCE: (*pleading most urgently, holding out his arms to her*) I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (*DARK MAN physically takes the PRINCE's arms and pantomimes nailing them to a cross*) While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk to me while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. (*Pause for 2 beats but the princess does NOT come. PRINCE bows head in death. KING, face filled with grief, turns away from the PRINCE.*)

NARR: Yet the princess did not come to him, though he paid for her life with his own. *PRINCESS is crying, loudly at first, then muffled occasional sobs. PRINCE and DARKMAN exit.*

NARR: This is the message we have heard from the Prince and declare to you: the King is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we walk in the King's light, as the Prince is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of the Prince, his Son, purifies us. (*PRINCE appears next to NARR*)

PRINCE: You (*pointing to audience*) are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. (*STAR CARRIER takes candle from under the star and holds it up*) Neither do people light a candle and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. (*STAR CARRIER drops star backstage or hooks it above the stage to continue to be seen*)

PRINCE: In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light. For the king, who said, (*KING turns back around*)

KING: "Let light shine out of darkness,"

PRINCE: ... made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of His glory displayed in the face of Christ.

PRINCE: Who will add their candle? Who will add their light? Who will reach my princess, all my princesses, who are in darkness? Sing with us. (*Cast begins to sing This Little light of mine. Audience members should be encouraged to add their voices. As they do the PRINCESS takes off eye bandages and finally comes to the prince and KING who welcome her with joy*)

MARY'S CHOICE

CHARACTERS: 10 (3F, 2M, 4 either)

COSTUMES: Biblical

PROPS: None specified

SETTING: Anywhere in Nazareth

RUN TIME: 6 minutes

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Luke 1 & 2, Esther 4, Isaiah 49:6, Hebrews 11 & 12, Psalms 23, 2 Corinthians 6:2

AT RISE: GABRIEL is center stage. MARY slightly to one side, busy, unaware of GABRIEL's presence until he speaks to her.

GABRIEL: *(to the audience)* In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent me, the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin. *(GABRIEL takes a step toward and addresses MARY)*

GABRIEL: Greetings, Mary, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. *(MARY starts in surprise, draws back a step and appears troubled at the rest of his words but not frightened)* Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

MARY: How will this be since I am a virgin?

GABRIEL: The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. *(with delight)* So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. *(DEMONS move stealthily toward MARY before they speak, seeming afraid to draw GABRIEL's notice. They speak at first, in hushed tones close to her ear, and then back off as if being near MARY or GABRIEL is painful)*

DEMON 1: Mary. You're pledged to be married to a man named Joseph. Don't do anything to mess this up. *(MARY can hear the voices of the demons but she can't actually see the demons. She should peer about as if in a dark room, able to tell where the voices are coming from but not make eye contact with any of them. Her face should be visible to the audience so they can see her reactions)*

GABRIEL: Your son Jesus 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 Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end

DEMON 1: *(backing off a bit, sounding like a kindly Jewish grandmother)* This is nonsense talk. You're family's not royalty; you're not even Jewish nobility. How could a son of yours become king?

MARY: Joseph is a descendant of David.

DEMON 1: He's a nice man, maybe a bit poor, but a good catch. But royalty? No. He's a carpenter. He builds furniture, not kingdoms. This is too far-fetched.

DEMON 2: *(more insidious but not threatening)* If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Tell this apparition to get lost. He's talking nonsense. Utter nonsense.

GABRIEL: Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. *(pause)* For no word from God will ever fail. *(DEMONS draw back and huddle together for support at those words. But they continue to try to influence MARY. A touch of desperation creeps into their voices)*

DEMON 2: What about your reputation? Do you think Joseph is going to believe you're carrying the king of the universe or that you have strayed?

DEMON 1: The law says to stone women for impurity.

DEMON 2: You could lose your life.

GABRIEL: Lord, open her eyes that she may see that she is surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. *(DEMONS 1 & 2 withdraw. As good characters appear, Mary is able to see them. Her face should be a canvas, showing her reactions to their encouragement)*

ESTHER: Mary, I once feared losing my life. Thank the Lord Mordecai helped me realize that I might have come to my royal position as queen to save my people.

MARY: Queen Esther?

ESTHER: Yes, Mary. God brought me where he needed me to be to serve him and his people, not myself. If I had remained silent, refused to take the risk, God would have delivered my people through another. However, I would have perished.

MARY: *(remembering what she has been taught and finishing the story)* So you risked your life to save the Jews from Haman.

ESTHER: *(nodding in agreement and speaking with evident joy)* And through Jesus, the one of whom Gabriel speaks, not just the Jews will be saved, but the Gentiles as well.

GABRIEL: *(prophetically and expansive in his joy)* It is too small a thing for Jesus the servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel. He will also be a light for the Gentiles that Jehovah's salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

DEMON 3: *(forceful, has a hard edge)* Gentiles. Gentiles like these filthy Romans who slaughter our people and blaspheme the name of the Lord. Who wants to save Gentiles? Mary, this is crazy talk. You don't want to do this. Risking one's life is fine for a queen, but you're a – how do I say this nicely? – a nobody.

DAVID: *(has entered quietly, behind GABRIEL and dramatically steps out to be seen)* They thought the same of me. The youngest son, a shepherd tending a few sheep. Then when I said I would take on Goliath, they called me crazy too.

MARY: David? King David?

DAVID: Yes, Mary. *(taking her hands and speaking with love and conviction)* You are of my line, my blood, royal blood. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young ...

RAHAB: *(Stepping dramatically from behind GABRIEL and coming around to the other side of MARY, forcing DEMON 3 to step back)* Or female.

DAVID: *(introducing them)* This is my great-great grandmother, Rahab.

RAHAB: I too risked my life to save my family.

DEMON 3: She's a prostitute, a filthy Gentile prostitute.

RAHAB: Yet even I was found righteous by placing my faith in God and acting on it by protecting the spies.

DEMON 4: *(cringing entry from the opposite side of the other demons; pleading)* Mary, you don't want to do this. You'd be all alone.

DAVID: The Lord is my shepherd (*RAHAB joins in*) I shall not want. Yea, thought I (*MARY joins in*) walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

DEMON 4: (*last-ditch effort*) Now isn't a good time to make such a monumental decision. Ask for a couple of days to think it over. There's plenty of time.

GABRIEL: (*proclaiming forcefully, letting his words push the demons back to the farthest corners*) Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation

MARY: (*bows in humility, lifts her face and answers confidently*) I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled. (*Demons and GABRIEL exit; other characters pull MARY to her feet and hug her.*)

Online interactive Christmas games

John 1-3 challenge board

<http://www.quia.com/cb/806496.html>

Luke 1:26-38 cloze

<http://www.quia.com/cz/283994.html>

Luke 3 - Jesus' ancestors

<http://www.quia.com/cm/362544.html>

Luke 3: Who is who? hangman

<http://www.quia.com/hm/777402.html>

Mary and Elizabeth rags to riches

<http://www.quia.com/rr/504005.html>

Matthew 1 match up

<http://www.quia.com/jq/1699581.html>

Matthew 1 word unscramble

<http://www.quia.com/jw/350877.html>

Christmas (easier) rags to riches

<http://www.quia.com/rr/756186.html>

Christmas jumbled words from Luke

<http://www.quia.com/jw/273716.html>

Jesus is born battleship

<http://www.quia.com/ba/216877.html>

Jesus is Born Rags to Riches

<http://www.quia.com/rr/388092.html>