

Promised Children, Promised Child

(AKA Black Sheep ancestors of the Lamb of God)

By Kathy Applebee

Characters with doubling

VOICE OF GOD –could possibly be doubled

RUTH/MARY

EVE/RAHAB

SARAH/NAOMI/ANNA/ELIZABETH

ADAM/ ISAAC/ DAVID/GABRIEL

ABRAHAM/SIMEON/ ZECHARIAH

MAGI 1 – only one with memorized lines

MAGI 2 – reading only

MAGI 3- reading only

A, B, C – can be doubled

Small parts from choir

Boaz (no lines)

Joseph (no lines)

Spy 1

Spy 2

Woman 1

Woman 2

Woman 3

Man 1

Man 2

Shepherd

Shepherds (no lines)

Scene 1

NARR: People around the globe know December 25th is a celebration of the birth that took place a long time ago - Jesus, son of Mary. From there, what Christmas means varies from one family's traditions to the next, from retailers' end-of-the year balance sheets to kids anticipating school breaks to the socialite's schedule of parties. Christmas carols, cookies and decorations transcend language, culture and religions.

(Profoundly) But what is the essence of Christmas?

That cannot be answered in an hour or two (lightening considerably)so don't expect this production to be some earth shattering, miraculous revelation that once and for all makes the meaning of Christmas crystal clear. *(moves a couple steps stage right)*

On the other hand. *(with a twinkle in the eye)* The first Christmas was earth shattering. And miraculous. *(pause)* And miraculous, earth shattering things happen to those who believe. Even to the black sheep in the family of God.

God promised imperfect people a savior, a perfect sacrifice, his own son. He even worked through imperfect people – the black sheep of the family – to bring the Lamb of God into the world.

Knowing us and our imperfections well, God also gave ample signs – prophesies – so we would recognize the Messiah, the promised, perfect one, when he arrived.

Who were these people? These black sheep? What were the prophesies given to these black sheep that pointed to a perfect lamb?

Among Jesus' ancestors we find the destitute and a prostitute. Outlaws and in-laws. Many were children of promise themselves – born in unusual circumstances to unusual people.

Let us start at the beginning.

Lights out.

Scene 2

NARR: The very beginning.

NARR: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said,

VO: Let there be light.

Single diffuse light upon center stage that steadily grows brighter

NARR: And there was light. God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night.

VO: Let us make man in our image.

NARR: So God created man in his own image. *(simultaneous video 1)*

ADAM: The LORD God put me in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. He created woman so I would not be alone.

EVE: We lived in paradise. We had no idea what pain, suffering or death meant. But it was not to last. We fell prey to temptation. Sin entered the world and death through sin. The result of one trespass was condemnation for both us and all who followed.

ADAM: Yet we had hope. God made a promise to us and all the generations that would follow.

VO: I will put enmity
 between Satan and the woman,
 and between his offspring and hers;
 My son, your offspring, will crush Satan's head. And Satan will bruise his heel.

ADAM: But the promise carried a heavy price. Though God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness would reign through the one man, Jesus Christ. That savior that God made flesh, would have to die. (*ADAM and EVE cross to down center; end video 1*)

EVE: Before he could die, he would have to be born.

Yes, the son of God, being in very nature God,
 did not consider equality with God something to be grasped or held onto,

ADAM: He would make himself nothing,
 taking the very nature of a servant,
 being made in human likeness.
 And being found in appearance as a man,
 he he would humble himself to be born in the flesh.

EVE: Only to become obedient to death, even death on a cross! It was only after I had sons, only after one killed the other, that I truly understood what death was. Not only that, I also understood with absolute clarity and absolute agony how much it would cost God to lose his son. (*ADAM and EVE cross back to down right*)

Scene 3

NARR: Adam's son Seth, fathered Enosh, who fathered Kenan, the father of Mahalalel, the father Jared, the father of Enoch.

ADAM: Enoch walked with God 300 years and was commended as one who pleased God. Then he was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death. (*simultaneous video 2*)

EVE: God took him away so he did not have to face the fate of a world grown wicked, corrupt in God's sight and full of violence. The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.

ADAM: But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. By faith, he and his family were saved. God told them to be fruitful and multiply, but once again, sinned multiplied as well. (*end video 2*)

EVE: Yet one man, Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God's friend.

Scene 4

VO: Abram, Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

I will make you into a great nation
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

All peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.

ABRAHAM bows to the voice, ABRAM and SARAH move down center (simultaneous video 3)

SARAH: By faith 75 year old Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; (*SARAH exits*)

ABRAHAM: I lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with me of God's promise. For I was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (*end video 3*)

VO: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Exalted Father; your name will be Abraham – meaning father of many. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

ABRAHAM: You, O Lord are faithful. You have called me, a mere man, your friend. You are the God who gives life to the dead and calls things into being that are not as though they were. This grand, magnificent universe was formed at your command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

VO: I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you

ABRAHAM: I am 90, as good as dead; past the age of fathering children and my wife Sarai is barren, but you are both faithful and powerful. I know everything you say will come to pass.

VO: As for Sarai your wife, I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.

Abraham falls face down, and then laughing with delight at what he believes will come to pass, wipes tears of joy from his eyes as he speaks.

VO: Your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

Sarah enters carrying Isaac

ABRAHAM: Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to me in my old age, at the very time God had promised me. I was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

SARAH: God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me. Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.

Song (SARAH and baby exit, lights out on stage following song)

Scene 5

VO: Abraham!

ABRAHAM: Here I am.

(start simultaneous video 5) VO: Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.

(Voice Over on video) SARAH: Abraham did not argue or delay. Early the next morning took our son Isaac and set out. *(Isaac enters onstage, Abraham and Isaac prostrate on stage)*

(VIDEO 5 continued- Abraham and Isaac are building the altar) ISAAC: Father? The fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?

ABRAHAM: God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.

Abraham binds Isaac, lays him on altar

ABRAHAM: My son, God has said "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." It stands to reason that God who created the heavens and the earth from nothing, who formed man from the dust of the earth, will be able to raise the dead without any trouble. Therefore you will live, even if you die, so his promises to me will be fulfilled.

Abraham raises the knife

VO: Abraham! Abraham!

ABRAHAM: Here I am.

VO: Do not lay a hand on the boy; do not do anything to him. Now I know that you respect and awe me, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.

Abraham helps ISSAC up, they embrace. At the sound of God's voice they fall prostrate. (END VIDEO 5)

Lights up down center. Abraham and Isaac are prostrate to match end of video. They rise to their feet during next VO)

VO: I swear by myself that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me. *(Abraham exits, ISAAC moves further downstage)*

ISAAC: God provided a ram in my place so from that day forth we called this place The Lord Will Provide. He would provide not just the ram in my place, but his own son, his only begotten son, in the place of all mankind.

Perhaps God called my father friend, because in some small way, my father could understand the pain in God's heart, the gloom, the agonizing anticipation of sacrificing an only son. *(ISAAC exits)*

Scene 6

NARR: Abraham was the father of Isaac,

Isaac the father of Jacob,

Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,

(aside) She's quite a character herself. But another story for another time.

Perez the father of Hezron, *(simultaneous video 5)*

Hezron the father of Ram,

Ram the father of Amminadab,

Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,

Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, *(end video 5)*

RAHAB: A prostitute in the lineage of Jesus? Yes. A prostitute from the city of Jericho. I and my people had heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea when the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had come out of Egypt. He had completely destroyed their enemies. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed. So when spies from Joshua came, I welcomed them, against the direct orders of my king.

SPY 1: The king of Jericho seeks to kill us. Hide us.

RAHAB: I know the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. Please swear to me by the Lord that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from death.

SPY 2: Our lives for your lives! If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land.

RAHAB: Agreed; let it be as you say. I will send those who seek your lives on another path and hide you until the city gates close. After I secret you out my window, go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way.

SPY1: Tie this scarlet cord in the window and bring your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house.

SPY 2: But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear.

RAHAB: Could God have saved his spies without my help? Absolutely. But God chooses to work his will through imperfect people. I had faith in the one true God and when he gave me the opportunity to act on my faith, I took it and was saved. And my family with me. Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. (*simultaneous video 6*)

God did not merely spare my mortal life. No, God is able to do more than we can ask or even imagine. I was adopted into his people, brought into an everlasting relationship with Him. I married an Israelite man, Salmon. (*end video 6*) And God blessed me with a remarkable son – Boaz. Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth.

Scene 7

RUTH: Like Rahab, I was not born a child of God. I learned of the Lord God of hosts from my first mother-in-law, Naomi. I had married her son when their family had come to Moab, to escape a famine. I was married 10 years, 10 long years of barrenness and disgrace before the devastating death of my husband left me a widow as well as childless.

NAOMI: My daughter-in-law, I have heard that the LORD has come to the aid of his people by providing food for them. So, go back to your mother's home.

RUTH: I will go back with you to your people.

NAOMI: When I return to Bethlehem I will have nothing. I will have to follow behind the harvesters, picking up what scant gleanings there'll be after years of famine. And you – you will be an outcast thrice over: barren, a widow and a foreigner. Return home.

RUTH: My home will be with you.

NAOMI: May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. May the LORD grant that you will find rest in the home of another husband here in your homeland. Now go back.

RUTH: Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you.

NAOMI: Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husband? I am too old. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me! Why would you come with me?

RUTH: The gods here in Moab are no gods at all. I admit I will be an alien and a stranger in Bethlehem. But I am longing for a better country, a heavenly one.

Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May your God not be ashamed to be called my God. (*RUTH and NAOMI move to center stage*)

NAOMI: By faith Ruth made her home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country. If she had been thinking of the country she had left, she would have had opportunity to return. Instead, Ruth kept her promise, staying with me, caring for me with a faithfulness and kindness beyond understanding. (*Boaz enters*) And God was not ashamed to be called her God. (*NAOMI gets baby*)

NARR: Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. The Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. (*NAOMI enters with Obed, WOMAN 1 & 2 step out of choir*)

WOMAN 1: Naomi has a son!

WOMAN 2: Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!

WOMAN 1: He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.

NARR: They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse.

Scene 8

MAGI 1: (*reading from a scroll*) A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD -

And he will delight in the fear of the LORD.
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;

But with righteousness he will judge the needy;
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

NARR: Jesse was the father of David.

RUTH: Let the Moabite fugitives stay with you;
be their shelter from the destroyer.
In love a throne will be established;
in faithfulness a man will sit on it—
one from the house of David—
one who in judging seeks justice
and speeds the cause of righteousness.

Scene 9

DAVID: King? Yes, I was a king but also an outlaw. I wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. It was through faith I escaped the edge of the sword; my weakness was turned to strength; and I became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. I conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised.

VO: Behold, the days are coming, when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; (*DAVID reverently kneels*) and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, `The Lord our righteousness.

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and I will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.

DAVID: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. (*David rises to his feet, moves to down center*)

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.

The stone the builders rejected will judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.

He will defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
he will crush the oppressor.

He will endure as long as the sun,
as long as the moon, through all generations.

The desert tribes will bow before him
The kings of Tarshish and of distant shores
will bring tribute to him;
the kings of Sheba and Seba
will present him gifts.

All kings will bow down to him
and all nations will serve him.

For he will deliver the needy who cry out,
the afflicted who have no one to help.

He will take pity on the weak and the needy
and save the needy from death.

He will rescue them from oppression and violence,
for precious is their blood in his sight.

Long may he live!
May gold from Sheba be given him.
May people ever pray for him
and bless him all day long.

May his name endure forever;
may it continue as long as the sun.
All nations will be blessed through him,
and they will call him blessed.

Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel,
who alone does marvelous deeds.

Praise be to his glorious name forever;
 may the whole earth be filled with his glory.
 Amen and Amen.

Scene 10

NARR: What more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, Samuel and the prophets, Women received back their dead, raised to life again. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

MAGI 1: From one man God made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

Star appears in the "sky". The Magi point to it.

MAGI 1: According to Daniel, the time has come for the Messiah. *(Reading from a scroll)* Listen! So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah, the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.

MAGI 3: *(Agreeing and reading from a scroll)* I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star shall come forth from Jacob, and a scepter shall rise from Israel.

MAGI 2: *(reading from a scroll)* And nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.

MAGI 1: *(reading from a scroll)* Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts... *(The other two MAGI pick up gifts)* So may he live; and may the gold of Sheba be given to him; and let them pray for him continually; Let them bless him all day long.

MAGI 2: *(reading from a scroll)* You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you

MAGI 1: Where? Where shall we seek this one, this Messiah, spoken of in these prophecies?

MAGI 3: *(reading from a scroll)* But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
 though you are small among the clans of Judah,
 out of you will come for me
 one who will be ruler over Israel,
 whose origins are from of old,
 from ancient times.

Scene 11

NARR: In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

Zechariah was chosen by lot to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. All the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

ZECHARIAH starts the offering on incense. An angel of the Lord appears, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. He is startled and gripped with fear

GABRIEL: 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. 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.

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

GABRIEL: 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.

Scene 12

ZECHARIAH moves to center stage and makes signs since cannot speak. Choir members enter the scene

WOMAN 1: He has seen a vision!

MAN 1: A vision from the Lord!

Scene 13

NARR: When his time of service was completed, he returned home. (*ZECHARIAH and ELIZABETH move to center stage right*) His wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion.

ELIZABETH: The Lord has done this for me; in these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.

Scene 14

GABRIEL: Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. (*MARY appears troubled*) 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: How will this be since I am a virgin?

GABRIEL: 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.

MAGI 1 (*reading from a scroll*) As Isaiah prophesied - The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel—which means, "God with us".

Scene 15

Mary crosses to Elizabeth

MARY: Elizabeth? (*Elizabeth grasps her swollen belly, turns to greet her*)

ELIZABETH: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, 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!

Scene 16

MARY: (Can be done as a musical solo)

My soul glorifies the Lord
 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
 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 forever,
 even as he said to our fathers.

Mary exits

Scene 17

WOMAN 1: Elizabeth has had her child!

ELIZABETH: It's a boy!

MAN 1: Zechariah is a father. Of a son!

MAN 2: The child should be named after his father.

ELIZABETH: NO! He is to be called John.

WOMAN 2: There is no one among your relatives who has that name.

MAN 1: *(to ZACHARIAH)* What do you say? *(hands him a tablet)* What shall he be called?
(ZECHARIAH writes and passes the tablet. Man appears surprised. Reading) His name is John.

ZACHARIAH: Yes, he shall be called John. *(People are amazed)*

WOMAN 1: What then is this child going to be?

ZACHARIAH: The voice of one crying in the wilderness, `Make ready the way of the Lord,
 make His paths straight. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts
 of the children to their fathers. All flesh shall see the salvation of God. *(ZACHARIAH moves
 down center, Choir takes their places)*

Scene 17b

ZACHARIAH:

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.
 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.

Scene 18

GABRIEL: Joseph son of David, do not divorce your betrothed. 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. (*GABRIEL exits, MARY enters; MARY and JOSEPH move center stage*)

Scene 19

NARR: In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. (*Shepherds go to center stage right*)

He went there to register with Mary and she 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 20

NARR: Shepherds in the fields nearby were keeping watch over their flocks at night.

GABRIEL enters. Maximum intensity light shines on the shepherds who are awakened and frightened

GABRIEL: 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.

CHORUS: Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests. *Segue into song*

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

Song(s). During song(s) Shepherds move to center stage, visit, then go spread the word about his birth. Audience members are told and a few brought to see the baby.

Scene 21

NARR: On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons, the offering of the poor who could not afford a lamb.

Mary, Joseph and baby move downstage right. Simeon sees them, takes the baby and raises one hand to God.

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

This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.

ANNA:

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,

and the government will be on his shoulders.
 And he will be called
 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace
 there will be no end.
 He will reign on David's throne
 and over his kingdom,
 establishing and upholding it
 with justice and righteousness
 from that time on and forever.
 The zeal of the LORD Almighty
 will accomplish this.

Mary and Joseph take baby center stage

MAGI 1: As Daniel foretold, the time of the Christ's coming is at hand. Here is the one who has been born king of the Jews. We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.

Song(s) They worship and present gifts. MAGI exit. Mary and Joseph lay down. Gabriel touches Joseph

GABRIEL: 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.

Joseph gets up, takes them and leaves

Scene 22

MAGI 2: *(reading from a scroll)* And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet Hosea: "Out of Egypt I called my son.

NARR: When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became insanely enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi. Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled. *(NARR moves down center)*

MAGI 3: *(reading from a scroll)* A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be comforted, because they were no more.

NARR: It is of little lasting consequence there was no room in the inn for the Messiah. It will be of everlasting consequence if you have no room for him in your heart.

Jesus **is** the Messiah. He not only claimed it, he *demonstrated* it by His fulfillment of every messianic prophecy we know of, leaving no room for doubt.

What is the probability of any one person fulfilling all the prophecies?

One in 3 million to fulfill just 6 of the 40 prophecies related to Jesus' birth.

The odds of Jesus fulfilling only eight of the Messianic prophecies as 1 out of 10^{17} (a one followed by 17 zeros). You have a better chance of randomly choosing a specific silver dollar from a pile covering the entire state of Texas piled two feet high.

Yet all the evidence, no matter how convincing, is not enough. Without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Will you seek the son of God as did the wise men, studying the prophecies then crossing hundreds of miles following one unusual star?

Would you leave home and family as Ruth and Abraham? Country and nation as Rahab? Live as an outlaw as David?

Momentarily we'll ask you to join us in singing O Come All Ye Faithful.

A: If you are one of the faithful and feel so moved, come out of your seat, walk down this aisle and stand with us, blending your voice with ours.

B: Perhaps you once counted yourself among the faithful but you have fallen away, your love has grown cold. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. You too can step out of your seat and into the aisle and join us, rededicating your life to him.

C: Jesus described himself as the Good Shepherd. He told a parable in Luke, chapter 15, about a shepherd who loses one of his sheep, who leaves the 99 and goes after the one lost sheep until he finds it. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

If you want to turn your life over to Jesus, or just find out more about becoming a Christian, step into the aisle, come down. We have people ready to talk to you, this very night. (*Choir and characters move downstage, to the floor, a person or two in each aisle*)

NARR: Please stand as we sing. For whatever your reasons, if you are so moved, join us down front as we sing.

O Come All Ye Faithful
 Joyful and triumphant,
 O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
 Come and behold Him,
 Born the King of Angels;
 O come, let us adore Him,
 O come, let us adore Him,
 O come, let us adore Him,
 Christ the Lord.

O Sing, choirs of angels,
 Sing in exultation,
 Sing all that hear in heaven God's holy word.
 Give to our Father glory in the Highest;
 O come, let us adore Him,
 O come, let us adore Him,
 O come, let us adore Him,
 Christ the Lord.

All Hail! Lord, we greet Thee,
 Born this happy morning,
 O Jesus! For evermore be Thy name adored.
 Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
 O come, let us adore Him,
 O come, let us adore Him,
 O come, let us adore Him,
 Christ the Lord.

NARR: Merry Christmas and God bless!

Staging for scenes 1-10 of Promised Children, Promised Child

CHOIR	CHOIR	CHOIR
	Abraham scene 4a Ruth and Naomi, scene 7, second part	
Adam and Eve, scene 2a, 3 Sarah scene 5 Ruth and Naomi, scene 7 – first part David scene 9a	Narrator scene 1 Adam and Eve, scene 2b Sarah and Abraham scene 4b, Abraham & Isaac scene 5 Rahab and spies scene 6 David, scene 9b	Narrator scene 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10 Ruth, scene 8 Magi scrolls scene 10

Staging for scenes 11-22

CHOIR	CHOIR	CHOIR
#11 Zechariah and altar #13 Zachariah and Elizabeth #15 Mary and Elizabeth #20 Gabriel and shepherds	#12 Zachariah and people (choir) #17 Naming of John #19 manger #22 house and Magi	#14 Mary and Gabriel #18 Joseph and Gabriel
#21 Temple, Anna, Simeon	#16 Mary's magnificent #17b Zechariah's song #22b Narrator	Narrator #22a, Magi/ scroll reading

Videos

1 – Adam and Eve's temptation by the serpent

Optional 2- Enoch, violence, Noah

Optional 3- Abraham leaving, moving through the desert

4 – Abraham sacrificing Isaac, has set dialogue

Optional 5 – Red Sea parting

Optional 6 – Jericho falling