

ISN'T THIS WHAT CHRISTMAS IS ALL ABOUT?

by Bernard Dougherty



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**ISN'T THIS WHAT
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ABOUT?**

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

Narrator 1

Isaiah

Narrator 2

John the Baptist

Angel (*Gabriel*)

Mary

women (*unlimited number*)

townspeople (*unlimited number, all ages*)

soldiers (*unlimited number*)

Joseph

innkeepers (*several who turn away the family*)

Innkeeper (*with the manger*)

Innkeeper's Wife

Mom

Sue (*daughter*)

Dad

Johnny (*son*)

angels (*unlimited number*)

shepherds (*unlimited number*)

Melchior (*first Wise Man*)

Balthazar (*second Wise Man*)

Gathspar (*third Wise Man*)

1 **NARRATOR 1:** For generations, as early as seven centuries
 2 before the birth of Christ, prophets proclaimed the coming
 3 of the King of Kings and Prince of Peace. This Messiah of
 4 the world was to be sent from God to restore righteousness
 5 and peace to all the peoples of the world. (*Enter ISAIAH,*
 6 *who goes to Stage Right by the altar.*)

7 **ISAIAH:** There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of
 8 Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the
 9 spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him — the spirit of wisdom
 10 and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the
 11 spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight
 12 will be in the fear of the Lord.

13 **NARRATOR 1:** And Isaiah continued explaining that this Lord
 14 of Life would not judge with his own eyes or decide with his
 15 own ears, but would judge the poor and the meek of the earth
 16 with justice, righteousness and equity. "Righteousness," said
 17 Isaiah, "would be the girdle of his waist and faithfulness
 18 would be the girdle of his loins." When this Prince of
 19 Peace would come, Isaiah promised that the wolf would
 20 dwell with the lamb and the leopard would lie down with
 21 the kid, and the calf and the lion, and the fatling together,
 22 while the little child would lead them.

23 **NARRATOR 2:** There was, at about the same time as Jesus,
 24 a man who had chosen to wander in the wilderness, with
 25 no particular place to call home. He was known as John
 26 the Baptizer. Some believed him to be the promised
 27 Messiah, but truth had it that he was yet another voice
 28 prophesying the coming of the Lord of Life. (*Enter JOHN*
 29 *THE BAPTIST from Stage Left.*)

30 **JOHN THE BAPTIST:** I have just come from the wilderness,
 31 having spoken with God quite often. He has called me to
 32 deliver to you this most important message: "Turn from
 33 sin to doing right, for the kingdom of God is at hand and
 34 the King is soon to come."

35 **NARRATOR 1:** The fact was that this prophet, the first prophet

1 from God for over four hundred years, was a cousin of
2 the Lord of Life. Elizabeth, John's mother, had heard the
3 Angel Gabriel speak to her and to her husband, Zachariah,
4 about the promise of favor from God. This message, of
5 course, filled their hearts with joy. But the angel left them
6 and went to a city in the north, called Nazareth, to share
7 the blessed message with Mary, that she was to be the
8 mother of the Lord of all life. (*Enter ANGEL and MARY.*)

9 ANGEL: Hail, woman favored by the Lord. The Lord is with
10 you. Do not be afraid, Mary. The Lord has chosen you to
11 be the mother of a son whose name shall be Jesus, which
12 means *salvation*, because he will save his people from their
13 sins. He shall be a King and shall reign over the people of
14 God forever; and of his rule there shall be no end! (*Exit*
15 *ANGEL, MARY, JOHN THE BAPTIST and ISAIAH.*)

16 NARRATOR 2: All this is to say, the gift of the Lord was
17 promised of old, was in due time fulfilled, and this is how
18 the story continues. God fulfilled the dreams, hopes, prayers
19 and promises of the prophets in the fullness of time, for
20 there is a time for every purpose under heaven. God made
21 the Word become flesh in the person of Jesus so that God
22 could dwell among us.

23 NARRATOR 1: Shortly after Mary discovered she was to be
24 the blessed mother of Jesus, Joseph, her husband, was
25 ordered to return to the hometown of his clan, the town of
26 Bethlehem, for the purpose of registration and taxation. You
27 see, Joseph was of the family of David, whose origins were
28 in that little town of Bethlehem. It had often been said that
29 nothing of any good would ever come from Bethlehem.
30 How this important story changed all that!

31 NARRATOR 2: These were the days of Caesar Augustus, when
32 the Roman government was in power and the military was
33 strong. As the townsfolk gathered in their hometowns,
34 everyone spoke of their fear of the soldiers, whose presence
35 was evident. (*Enter women who huddle together, holding jars,*

etc., so as to look like they were going about their routine chores. Townspeople enter, standing around in small clusters, looking fearful, while they talk among themselves, often looking over their shoulders. Soldiers enter, marching in order. As soldiers leave, townspeople disperse in different directions.)

NARRATOR 1: Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, after a long, dusty, dirty and difficult ride from Nazareth in the north. (MARY and JOSEPH walk down the aisle to the chancel, where several men stand as innkeepers. One is joined by his wife.) Mary was very tired, and simply desired somewhere to rest her head. After checking with the local innkeepers, Joseph was discouraged, because there was no room for them anywhere. One innkeeper had a lovely wife who had compassion for Mary and Joseph and convinced her husband to let them stay in the stable out behind the inn. By this time, any place was better than no place at all.

NARRATOR 2: While they were in that rude stable, the home of cattle, oxen, donkeys and other animals of burden, the time came for Jesus to be born. Mary gave birth to her first-born Son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

NARRATOR 1: Yes, my friends, the Savior of the world, the Lord of Life, the long-promised Messiah, was born in a manger — and his birth is that which we celebrate on Christmas.

(Suggested carol to be sung by congregation: "O Come, All Ye Faithful.")

SETTING: MOM and daughter, SUE, are busy preparing to bake Christmas cookies.

MOM: Sweetheart, this is what Christmas is all about. I can remember when I was a child just like you, how my mother

1 and I used to bake batch after batch after batch of Christmas
2 cookies. We'll do that today.

3 **SUE:** I think this will be fun!

4 **MOM:** You go get me the flour and some water and the milk,
5 and the flavorings. (*Lights fade as scene changes to the other*
6 *side of sanctuary, where DAD is getting ready to decorate the*
7 *Christmas tree.*)

8 **DAD:** I hate this. Every year, it's the same thing — get out
9 the Christmas tree. I sure am glad I got this artificial
10 one. (*DAD walks to door and shouts.*) Johnny, hurry up and
11 get those ornament boxes in here. I've got other things I
12 have to do today. If you're going to have a Christmas tree
13 this year, you'd better get a move on! (*JOHNNY enters,*
14 *carrying a huge stack of boxes. Scene changes to kitchen.*)

15 **SUE:** (*Carrying an armful of ingredients*) Mom, are you sure this
16 is what Christmas is all about?

17 **MOM:** (*Yelling*) Don't drop those things! I don't have time to
18 clean up a floor because of your laziness to carry things
19 over here in two trips! Where's the flour? You can't bake
20 without flour.

21 **SUE:** Are you sure this is what Christmas is all about?

22 **MOM:** Sure, Christmas is the time for parties and big meals,
23 so we have to have pretty cookies! That's exactly what
24 Christmas is all about! (*Scene changes to Christmas tree.*)

25 **DAD:** Hurry up, son. Get these ornaments unwrapped. Let's
26 get going. The big football game is on TV and I don't want
27 to be disturbed by this dumb Christmas tree stuff.
28 (*JOHNNY almost drops an ornament on floor.*) Johnny! Please
29 be more careful. That's a valuable collector's ornament.
30 We've had that in the family for many years. I sure don't
31 want you to destroy that ornament. If you did, it would
32 destroy our whole Christmas!

33 **JOHNNY:** Dad, are you sure this is what Christmas is all
34 about?

35

(Suggested carol to be sung by congregation: "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing.")

(Angels have slowly and quietly assembled around MARY, JOSEPH and the BABY.)

NARRATOR 2: All of life, even life in heaven among the angels, celebrated the birth of the King of Kings. The scripture tells us that a whole host of heavenly beings sang out praises, saying:

ANGELS: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to everyone on earth!

NARRATOR 1: There were shepherds in the fields watching their sheep when an angel appeared to them, the same angel who had spoken to Mary, Elizabeth, Joseph and Zachariah. *(GABRIEL goes to the row where shepherds are seated to speak directly to them.)* And the glory of the Lord was apparent, but the shepherds were filled with fear.

GABRIEL: Do not be afraid. I am here to bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. This will be your sign: you will go and find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

NARRATOR 1: And with the Angel were the voices of the other heavenly beings, saying:

ANGELS: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to everyone on earth!

(Suggested carol to be sung by congregation: "Angels We Have Heard on High.")

(Christmas tree is finished. DAD sits at card table, addressing Christmas cards.)

- 1 DAD: I wish I could figure out a quicker way to do this
 2 Christmas card stuff. Here — a card to Joe and Sue. They
 3 don't care if they get a card from us or not! I shouldn't
 4 waste the money on a card for them, anyway. But, they
 5 did send us a card last year. I guess I have to send a card.
 6 I'll send them one from this cheap box. (*Scene shifts to other*
 7 *side with MOM shopping. SUE is holding on to MOM'S skirt.*)
 8 MOM: Christmas shopping. I wish I could get out of this
 9 somehow! All these crowds. All these pushy shoppers. I
 10 wish everyone else would do their shopping in the summer,
 11 and stay out of my way!
 12 SUE: Mom, can we go visit Santa?
 13 MOM: No, honey. I've got more important things to do than
 14 that! Now, Mary Ann gave me a gift last year. What was
 15 it? I remember. It was a cheap box she expected me to
 16 put on my dresser. I wouldn't be caught dead with that
 17 thing in my house! Well, since she did give me a present,
 18 I guess I have to get her something. What's cheap around
 19 here?
 20 SUE: Mom, can I buy Johnny a little football for Christmas?
 21 MOM: No! If you don't quit interrupting my thought process,
 22 I'm going to have to spank you! Now, where was I...?
 23 Oh, my sister gave me a sweater that cost about thirty-five
 24 dollars last Christmas. I just have to buy her something
 25 worth at least forty dollars.
 26 NARRATOR 1: Now, the shepherds recognized that nothing
 27 they had to do was more important than going to find
 28 this amazing birth. Nothing could be more important to
 29 them than to celebrate their long-awaited dream come
 30 true. They left their sheep and journeyed to the crude
 31 manger to find the Baby and bowed down to worship him.
 32 NARRATOR 2: There were in the East many men known for
 33 their profound wisdom. They could tell happenings in the
 34 universe by the movements of the stars. Upon reflecting
 35 on the stars, they received wisdom from God and were

1 looked to for advice by kings and princes. One night, they
 2 saw a star, an unusually bright star, and followed their
 3 instincts and their God-given, divinely inspired wisdom
 4 in search of a Baby who, they had known, would be born
 5 the King of Kings and Prince of Peace. All the hustle and
 6 bustle of their lives seemed unimportant in relation to
 7 what they saw in the stars. The wisdom they could impart
 8 to kings and world leaders seemed to be of little importance
 9 when they could set out in search of this promised Messiah!
 10 Nothing was more important than setting out in worship
 11 of God.

12
 13
 14 *(Suggested carol to be sung by congregation: "We Three Kings*
 15 *of Orient Are.")*

16
 17 *(Lights come up on MOM and SUE in kitchen.)*
 18

19 SUE: Mom, while we're decorating these cookies, let's talk
 20 about the real meaning of Christmas.

21 MOM: Of course, sweetheart. What do you think the real
 22 meaning of Christmas is?

23 SUE: I think it is about doing things for others.

24 MOM: Why, that's great. Of course that is what Christmas is
 25 about. After all, God did something for us when he sent
 26 us his Son.

27 SUE: If we are to do things for others, can we make a plate
 28 of cookies for Mrs. Johnson down the street? She has no
 29 one else to care for her.

30 MOM: Oh, I wish we'd thought of that earlier. I would have
 31 made more so we could have taken some to her. We only
 32 have forty-two dozen left, and that'll only be enough for
 33 our own parties and get-togethers. Maybe next year we'll
 34 remember that! *(Scene shifts to DAD and JOHNNY.)*

35 JOHNNY: Dad, if Christmas is the time to celebrate the birth



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customerservice@christianpub.com