

CHARACTERS

<i>Theo</i>	<i>off-stage narrator</i>
<i>Angel</i>	<i>top</i>
<i>Mary (woman)</i>	<i>left</i>
<i>Shepherd (white beard)</i>	<i>left</i>
<i>Sheep</i>	<i>next to Shepherd</i>
<i>Joseph (black beard)</i>	<i>centre</i>
<i>Wise Man (king)</i>	<i>centre</i>
<i>Innkeeper (beardless)</i>	<i>right</i>
<i>Man (beardless with scarf/hat)</i>	<i>right</i>

Angel up

CREATION SONG by Ishmael

6 creation signs appear in turn along front during song

Angel down at end of song

Creation signs down

SCENE 1: IN THE BEGINNING

Theo In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and he was pleased with all he made.
In the beginning, God created people, and he was *very* pleased with all he made.

Innkeeper up

Innkeeper Pleased? Really? I don't think he's always very pleased with me.

Theo God loved his people and he wanted only good things for them. So he made a beautiful place for them to live with him, and he gave them rules to keep them safe.

Innkeeper Rules ... yeah ... I'm not so good with rules.

Theo God said. "Love me, and love each other, and all will be well." But instead, his people chose to love themselves. They broke his rules. And they began to spoil his beautiful world.

Shepherd and Sheep up

Shepherd Well there's certainly nothing beautiful about a shepherd's life. It's a hard life out on the hills, guarding the sheep. Sometimes it feels like nobody cares about me.

Theo God knew how hard life was for his people. They'd made a mess of things. They just kept breaking his rules and hurting each other.

Wise Man up

Wise Man It's a mess, all right. I don't know what's to be done about it. I've spent my whole life looking for the answer. I'd love to know the truth. I'd love to know what life's all about. But how can we ever hope to find out? I'm one of the richest and wisest men in the world. I've spent years studying and thinking about this. If I can't find the answer, then who can?

Theo But God had a plan. God had always had a plan, and now ... well, two thousand years ago, actually ... the time was right. The time had come for him to *show* his people the answer.

Innkeeper Well, it's no use him showing me. I'm a lost cause. I want to be good. I want to do what's right. But I just can't do it. I'm always messing up.

Theo But no matter how badly God's people messed up, he would never stop loving them. And now ... well, two thousand years ago, actually ... the time was right. The time had come for him to *show* them how much he loved them.

Shepherd That's all very well, but I can't see that it makes much difference to me. I'm just a nobody. Why would the

God who created heaven and earth care one jot about me?

Theo One jot? God doesn't care one jot about a lowly shepherd. He doesn't care just *one jot* about any of us. He cares more about us than we can ever imagine. And now ... well, two thousand years ago, actually ... the time was right. The time had come for him to *show* us - to show *all* of us - what he's really like, and what he wants us to be like.

The time had come for a child to be born in a cattle shed.

Innkeeper, Shepherd, Sheep and Wise Man down

CAROL: ONCE IN ROYAL (VERSES 1 & 2)

SCENE 2: MARY AND JOSEPH

House scenery up

Theo Once upon a time ... well, two thousand years ago, actually ... a young woman called Mary lived in a town called Nazareth.

Mary and Angel up

Angel Hi, Mary. You are truly blessed! The Lord loves you and is going to do an amazing thing through you.

Mary You're an angel from God! What's happening?

Angel Don't be afraid, Mary. God really loves you. You're going to have a baby, and you will call him Jesus. He will be great and will be known as the Son of the Most High. He will be the King of Kings.

Mary I don't understand. I'm not even married yet!

Angel By the power of the Holy Spirit, this baby will be the Son of God.

Mary Well, I love God and trust him.....so let it happen as you've said.

Mary and Angel down

Theo Mary wasn't married yet - but she was engaged to be married to a man called Joseph. And when Joseph

heard that she was going to have a baby, he wasn't at all sure what to do.

Joseph up

Joseph I don't want to do anything to make Mary unhappy. I want to do what's right.

Angel up

Angel Joseph, don't be afraid to marry Mary. Her baby is the Son of God. You'll call him Jesus, which means "The Lord Saves", because he will save his people from their sins.

Joseph All right. I'll do what you say. I'll marry Mary. And I'll take good care of this special baby.

Joseph and Angel down

Theo But life wasn't easy for Mary and Joseph. The country where they lived was ruled by the Romans, and at that time the Roman Emperor decided to take a census of the whole Roman empire. He wanted to know just how many people lived in each place.

Mary and Joseph up

Joseph Mary, we'll have to travel to Bethlehem for the census.

Mary Bethlehem? But that must be eighty miles away! It will take days for us to get there. And the baby will be born soon.

Joseph I know. But we must go. The Emperor wants people to go to the towns where their families come from, to be counted. And you know that I'm from the family of King David, and Bethlehem is his town.

Mary Ok, Joseph. Let's go. We'll just have to trust God to look after the baby.

Joseph He will, Mary. God never lets us down.

Theo So off they went, Mary and Joseph, on the long journey to Bethlehem.

Mary and Joseph down

House scenery down

CAROL: LITTLE DONKEY

SCENE 3: JESUS IS BORN

Bethlehem scenery up

Theo At last, Mary and Joseph reached Bethlehem. But life didn't get any easier for them once they reached the town.

Mary and Joseph up

Mary Oh, Joseph, there are so many people in Bethelhem. Where are we going to stay?

Joseph I don't know, Mary. I knew it would be busy, but I've never seen anything like this. Every inn we've tried has been full.

Mary The baby will be born very soon, Joseph. We *must* find somewhere.

Joseph Don't worry, Mary. God will look after us. Look, here's an inn that we haven't tried. And this time, I simply won't take no for an answer.

Innkeeper up

Joseph Please, sir, do you have a room for us? We must find somewhere to stay tonight. My wife is going to have a baby very soon.

Innkeeper A room? There are no rooms left anywhere in Bethlehem, never mind at my little inn.

Joseph We don't need much. Just a roof over our heads. Please, sir, can't you help us? You must see that my wife needs somewhere safe to rest.

Innkeeper Well ... there is one place. It's the shed where the animals sleep. It's not much, but it will be warm and dry.

Mary Oh, thank you. Thank you so much. May God bless you for your kindness to us.

Joseph, Mary and Innkeeper down

Put scarf/hat on Innkeeper (becomes Man)

Theo And that's how the Lord God of all Creation - the God who, in the beginning, created the heavens and the earth - came to be born in a stable, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, and laid in a manger.

CAROL: AWAY IN A MANGER

Bethlehem scenery down

SCENE 4: THE SHEPHERDS

Sheep scenery up

Theo That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep.

Shepherd, Sheep and Angel up

Shepherd It's an angel! He's so bright and shining, I can't bear to look any more.

Angel Don't be afraid! Listen, I bring you glorious news that will bring great joy to all people. Today, in Bethlehem, a Saviour has been born for you. He is Christ, the Lord.

Shepherd A Saviour has been born? What can this mean? I don't know what to think.

Angel Let this prove it to you: you will find a baby, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, and lying in a manger.

Theo And then suddenly the angel was joined by thousands of others - the armies of heaven - praising God.

Angel Glory to God in the highest Heaven! Peace to his people on earth!

Angel down

Shepherd Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see what's happened.

Shepherd and sheep down

Sheep scenery down

Theo So the shepherds hurried as fast as they could, and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in a manger.

After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard them were astonished! But Mary treasured all these things in her heart and pondered them often.

Then the shepherds went back to work - but everywhere they went, they told others about what had happened. It was just as the angel had told them.

CAROL: O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL (VERSES 1 & 3)

SCENE 5: THE WISE MEN

Star up

Theo Not long after Jesus was born, some wise men came from eastern lands to the city of Jerusalem. They were looking for Jesus, and they didn't know that he had been born in Bethlehem.

Wise Man and Man up

Wise Man Excuse me. My friends and I are looking for the newborn king of the Jews.

Man I'm sorry? I don't know what you're talking about.

Wise Man We have been studying the stars for many years, and we have seen a star that told us about a special new king for the Jews. We saw it as it rose, and straightaway we set off to find him, so that we can worship him.

Man A special new king for the Jews? Don't let King Herod catch you talking like that. He won't like it at all.

Wise Man and Man down

Theo Quite right. King Herod was really angry when he heard what the wise men were saying. He called a special meeting of the leading priests and teachers, and asked them where the Christ was supposed to be born. “In Bethlehem,” they said. “A prophet wrote about it hundreds of years ago.”

Wise Man and Man up

Man Hello again. Did you find that king you were looking for?

Wise Man Not yet. But we did find King Herod. Well, he found us actually.

Man Oh, dear. I did warn you that he wouldn't be pleased.

Wise Man Well, actually he was rather helpful. He said that the King of the Jews is supposed to be born in Bethlehem, so that's where we're heading now. In fact, King Herod even told us to come back here, once we've found the child, so that he can go and worship him, too.

Wise Man and Man down

Theo So the wise men went on their way to Bethlehem. And now the star, which they had seen in the east, went in front of them as they travelled, until at last it shone right over the place where the little child lay. The sight of the star filled them with indescribable joy.

Wise Man and Mary up

Theo When they saw the little child with his mother, Mary, these rich, wise men fell on their knees and worshipped him.

Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts.

Gold picture up

Wise Man Gold for the King of Kings.

Incense picture up

Wise Man Incense for the Son of God.

Myrrh picture up

Wise Man Myrrh for the one who had been born to save us all from our sins.

Theo Then, since they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, the wise men went back to their own country by a different route.

Wise Man and Mary down

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh pictures down

CAROL: SILENT NIGHT (VERSES 1 & 3)

SCENE 6: IN THE BEGINNING

Theo In the beginning ... well, two thousand years ago, actually ... one silent, holy night ... a child was born. The time was right. The time had come for God to be born on earth, so that everyone could see what he is like, and what he wants us to be like.

Innkeeper up

Innkeeper When we see Jesus, we know that God is love. We know that he will never stop loving us, no matter what we do. Because of Jesus, whenever we say sorry to God, and really mean it, he gives us a fresh start. God -

the awesome God who made the heavens and the earth
- is our Dad, and he loves us.

Shepherd up

Shepherd And that means *all* of us. The good news about Jesus is good news for *everyone*. There is not a single person in the whole world who isn't loved and cared for by our Father God.

Wise Man up

Wise Man Jesus is the way to get to know God. He shows us the truth about God. And when we decide to follow him, he helps us to live the most amazing life with God.

Mary up

Mary When we think about Jesus, we know that God has a plan for each one of us. He made us, and so he knows just what we're like and just what we can do.

Joseph up

Joseph Jesus shows us that we can always trust God to look after us. No matter how bad things might look - even when nothing seems to make any sense - God will never let us down.

Theo

Let's praise God again now, for the good news about Jesus. I bet you've often enjoyed singing "Away in a Manger" - but how often have you thought about what the words really mean?

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Two thousand years ago, away in a manger, that same God was born here on earth. And now we know that Jesus will always be near us, always love us, and always help us to be the people we were made to be: people fit to live with him in heaven, forever.

CAROL: AWAY IN A MANGER