

EPIPHANY PAGEANT 2023

CHARACTERS

Luke - Eric

Matthew - Gail W.

Zechariah/Guard - John L

Elizabeth - Shirley

Bystander/Wise One - Jacquie

Mary - Gail J

Angel - Cassia

Herod - Peter

John - Miranda

LUKE

Hello, friends! My name is Luke. I have made a thorough study of all the sources concerning the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, and I am prepared to present the authoritative account of everything you need to know about Jesus.

The story of Jesus begins with an old man and an old woman, Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Now, Zechariah was of the priestly line of Abijah, established by King David back when Israel was a mighty nation. And Elizabeth was a descendent of Aaron, the brother of Moses, who was the very first priest to worship God in the holy Tabernacle in the Wilderness.

So these were VERY HOLY PEOPLE.

But they didn't feel very fulfilled, because they wanted to be parents, but had never had a child.

Zechariah was a priest at the Great Temple in Jerusalem. One day it was Zechariah's turn to serve at the altar, in the holiest, most secret part of the Temple. You go in with a rope attached to you, in case God's holiness overwhelms you while you're in there and you die!

Zechariah walked up to the altar to make an offering of incense. And then - suddenly -

ANGEL
FEAR NOT!

ZECHARIAH
AAAAGH!

ANGEL

I said, FEAR NOT! Listen, Zechariah, your prayers have been heard! Your wife Elizabeth will become pregnant and have a son. You will be so happy! Your son has a special calling. He will prepare the way for the One who is coming, and turn the people's hearts towards God.

ZECHARIAH (*doubtful*)

I don't know about all that. My wife and I are *very* old.

ANGEL (*angry*)

I AM GABRIEL, who stands in the presence of God, the Holy One! I was sent to you with this good news! Now, since you have doubted, you will not speak any words until MY words are fulfilled!

LUKE

So Zechariah and Elizabeth went home. And what do you know! She became pregnant, just as the Angel had said.

Now, Elizabeth had a cousin named Mary, a young woman who was not yet married, though she was engaged - to a man named Joseph. And one day, a few months after Elizabeth became pregnant, suddenly...

ANGEL

Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you!

MARY

What sort of greeting is this?

ANGEL

Don't be afraid, Mary! You have found favor with God. You will conceive and bear a son. And you will call him Jesus.

MARY

How is this possible?

ANGEL

The Holy Spirit will come to you, by the power of the Most High God. The child you bear will be holy. He will be called the Son of God and the Prince of Peace. And look, as proof that God can do anything, consider your cousin Elizabeth - she's going to have a child soon, and she is VERY old!

MARY

Behold, I am the servant of God! Let everything happen with me just as you have said.

LUKE

Then Mary hurried off to visit Elizabeth, at their country house in the hills.

ELIZABETH

Blessed are you among woman, and blessed is your child! I am honored, for the mother of my God has come to me. As soon as I heard your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy!

MARY

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! God has looked kindly on my lowliness, and raised me up so that generations to come shall call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me and for all people; God's name is holy!

LUKE

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months, then returned home. Now, the time came for Elizabeth to have her child, and she gave birth to a son.

BYSTANDER

OOOH, what a lovely boy! You should name him Zechariah, after his father!

ELIZABETH

No. His name will be John.

BYSTANDER

That's really weird. Nobody in your family has that name! What does his father say?

ZECHARIAH (*holds up a sign/piece of paper that just says, JOHN*)
HIS - NAME - WILL - BE - JOHN. Hey, I can talk again!!

BYSTANDER

My gracious! Such goings-on! What will this child become!?!?

ZECHARIAH

Welcome, baby John! God has blessed us indeed.
Blessed be the Holy One of Israel,
who has remembered and redeemed us!
God is raising up a mighty Savior for us!
And you, my son, will prepare the way for him.
In God's tender mercy, a new dawn is coming,
And God's light will shine on those who dwell in the shadow of death.

LUKE

Everyone was full of joy! And a few months later, Mary's baby was born...

MATTHEW (Interrupting!)

Hello, good people! I am here to tell you about Jesus of Nazareth! My name is Matthew. I have done extensive research and I can tell you the whole story of his life, death, and resurrection! The most important thing to know about Jesus is this: He is the second MOSES! The great liberator of the Jewish people in ancient times!

When our ancestors were slaves in Egypt, persecuted by Pharaoh, Moses was called by God to lead us to freedom and establish us as God's chosen nation, bound by holy covenant!

LUKE (*Trying to get Matthew's attention*)

Um, excuse me - yes, Moses was a hero of our people - but what does all this have to do with Jesus?

MATTHEW

I told you! Jesus is the second Moses! He led God's people to a new relationship with God, and a new freedom of heart! They have so much in common - don't you see it? Moses was part Jewish, part Egyptian. Jesus was part human, part God.

LUKE

I suppose I can see that...

MATTHEW

And they were both nearly murdered by evil kings when they were babies!

LUKE

... I beg your pardon?

MATTHEW

Yes! King Herod, like Pharaoh in Egypt, was so fearful that a baby made him tremble on his throne...

HEROD

Hi! I'm King Herod, and I am SO BORED. Hey, Guard - are any of my children plotting against me?

GUARD

No, sir.

HEROD

How can you be so sure?

GUARD

You've killed them all, sir.

HEROD

Oh, right. I'm so bored...

GUARD

Visitors from afar are here to honor the Great King, Your Majesty!

HEROD (*cheering up*)

That's more like it. See them in!

WISE ONE

Greetings, O King Herod! May you live forever! My colleagues and I have come many days' journey, from our observatory in the mountains far to the east. We study the stars, and the stars told us that a new King has been born in Judea. So we have come, following the star, to honor him. Congratulations on the birth of your son!

HEROD (*frowning*)

I have no new son. No child has been born in this palace in years.

WISE ONE (*confused*)

But the stars gave a clear message! What does this mean?

HEROD

O Wise Ones from the East... tell me, the star that told you of a new-born king... when exactly did that happen?

WISE ONE

The baby should be born right about NOW.

HEROD

Hmmm. And ancient prophesy says that our next great king will be born in Bethlehem. So you will no doubt find the child you seek if you go to Bethlehem, and ask around for a newborn baby boy. And when you have found the child, I beg you, come back and tell me where to find him, so that I, too, may come and honor him!

WISE ONE (*enthusiastically*)

Oh, we will, O King! We will! Thank you so much!

MATTHEW

The Wise Ones followed the star, and it led them to a humble home; there they found the Holy Child, with his mother. And they gave him gifts, and prepared to go back and tell Herod where to find him.

ANGEL

What about the shepherds?

MATTHEW

There were no shepherds.

LUKE

There were definitely shepherds.

MATTHEW

THERE WERE NO SHEPHERDS. AS I WAS SAYING... the Wise Ones were going to go back to Herod. But of course Herod, like Pharaoh before him, had murderous intentions! He did not want to honor the child, but to dispose of him!

ANGEL

O Wise Ones, don't go back to Herod! He wants to kill the baby!

WISE ONE

Oh my goodness! That's terrible! We must go home by another road!

ANGEL

Mary and Joseph, you should get out of here too! Try Egypt!

MATTHEW

Only the angel's warning saved Jesus - just as baby Moses was saved from Pharaoh's cruelty, when his mother put him in a basket to float away to safety on the River Nile!

Herod soon realized he had been tricked by the Wise Ones...

HEROD

Hey!!! What gives?

MATTHEW

So he sent his guards to Bethlehem, to kill all the baby boys in the city!

LUKE

STOP! STOP! This is terrible! I never heard about anything like this!

MATTHEW (*indignant*)

Are you accusing me of making things up?

LUKE

I'm just saying that in all my research, I never heard about a massacre of babies in Bethlehem!

MATTHEW

Well, I never heard about anything like those POEMS you put into your story!

LUKE

Oh yeah? Well, I got them from Mary!

MARY

Yeah! I pondered them in my HEART!

MATTHEW

Well, it's all very pretty, I suppose, but it sure takes up a lot of room. Your story needs less poetry and more politics!

LUKE

Your story needs more poetry and less plagiarism! You're making Herod into Pharaoh just to make Jesus into Moses!

HEROD

Hey! I don't need any Gospel writer to make me cruel and depraved. I can do that on my own!

ELIZABETH

What kind of jerk tries to kill BABIES? Pick on somebody your own size!

GUARD

Well, NOW what am I supposed to do?

ANGEL

Find a better job? Maybe something less MURDERY?

JOHN [*INTERRUPTING DRAMATICALLY*]

IN. THE. BEGINNING.

Was the WORD.

And the Word was WITH GOD...

And the Word... WAS God.

Through him came LIFE...

And that LIFE was the LIGHT of all people.

The light shines in the darkness...

and the darkness DID NOT overcome it.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us -

and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son -

full of grace and truth.

MARY

Quite right! He's a lovely baby.

LUKE

Say, who are you, anyway?

JOHN

There was a man sent from God... whose name was... John?

MATTHEW

And... you're talking about Jesus. Right?

JOHN (*nodding*)

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

LUKE

I'm not sure I follow, but ... okay?

MATTHEW

I guess people are just going to have to read different versions of the story and figure it out for themselves.

LUKE

I guess they are.

MATTHEW

Your version still has too much poetry.

LUKE

Your version still has too many BABIES being murdered!

ANGEL

He will be called THE PRINCE OF PEACE!

LUKE

Fine, fine. Have it your way.

MATTHEW, LUKE, and JOHN (*SPEAKING IN UNISON*)

This is the story of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.