“The Nazareth Evening News”

A Children’s Christmas Play

by

Karin Alferink

SYNOPSIS

The town of Bethlehem is on the verge of a world changing event, the birth of our Savior. A young couple expecting a baby has travelled to Bethlehem to be counted as part of the Roman census. Mary’s baby is about to be born and Joseph looks for a place for them to stay. The audience will get to experience the events of the night through the reporting of the Nazareth Evening news. In addition, field reporters will bring breaking news updates, interview eyewitnesses who saw the choir of angels, and report on the census “debacle.” Shepherds, Wisemen, and even Mary and Joseph are interviewed by eager reporters excited to get the story out. This version of the nativity story creatively and humorously mixes biblical truths with present day elements and jargon.

LENGTH

Approximately 45 Minutes

Cast

David (Randy Nunn) & Tom (Abe Peters): News broadcasters with dry personalities. They take their job of reporting the news very seriously. They speak slowly and over annunciate each word.

Joanne (Joanne Vogelsang) & Suzanne (Gwen Beyer): Field reporters eager for their big break. Skeptical about the birth of Jesus. They live for breaking news and being the first to deliver a story.

Shepherds: They are laid back guys/girls. They are blown away by the angel encounter. They are almost modern characters set in biblical time. They kind of talk like “surfer dudes.” There are 3 shepherds. **(Ewe-landa – Rebecca Peters; Bethany Woolson – Mariah Peters; Martha Lambkins – Sophia Peters)**

Wiseman: Experienced star watchers who are on a journey following the star and searching for baby Jesus. There are 3 Wisemen. **(Wise man 1 – Owen McNamara; Wise man 2 – Daniel Cook; Wiseman 3 – Theo Cyr)**

Mary (Ainsleigh McNamara): Humble but confident earthly mother of Christ. Obedient to God’s call.

Joseph: Humble but confident earthly father of Christ. Obedient to God’s Call

Producer (Morgan Wissink): Has 1 line. Starts the news broadcast. Hods a clip board and wears headphones.

Camera Operator (Jackson Peters): Does not have lines. Holds a camera and points to Jack and Suzanne to signal them to begin their live broadcast.

COSTUMES

Shepherds, Wisemen, Mary, and Joseph – Biblical costumes

Animal costumes: sheep (2-3), donkey (1), camel (1) –more animals optional

News broadcasters – Business suits

Field reporters – trench coats or overcoats

Angel costumes for kids to wear in the pictures to be shown on the screen.

PROPS

Table with 2 chairs and 2 Lapel mics for news broadcasters

A “Nazareth Evening News” sign to hang on the front of the news broadcasters table.

Clipboard and headset/headphones for producer (headphones don’t have to be plugged into anything.

Handheld mic for field reporters (A “Chanel 25” microphone wrap optional)

Straw bales, manger, and doll for the stable

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh for wiseman

Pictures of kids in angel costumes bringing good news of great joy to be shown on the screen when prompted in the script

Pictures of sheep reacting to the good news (to be shown on the screen when prompted in the script

A selfie of Suzanne Hehaw (to be shown on the screen when prompted in the script)

Big video camera for the camera operator

MUSIC

Opening theme music for news broadcast

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus (possible solo)

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing – Mission Kids (Grade 1 to 4 Class)

Twinkle, Twinkle Christmas Star – Mission Kids (Age 2 to SK Class)

Go Tell It On the Mountain – Mission Kids (Grade 1 to 4 Class)

Lights up on Newscasters. The scene opens with the anchors, David and Tom, sitting at the news desk on stage left. They are making last minute notes, shuffling papers, and making sure their hair and ties are straight. The ***Producer*** *moves in front of them motioning to a pretend camera and begins the countdown.*

MUSIC CUE: Newscast Music

Newsroom Scene on Screen

Producer: And we're live in 5… 4… 3… 2… 1… (Points at **David** to being)

David: Good evening, I'm David Myrrh, and welcome to the Nazareth Evening News. We begin tonight's broadcast with a programming note. Tonight's news production contains elements of truth and fiction. While the birth of Jesus really did happen over 2000 years ago in Bethlehem, a news broadcast of the event did not occur. There were no field reporters on scene interviewing people and we have taken some creative liberties with the timeline of events. In addition, we are not real news broadcasters and this is not a real news studio. With that said, we invite you to enjoy today's production.

Tom: Thank you, David. I'm Tom Frankincense. We continue tonight's broadcast with our top story. There was a major camel accident on the road to Bethlehem today. With traffic volumes high, due to the census issued by Caesar, and people returning to their home towns to be counted, folks need to be alert and watch out for distracted riders.

David: That's right, Tom. It's been reported that distracted riding was the cause of the accident which had over 50 camels involved. Authorities say the number of injured is at 75 and that number is expected to rise. Authorities are advising that you avoid the main route to Bethlehem and if possible, detour through the fields where the shepherds are abiding and keeping watch over their flocks. We'll bring you more details as they become available.

Show Video of Camel Pileup on Screen

Newsroom Scene on Screen

Tom: Thank you David. Distracted camel riding is becoming a real problem as younger riders check their satchels instead of always keeping their eyes

on the road. In other news, the census is also causing other headaches for travelers as overnight accommodations are getting more and more difficult to find. For more on this story we go to Channel 25's reporter, Joanne Greengrass. Joanne, what can you tell us about this growing problem?

Lights up stage right. ***Joanne****, the field reporter, is holding a microphone and standing in front of a background that looks like the "Streets of Bethlehem". Camera Operator holds a video camera. You can also have extras as market goers in the background with baskets, merchants selling their wares, etc.*

Camera Operator *points at* ***Joanne*** *signaling that they're live.*

Joanne: Thanks, Tom. I'm standing in the streets of Bethlehem where I see families from all over the region desperately searching for inns that still have rooms available. As of an hour ago, there were one or two inns that still had a few empty rooms but they were being snatched up quickly. By now I'm sure most inns have reached capacity and people are being turned away. In fact, I just saw one couple being directed to a stable out back. The wife was riding on a donkey being led by her husband. And from the looks of things she was quite pregnant and about to have a baby. David, I'll send things back to you now in the studio.

Lights out stage right. ***Joanne****,* ***Camera Operator****, and any extras exit.*

Show Newsroom background on Screen

David: Thank you, Joanne. Well, if that's any indication of the troubles this census is causing, I'm sure Caesar will think twice about requiring another one. If you have any viewer photos or comments about the census, you can post them to Instagram and tag us or use the hashtag "B.C. Census"

Tom: After the commercial break, we will give you an update on a story we brought you earlier this week about a Hebrew prophecy proclaiming the coming of a new king for the Jewish people. Please enjoy this message from one of our sponsors this half hour, [Name of Soloist].

Show Name of Sponsor on Screen

SONG: COME THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

Show Newsroom background on Screen

Tom: Welcome back, viewers. As I stated before the break, there is an update on the story we brought you last week regarding a Hebrew prophesy of a coming king. Ancient prophets have been writing about his coming for hundreds of years. Yet we still have not witnessed his arrival.

David: That's right, Tom. Some local folks speculate and are hoping that the long-awaited Messiah will come with armies and power to overthrow Herod and free them from Roman oppression. There's even talk that he will come from the line of David right here in Bethlehem. Additionally, as more and more people arrive in Bethlehem for the census we can't help but wonder, is the arrival of the long-prophesied Messiah and Savior close at hand? We will continue to monitor this story and bring you more updates as they become available.

Tom: Feel free to send us a tweet or snapchat a photo if you have any viewer updates on this story of the so called "coming Messiah." I'm sure Herod is not too happy about this prophesy brouhaha and just wants it to go away. *(Shuffling papers)* Furthermore, since prophets have been talking about it for hundreds of years and nothing has happened, I'm not holding my breath for any breaking news.

Suzanne, ***Shepherds***, and ***Sheep*** enter stage right.

David: Um Tom, I'm sorry to interrupt but we have breaking news. I'm getting a report from the fields outside of Bethlehem that a choir of angels simply appeared out of thin air and started singing. I'm being told in my ear *(cup ear as if listening to a producer)* that we have a reporter that just arrived on the scene. Let's go to Suzanne Hehaw to see if she can shed some light on the situation. Suzanne, what can you tell us about this supposed celestial serenade?

Light up stage right. ***Suzanne****, the* ***Shepherds****,* ***Sheep****, and* ***Camera Operator*** *are standing in front of a set that looks like the fields of Bethlehem.* ***Suzanne*** *is holding a microphone ready to interview the* ***Shepherds****.* ***Camera Operator*** *points at* ***Suzanne*** *when live.*

Show Fields of Bethlehem background on Screen

Suzanne: You heard that right, David. According to the shepherds who are out here abiding in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night, the sky simply opened up and instantly filled with angels. Let's talk right to one of the shepherds who witnessed the event. I have Ewe-landa the shepherd here with me. Ewe-landa, what can you tell us?

***Suzanne** holds microphone up to **Ewe-landa** for to speak.*

Ewe-landa: Oh man. It was the craziest thing. I had just settled down for the night. They were kind of off, not really able to bend down like normal… they were skittish. It's like they knew something major was about to happen. I kept looking for a lion or wolf or something. You can never be too careful up here in the fields. I usually try to sleep with one eye open, ya know what I'm sayin'? Anyway… then all of a sudden there was a blinding light! We all looked up and instantly fell to the ground in fear! We had no idea what was happening!

***Bethany Woolson** grabs the microphone from **Ewe-landa** with excitement.*

Bethany: That's right. We thought we were in a dream or something. We were just terrified and shaking, waiting for it to stop. Then all of a sudden one of the angels started talking to us. He said, "Do not be afraid." And I was like "well, too late for that." Then he said, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all 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." We were like, "What is he talking about? Is this some kind of joke?" We thought someone was going to jump out from behind a sheep and tell us we were on candid camera.

***Martha Lambkins** grabs the microphone from **Bethany** with excitement.*

Martha: But nobody did. Just then it got quiet again and we thought maybe it was over, but then suddenly a great company of the heavenly hosts 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." Totes cray cray right?

***Suzanne** takes the microphone back rom **Martha**.*

Suzanne: *(looking confused)* So you're telling me that a group of angels appeared out of nowhere, told you they had good news of great joy, and then announced that the Savior, Christ the Lord has been born… in a manger? *(To camera)* Wow! You can't make this stuff up!

Suzanne *keeps the microphone but holds it up to each* ***Shepherd*** *for them to say their lines.*

Martha: No kidding! We didn't know what to think at first. Then we got to talking and we decided that maybe we should check it out and see if what the angels said was true. You know us shepherds, we have FOMO when it comes to good news of great joy.

Suzanne: FOMO? What does that even mean? Does no one use complete sentences anymore?!?! Millennials… *(exasperated)*

Bethany: Um duh… *(looking slightly confused/annoyed*) Hashtag fear of missing out…

Ewe-landa: Yeah, it's not every day that a group of angels delivers such life altering news to a brood of lowly shepherds like us. So, with all due respect ma'am, we really want to go to Bethlehem… Now!

Shepherds *rush off stage*

Suzanne *looks at the camera.*

Suzanne: Well folks, you heard it here first. The ancient prophets may have been on to something with their baby theory. *(Talking with slight disbelief)* Tonight, in Bethlehem, a baby has been born, a Savior of the world, according to the angels. It appears this baby could undoubtedly, change the course of history. Back to you in the studio, Tom.

Lights down stage right. ***Suzanne*** *and* ***Camera Operator*** *exit.*

Show Newsroom background on Screen

Tom: Well folks, on that note, we need to take a commercial break. This has been an unprecedented turn of events tonight. Our producers are trying to gather additional details and we have more reporters heading out to Bethlehem to see if in fact this supposed baby has been born. In the meantime, please enjoy this message from our sponsors this half hour, the Mission Kids Sr. Choir.

SONG: HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Lights up stage life.

David: Welcome back, folks. During the commercial break, we received these photos from various eyewitnesses who saw the angel encounter. They tagged us on Instagram and used the #wdijsagoapgnogjfapasaab which stands for "whoa dude I just saw a group of angels proclaiming good

news of great joy for all people and singing about a baby." Seems a bit excessive… but ok, we'll go with it *(facial expression/exasperation).*

On screen, there are photos of singing/smiling ***Angels****,* ***Sheep****, and* ***Suzanne*** *selfie on a big screen. *You can have a lot of fun with these pictures—selfies with angels, photobombing angels, etc.*

Newsroom Scene on Screen

David: As you can see from the photos the angels are, in fact, singing, smiling, and bringing good news of great joy. Even the sheep look like they're having fun.

Tom: Wow! Well those photos and the eyewitness account from the shepherds are pretty convincing. I'm starting to think that something amazing could have happened tonight. And Suzanne… who knew she could take such good selfies?! *(****Tom*** *pauses, cups ear, and listens. A bring big star turns on over the staple at far stage right)* I'm getting a message from the producers that there is a strange light, a bring star of some sort, that is shining over Bethlehem. *(Talking to the camera to the "producer")* Do we have a crew that we can send to the scene? Do we know if the star is shining on someplace or someone in particular?

David: (cups ear to listen) Tom, I'm being told that Joanne Greengrass, our Bethlehem reporter, is still on the scene in Bethlehem, and is preparing to go live. She has some more details to share on the census lodging crisis and this new star. Apparently, this star is connected to the long-awaited Messiah who, coincidentally, is who the angels sang about to the shepherds earlier tonight. Before we go live to Joanne, we need to take a commercial break and hear a word from our sponsors.

Show Pharisee, Pharisee, Sadducee Law commercial

Newsroom Scene on Screen

Joanne *and* ***Wisemen*** *enter stage right*

Lights up stage left.

Tom: We're back. As we said before the break, there is an extraordinarily bright star that has appeared over a stable or barn of some sort in Bethlehem. We're going live to **Joanne**, our Bethlehem reporter. **Joanne**, what can you tell us?

"Streets of Bethlehem" Background on Screen

Joanne: Thank you, Tom. As I said earlier, there are no rooms available in any inns now. Everything is full. While I was making my way through the streets of

Bethlehem in search of where the star is shining, I met these three kings. They tell me they have been on a journey searching for the baby that the star shines for. The star appears to be shining over the stable where earlier I saw a husband and very pregnant wife being directed to, since all the inns are full. Could that be the baby the angels sang about, and that these men are searching for? Let's hear it right from them. What can you tell us about your journey?

Joanne *holds the microphone in front of each* ***Wiseman*** *as they say their lines.*

Wise 1: We have been studying stars for years. We often heard about this special star, an unusually bright star that would lead us to the promised king. We were waiting for it so when the star appeared we knew that we had to follow it.

Wise 2: That's right. We are experienced star watchers. We knew immediately that the star would lead us to the long-awaited Messiah.

Wise 3: We even brought these gifts to present to him. As we began our journey we stopped to pay respects to King Herod and tell him of our trip to find the baby written about in the prophesy. He was very interested and almost eager to find the baby too. He said he wanted to meet the baby King so he could bow to him… or bury him… I don't remember now. It was one of those two. *(Finger on chin and looking up as if thinking. A little confused.)*

Joanne: So, you're telling me that this star did not appear out of nowhere? It has a meaning… a purpose? It is leading you… or us to the Messiah? The Savior King that has been prophesied about for centuries, is in that stable under the light of that bring star?

Wise 1: Yes. We believe he is. We have traveled many, many miles to find the baby and worship him.

Wise 2: If this baby is the long-awaited Messiah, then we *need* to worship him. We all do.

Wise 3: He deserves our gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. He also deserves our worship and praise. Why don't you come with us and we can find the baby together?

Joanne: Oh, I'm not sure… but the ratings would be huge. (Debating whether he should go) A King born in a barn? You can't make this stuff up. Why not! Let's go! **David**, can you hear me in the studio? *(**David** perks up and cups ear as if listening)* I'm going with the Wisemen to find the baby. The angels sang about him, the shepherds left the fields to find him, the

Wisemen traveled with gifts to meet him… I think we need to bring our viewers to the baby as well.

Newsroom Scene on Screen

David: *(Acting slightly surprised)* Well all right then… thank you, **Joanne**. We look forward to your live report from the stable. While we wait for them to arrive we're going to take a commercial break. Please enjoy this message from our sponsors, the Mission Kids Jr. Choir.

SONG: TWINKLE, TWINKLE CHRISTMAS STAR

Lights up stage Left

Tom: And we're back. What a night we've had folks. What started as a typical evening in Nazareth has turned into just the opposite. The camel accident, the census debacle which caused an influx of travelers to Bethlehem, then angels appearing out of nowhere to sing about a savior being born in a manger in Bethlehem, and finally Wisemen traveling many miles following a mysterious bright star hoping it would lead them to this aforementioned baby. Let's go back to **Joanne** Greengrass, in Bethlehem, to see if she has an update for us. **Joanne**, what can you tell us? We're all waiting to know.

Lights up at stable

***Joanne** is sitting in the stable with **Mary** and **Joseph** on either side of her. **Shepherds**, **Wisemen**, and **Animals** are also there. The stable has straw bales and a manger. Characters can stand or sit on straw bales around **Mary** and **Joseph**. Baby Jesus is lying in the manger. **Camera operator** kneels in front of **Mary**, **Joseph**, and **Joanne**.*

Stable Background on Screen

Joanne: Well **Tom**, this is unprecedented. Never in all my years of journalism have I reported on a story that is as riveting as this one. Let me set the scene. I'm here in the stable, under the bright star, whit the **shepherds** we met in the fields, the **wisemen** who we met before the commercial break, and a young mom and dad who have just brought a baby into the world. They are calm, and sort of blown away by the attention they are receiving tonight. The baby wasn't born in a warm clean house. He isn't sleeping in a bed or wrapped in nice garments. He was born in a barn, with animals. And he's sleeping in a manger where animals eat. And he's wrapped in tattered strips of cloth. Well, rather than listen to me go on and on, I want to get their side of the story. Excuse me, **Mary**, may I ask you a few questions?

Joanne *holds the microphone for* ***Mary*** *and* ***Joseph*** *as they say their lines.*

Mary: Of course. What would you like to know?

Joanne: Well, to begin, who is this baby? I've heard from a lot of people who they think he is, but as his mother, you would know best. How can this baby, born in a dirty, cold stable be the long-awaited Messiah of the world? It just doesn't make sense.

Mary: Well Joanne, you're right about one thing. He does look like a regular baby. Be he's not. He is God's Son. He may be a tiny baby now, and he may have been born in a stable, but he will grow up and be a King. He will bear the weight of the world upon his shoulders and be the Savior of the world. This is all God's plan.

Joanne: Whoa, whoa, whoa… Savior of the world???? Seriously? You think so too? *(Talking discreetly to the others out of the side of her mouth)* Does King Herod know that?? Cause that could be awkward… I'm just sayin'.

Mary: Yes. I trust God that my son, Jesus, is God's son and the King of Kings. It was in the sixth month that the angel Gabriel came to me while I was in Nazareth. He said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." I was afraid, not quite sure what that meant. But the angel continued, he said, "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." The angel explained that the Holy Spirit would come upon me and the power of the Most High would overshadow me and that the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. So, who am I to question a messenger from the Most High God? We all know that nothing is impossible with God. So, I responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." Then just as quickly as he came, the angel was gone.

Joanne: Well that's nice and all… a little unsettling, but interesting. I can't imagine that your husband, Joseph, took the news well. You have to admit that things did not look good for you. Joseph, did you believe Mary when she told you the story of the angel encounter? And can I just say that angels have been making quite a few appearances lately? They've been busy! Wait, let me guess. An angel appeared to you too??

Joseph: Well Joanne, yes, an angel appeared to me too, in a dream. *(**Joanne** looking stunned with mouth gaping open)* The angel said to me, "Joseph, son of David, 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." So, while at first it was hard to accept, I quickly realized that God had a bigger plan for our lives than we could ever imagine. His plans are better and we are humbled that he chose us to be the parents of this amazing baby.

Joanne: Wow, this is a lot to take in. I'm not even sure what to make of it. I think our viewers need a brief minute to collect their thoughts. David, I'm going to send it back to you in the studio for a commercial break.

Lights dim in the stable. Lights up full on stage left for the news anchors.

Newsroom Scene on Screen

David: *(blank look of disbelief on his face)* Just when you thought you've heard it all… *(shakes it off.)* This is the kind of night we journalists live for. It's one of those once-in-a-lifetime nights of groundbreaking reporting. So, on that note, we're going to take a commercial break. Please enjoy this message from our sponsor.

SONG: SILENT NIGHT (STILLE NACHT) – Dieter Vogelsang

Lights up stage left.

David: Welcome back folks. Are you as stunned as me? I'm still trying to gather my thoughts and process what we've heard tonight. Could it be true? Was the Savior of the world born tonight? In a stable? Is this Jesus going to grow up to be King of Kings? I have to say that I'm starting to believe it. Joanne, I'm going to send it back to you. What else can you tell us?

Lights up at the stable. ***Joanne*** *and other characters are still circled around* ***Mary*** *and* ***Joseph****.* ***Mary*** *is holding baby Jesus.* ***Camera Operator*** *points at* ***Joanne*** *when they are live.*

Stable Background on Screen

Joanne: David, let me start by saying that I have been a skeptic when it comes to the prophesy of a Messiah… a Savior. All our lives we've heard the same story that one day we would be rescued by the Son of God. But the Son of God never came. Herod and the Roman Empire think they rule this world and anyone who questions them is well.. you don't want to know. So when the reports of the angel's message and the mysterious bright star started coming in, I didn't make much of it. What's the point? God hadn't spoken through the prophets for hundreds of years. But now, sitting here with Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus, I do believe that this baby, baby Jesus is God's Son and the Savior of the world.

Joanne *holds microphone for* ***Mary*** *and* ***Joseph****.*

Joseph: Joanne, you're right. This is an exciting and holy night. It's a night like no other. God's Son was born right here in this stable in Bethlehem. He wasn't born in a palace. He wasn't born into earthly wealth. This little baby, who is sleeping so peacefully and whose beginning is so humble and lowly, will one day save the world. Praise God.

Mary: Thank you for letting us share with your viewers the wonder of Jesus' birth. We're so glad that they got to witness the birth of God's Son. We hope that everyone who saw this broadcast will trust that Jesus is God's Son, and that all who trust him and love him as God will be saved.

Joanne: Well David... Tom, I'm afraid we're running out of time so I'm going to send it back to you in the studio to wrap up.

Lights up full at stage left for news anchors.

Newsroom Scene on Screen

Tom: Thank you for that incredible report, Joanne. The world as we know it has changed. The God of the universe, who loves us so much, has burst through space and time to dwell among us. He is here. God is with us. We hope you enjoyed going on this journey with us tonight. I imagine we have not seen the last of this baby. Like his mother Mary said, Jesus will change the world. That's all from us tonight, folks. We invite you to tune in tomorrow night as we investigate the effects of dehydration on our camel population. Could shrinking humps really be a danger to the rider? Until then, good night, and Merry Christmas Nazareth.

Mission Kids Sr. Choir, and anyone on stage interested in joining the final song, can enter center stage.

SONG: GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

Everyone: Merry Christmas!

The End