

This is an original story about the Nativity, from Joseph’s perspective. In all aspects of this script, care has been taken to follow the Biblical records concerning the known details of Jesus’ life and family. The author has exercised “artistic license” to fill in unknown details and dialogue, as “historical fiction.” For a purely Biblical account of Jesus’ life, the author encourages you to read the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the New Testament.

Mystery—a man and more...

by gratefulsue

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For inquiries, please go to www.gratefulsue.com and submit your questions on the Contact page, or email gratefulsue@gmail.com.

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CHARACTERS:

Jacob—Joseph’s father, husband of Tirzah

Tirzah—Joseph’s mother, wife of Jacob

Joseph—Eventual husband of Mary and surrogate “father” of Jesus

Mary—Eventual wife of Joseph and mother of Jesus

Baby Jesus—Child of Mary, God in the flesh

CHACTERS REFERENCED - without lines or appearances:

Cousin of Mary—Acquaintance of Joseph and his family

Rabbi Benjamin—Spiritual advisor of Jacob and Tirzah

Words in brackets [---] are notes to the actors and Director.

Words in parentheses (---) are Biblical references, for the actors and Director, not speaking lines.

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SCENE 1: Arranged Marriage

[Jacob is sitting in a chair, waiting. Tirzah is also sitting. She's sewing, in a kitchen/living area.]

Joseph: [Joseph walks in from off stage.] You wanted to see me, Father?

Jacob: [standing] Yes, Joseph. Your mother and I have some good news for you! [He walks over to Joseph and puts his arm around him.] It has been decided. Within the year, you and Mary are going to be husband and wife, just as you had hoped.

Joseph: Oh, Father, that IS good news! I like Mary very much!

Jacob: I spoke with her father, and discussed the details. He and his wife are in favor of the union. He said they think well of you and believe you'll be a good husband and provider for their daughter Mary. [Jacob drops his arm down.]

Tirzah: Oh Joseph, of course you will be a good husband! [Tirzah puts down her sewing, walks over to Joseph, taking his hand as a sign of affection.] You have always been such a fine son. And, as far as being a provider, who doesn't need a skilled carpenter these days? The tables you make are as beautiful as your father's.

Jacob: [He looks a tad annoyed with her comment] Well...almost...

Joseph: Thank you, Mamma. [She releases his hand.] I'm so glad her parents had a favorable reply! God has put Mary on my heart for some time now. She seems to be more reverent and reserved than the other girls her age who are only interested in the latest gossip.

Tirzah: She's a humble, hard-working girl. And... [teasing] she has a very sweet face!

Joseph: [smiling and with understatement] It just so happens, I've noticed that myself!

Jacob: [Clears his throat awkwardly, trying to get Joseph's attention back, and focused on more important matters. He likes the law.] Mary comes from a solid Jewish family, like ours. She keeps the commandments and observes the Sabbath. She'll raise your children well,

following the traditions of the teachers of the law and the Torah. By this time next year, you'll be a happily married man! [Show of affection: Jacob pats him on the back, and Tirzah embraces him, as lights dim.]

Tirzah: Mazel tov, Joseph!!

SCENE 2: Bad News!

[Joseph is in a work shop, alone, visibly upset, alternately pacing the floor and sitting on a bench. If play is filmed and shown as a video, he can either be *speaking out loud to himself* with emotion, and/or *thinking to himself*, with some lines pre-recorded. For a live drama, all his lines are out loud.]

Joseph: [Out loud:] PREGNANT!!? Mary is PREGNANT??? How could this happen? [In his thoughts:] I can NOT imagine Mary sneaking around, and being immoral while she was still living in her father's house! It just doesn't fit! How could she betray me and bring dishonor to both my family and hers? Everyone knows we were promised to each other. [He pauses with a new revelation. Out loud, with anger,] Maybe it isn't her fault! Who would do this to her? [Pauses again, realizing the hole in his logic. Thinking to himself:] But, if she was violated, why wouldn't she just *say so*, instead of making up such a *crazy story* as an excuse? [Out loud:] I do NOT understand!! Lord, God, please help me!!

[Not immediately, but 10 – 15 seconds after Joseph stops talking, enter Jacob.]

Jacob: Joseph, you're resting. Did you finish the day's work already?

Joseph: No. There's plenty of work left to do.

Jacob: What is it then? Are you ill? You don't look well.

Joseph: No, I'm not ill. It's not me who is the problem; it's Mary.

Jacob: Mary is ill? [Brightening up...] Don't worry—she'll get better!

Joseph: [interrupting] Father! It's not that... it's worse! I have just learned, Mary is pregnant!

Jacob: Mary? *Your Mary* is pregnant? That's impossible!! You haven't married her yet!!

[horrified...] Unless...is there something you need to tell me?

Joseph: No, no. Of course not, Father.

Jacob: [Exasperated,] Yet, you tell me Mary's pregnant. That doesn't make any sense!

Joseph: I know, I know! But, it's true. Mary *is* pregnant. Her cousin just told me the news.

I know I'm not the father of her child. So...there must be another man involved.

Jacob: Well!! [pauses before speaking] This news is quite a shock. I never could have imagined such rebellion from Mary! I obviously misjudged her character. I have no sympathy for a woman who would bring such disgrace on our family...and her own!

Joseph: Mary has always been so kind and gentle, so respectful of her elders...

Jacob: Her parents are God-fearing people. They don't deserve this kind of treatment! No wonder she has been off visiting Elizabeth, her relative, for so long. She's trying to hide! [gaining momentum and resolve, pacing the floor as he speaks...] We must bring her to justice! The law of Moses says the punishment for immorality is death by stoning. We will bring her to the leaders of the synagogue and expose her sin! (Deut. 22:20-21) [Trying to sound noble, while obviously still very angry...] And, to save you the embarrassment, I'll volunteer to cast the first stone!!

Joseph: Father, Father, calm yourself!

Jacob: [Still pacing,] Why should I? She has violated your honor. Therefore, she deserves to die!

Joseph: Wait! Please listen to me! There's more.

Jacob: What more do I need to know? She's pregnant by another man, even though she made a commitment before God, to marry *my* son! [Jacob's pride is showing. He stops pacing.]

Joseph: [Very upset.] Listen, Father. I don't know what to think! I'm so confused! But, *according to Mary*, an "angel of the Lord," named... "Gabriel," I think, came to Mary suddenly one day and told Mary that she was "favored by God." [Jacob looks unbelieving.] He told her she would become pregnant "by the power of the Most High God."

Jacob: [interrupting] What? That's ridiculous!

Joseph: [continuing] ...He said the child to be born to her will be a boy, and he is to be named

“Jesus.” The angel also said something about the child being called “the Son of God” and being given “the throne of his father, David,” referring, I suppose, to King David of old.
(Luke 1:28-35.)

Jacob: An angel spoke to her and told her all those things? [Joseph nods] To little nobody, Mary? [Joseph nods] That’s absurd! And, just because her father’s a descendent of King David, she thinks she can fool us into thinking that the unborn child could be the promised Messiah? Now, that is *really* going too far! She has added the sin of irreverence to her immorality! Just how gullible does she think we are?!? Who could believe such a story?

Joseph: Well, according to her cousin, Mary’s parents believe her.

Jacob: [shocked] They do?! They believe that an angel appeared to Mary and spoke to her?
[Joseph nods “Yes.” Jacob pauses, then slumps onto a stool.]
[He continues with a more controlled tone of voice,] You must marry a virgin, not an immoral, crazy, pregnant girl! [Pause] What do *you* suggest we do?!

Joseph: [Frustrated tone of voice, not angry tone] I DON’T KNOW! [Pause.] Mamma always says that “God has a way of showing us the right path, if we’re looking for it.”

[If desired, this scene may be divided into two scenes here. New scene title: Mercy over Judgment]

Joseph: [He gets an idea...] Father, wouldn’t this be a case where I would be justified in requesting a “certificate of divorce” from the Rabbi, in order to break our vows of betrothal? [Reluctant head and hand gestures from Jacob indicate that Joseph is correct.] That would be a more merciful solution to this problem. You’ve often reminded me of the words of the prophet Micah. “...what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8 NIV) Don’t you believe that God prefers life and *mercy*, over death and punishment?

Jacob: [Weakening in his position,] Well, yes...but,

Joseph: Mary’s sin is the Lord’s problem. My responsibility is to “love mercy!” I can’t help it,

I still care about Mary...even though my own heart is broken. There would be no joy or vindication *for me*, in seeing her dead!

Jacob: [Thinking it all over] I suppose you're right. The law of Moses does also make provision for a "certificate of divorce" in such cases. (Deut. 24:1)

Joseph: Good. I'm very disappointed, but I think that's what the Lord wants me to do. I'll give her a certificate of divorce from the Rabbi, so that I won't have to go through with the marriage. (Matt. 1:19)

Jacob: Well, if a divorce certificate is what you want...fine. You are more righteous than I am, Joseph. You've chosen mercy over judgment. In His timing, may God provide you with a better wife than Mary!

Joseph: Father, may we keep the divorce quiet, and not announce it to everyone in town? You know, for her parents' sake. That would make it easier for them... And, to be honest, that would be easier for me, as well. [Looks dejected.]

Jacob: [moving over to Joseph, to comfort him] [Moves over to Joseph, to comfort him, puts his arm on his shoulder,] It will be as you wish...

SCENE 3: Divine Intervention

[Setting changes to a bedroom. Jacob and Tirzah are in bed, sleeping, in modest nightclothes. Joseph begins his lines from off-stage, storms into the bedroom, carrying a “lamp” which he could set on a table.]

Joseph: FATHER! MOTHER! WAKE UP! FATHER, MARY WAS RIGHT! WAKE UP!

Jacob: What? Joseph? What are you talking about? It is the middle of the night!

Tirzah: Oh my! What’s wrong son? Is something the matter?

Joseph: No, nothing’s the matter! Everything’s perfect! I understand now!! Mary was telling the truth! I’m not supposed to divorce Mary. I must take her as my wife after all!!

Jacob: Now, wait a minute...SLOW DOWN. I’m trying to wake up. What happened?

Joseph: [Fully awake, talking fast with much enthusiasm and wonder] I just spoke with an angel of the Lord! He came to me in a dream. I actually SAW him, just as clearly as I can see you!!

Jacob: [interrupting, and still trying to wake up] You saw what??

Joseph: An ANGEL, by my bed, where I was sleeping.

Jacob: An angel. First, Mary, now you. [sarcastically...] All of a sudden, everybody is seeing angels.

Joseph: Yes, Father. I know it sounds strange. He was strong and glowing white! His eyes were so intense, and at the same time, gentle also. He called me “Joseph, son of David...”

I guess because *our family also* is from the line of King David—just as Mary’s is!

Jacob: [Unimpressed,] What’s wrong with, “Greetings Joseph, son of Jacob, the carpenter?”

Tirzah: [Irritated with him. Not yelling, but firmly, she says,] HUSH Jacob! Let, Joseph talk!

Joseph: [continuing] He told me, “not to be afraid to take Mary as my wife because what is

conceived in Mary is from the Holy Spirit.” (Matt. 1:20) Then, he said the same things to me that Mary was told: She is going to have a boy, and I should “give him the name, ‘Jesus,’ because He will save His people from their sins!” (Matt. 1:21)

Tirzah: It’s almost as though the angel already knows everything that will happen in that little baby’s life.

Joseph: Mamma, what do you think he meant by, “He will save His people from their sins?”

Tirzah: Hmm... I’m afraid I have no idea, son.

Joseph: After the angel left and I awoke, the Lord brought the words of the prophet

Isaiah to my mind, when he spoke of the coming Messiah. It is written, “The Lord Himself will give you a sign: The *virgin* will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14) Mary wasn’t unfaithful or immoral after all! She’s the “virgin” of Isaiah’s prophecy! And, she’s *still* a virgin. Her pregnancy is the work of God...a miracle!! [Tirzah’s expression indicates that she is beginning to believe.] Not only that, but this baby she is carrying, this “Jesus,” must really be the promised Messiah!!

Jacob: [Jacob’s final, weak but hopeful rebuttal...] The Messiah?! Now you’re imagining things...to add to your “bad dream”!

Joseph: Father, you have to believe me...this wasn’t any sort of “bad dream!”

Tirzah: Do you really believe you spoke to an angel, son? [With a serious expression.]

Joseph: Yes, Mamma. With all my being, I KNOW that I did! I’m telling you the truth. The prophecies of old are being fulfilled before our very eyes! Not only was Mary chosen; I myself, a descendant of King David also, have been specifically chosen by God to be the husband of Mary, and to love and protect God’s son! I can hardly breathe! I must go to Mary’s house right away and speak with her parents. [Joseph begins to leave. Tirzah nods in agreement. Jacob is deep in thought about the news, disturbed. Turning back toward his mother, Joseph says,] Do *you* believe me, Mamma?

Tirzah: Yes, Joseph, I *do* believe you!! [She smiles slightly, not a big toothy grin...still in shock herself.] This is wonderful news! I'm so happy for you, son! Go quickly to Mary's house, just like you said. Take the lamp with you. [Joseph leaves. Tirzah looks up to heaven, with raised hands and says...] Praise the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; God almighty, who has remembered His people!! [Tirzah turns to Jacob,] What kind of man will this baby grow up to be?! He won't be like any *ordinary* man...He will be so much more...

Jacob: [Shaking his head, distressed, conflicted] [Groans] ...This changes *everything*...

SCENE 4: Guilt and Forgiveness

[Setting changes back to that of scene 1. Tirzah at table, preparing food.]

Tirzah: It's hard to take in all of the events of the past eight months. So much has happened...

All of Nazareth is buzzing!

Jacob: Over 400 years have passed since the last prophet, Malachi, has spoken... with no new word from the Lord. But now...all this!!

Tirzah: It's all very exciting!!

Jacob: Yes, but despite all these amazing events surrounding Mary and Joseph, my heart is heavy.

Tirzah: Why, my love? What's troubling you?

Jacob: I'm so ashamed, Tirzah! Before the angel appeared to our Joseph, I wouldn't believe Mary's story. I had so much hatred and bitterness in my heart. So much anger, that I was ready to kill her! I was nearly the instigator of murder—the murder of an innocent girl, and her baby—the Chosen One, our Messiah!

Tirzah: But, you didn't. God stopped you!

Jacob: Yes... but, if He hadn't stopped me, I *would* have! If I had called attention to her pregnancy publically, and asked for stern punishment, I would have been justified in the eyes of the law, AND in the eyes of the community. Yet, I would have been GUILTY before the eyes of God, who knew *the truth* about Mary, and who saw my pride and arrogance! I was more concerned about my own bruised feelings and my reputation in the community than I was about Mary or Joseph!

Tirzah: Anyone could have made the same mistakes. At first, I too, had doubts that Mary was telling the truth.

Jacob: Perhaps, but that still doesn't make it right! I've tried to observe the Sabbath, the annual feasts, and to keep the commandments required by the Law, since I was a boy. But, I still

feel condemned! I know that God sees what's in my heart, and it's not a pretty sight.

I can't sleep at night—because of my sin and guilt before a holy God.

Tirzah: Oh Jacob! [moves to comfort him] My beloved... doing good and keeping the commandments doesn't change the fact that we ALL have guilt before God! We all sin in many ways, big and small. And yet, despite this fact, we know that our God is gracious and forgiving.

Jacob: [forcefully] I don't deserve to be forgiven!!

Tirzah: [Matter of factly,] Of course you don't! [She pauses, Jacob looks worried.] But, the truth is, none of us do! Observing the Sabbath and keeping the Law and the sacrifices and such is all good, but it's only a *superficial* covering of our sins! It can *never be enough* to make us *truly* clean before God.

Jacob: I feel like *I'm* the one who deserves to die, instead of Mary!

Tirzah: Jacob, Jacob! The Holy Scriptures tell us—God is merciful. When we come to Him, admitting our sin and guilt, does He give us the punishment we deserve? No! Instead of death and separation, He gives us forgiveness and reconciliation...all because He loves us!

Jacob: How could He love me?

Tirzah: He loves you because He created you! The fact that your heart is humbled and heavy is probably a *good* thing! Didn't King David write about that? [body language for quote:]

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17)

David received forgiveness, and he actually DID murder someone! You remember, he murdered Uriah the Hittite... *after* he committed *adultery* with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba!

Jacob: [Beginning to listen to Tirzah,] That's true, he DID make some big mistakes!

Tirzah: Yes, he did! Then, when David was confronted with his sin, he also had a heavy heart. Yet, he received forgiveness because he trusted in God, who is loving and merciful. His

faith made the difference! It's impossible to work hard enough to *deserve* God's forgiveness! It's a gift we receive when we *believe!*

Jacob: Well, perhaps you're right... [He's not really sure though.]

Tirzah: Maybe you should go to the synagogue tomorrow and see if you can talk with Rabbi Benjamin. He seems like a very wise man in spite of his young age.

Jacob: Yes, I think I like him better than Rabbi Saul, who moved away last year. All Rabbi Saul ever talked about was being sure that we had kept the Sabbath perfectly, and had given our tithe.

Tirzah: But, Rabbi Benjamin has often talked about the importance of *faith*. Surely, he'll know what to say to you.

Jacob: [Nods in agreement] Very well...

SCENE 5: The Rabbi's Thoughts

[Set from Scene 1. Tirzah is standing at the table mending clothes. Jacob comes in. She looks up.]

Tirzah: So, you're back. You were gone a long time.

Jacob: Yes, I'm back.

Tirzah: Tell me about your time with Rabbi Benjamin. How did it go?

Jacob: Oh, Tirzah, everything we talked about was so interesting! Come, sit down for a minute, and I'll tell you about it. [They go to the chairs and sit.] He told me the history behind the various festivals we celebrate. We talked about the commandments, and the Sabbath.

We also talked about the temple and the animal sacrifices. I liked that part, especially.

Tirzah: Why? What did he say?

Jacob: He explained that the punishment we all deserve for our sins is death. So, the animals die in our place, as our substitute.

Tirzah: Yes, I knew that.

Jacob: But also, the sacrifices are an *illustration*: a regular reminder and picture of how two seemingly *opposing* aspects of God's character, His love and His justice [hand gestures to show opposites coming together] can both be satisfied *at the same time!* He forgives the sinner whom He loves, while yet condemning and punishing the sin that He hates.

Tirzah: Oh, I hadn't thought of it that way. See, it was a good thing for you to go see him! Did you talk to him about how you were feeling guilty, because of your angry thoughts toward Mary? You know, back when you didn't believe her story about why she was pregnant?

Jacob: Yes, I did. It felt very good to get it off my chest. He agreed with me that my anger was sin, because of what it did to my heart. He told me to confess it to God, and spoke about how ready God is to offer His forgiveness and cleansing. Then, he quoted King David's

writings: “Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who *forgives all your sins*...He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities... as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:2, 3, 10, 12)

Tirzah: So, now do you believe that God has forgiven you?

Jacob: Yes! As Rabbi Benjamin pointed out, God wants me to believe His holy word. As it says in the first book of the law, “Abraham *believed* the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6) Abraham was declared righteous when he simply believed.

Tirzah: Oh, I’ve never thought about that before.

Jacob: You know, I don’t feel guilty anymore! I think it really is *my faith* that has made the difference!

Tirzah: [Flat tone, realizing this is just what she had tried to tell him the day before.] My, where have I heard that before?

Jacob: [Ignoring her question,] “It’s impossible to work hard enough to *deserve* God’s forgiveness, Tirzah! It’s a gift we receive when we believe!

Tirzah: [Smiling, chuckling to herself, remembering that she had said the exact same thing.] Oh, imagine that.

Jacob: Faith pleases God more than anything we do, because it involves our heart.

Tirzah: [Engaged again, nodding her agreement,] Yes, it takes faith to convince a humbled heart that God would forgive us—even though we don’t deserve it!

Jacob: Then, once we have trusted in Him to forgive all our sins, it is much easier to keep the commandments. Our good works flow naturally, out of our *gratitude* to God, instead of being produced from our *fear of punishment*, if we *don’t* do them!

Tirzah: Yes. Yes, that’s true.

Jacob: [He stands, and looks away from Tirzah, deep in thought and says,] But, the Rabbi also

said something bizarre and fantastic, which I have never heard before...

Tirzah: What? What else did he say to you? [Standing, to be eye-to-eye with Jacob, who turns to look her in the face. Both have serious expressions.]

Jacob: He said that based on his study of the Holy Scriptures—the Law and the prophets, he believes that one day, God will *do away with* animal sacrifices at the temple!!

Tirzah: You're joking!! Why would God do that??

Jacob: Because, it's not really the blood of bulls and lambs that cleanses away our sin, it's the compassionate *love of God for His creation!* He's always ready to shower His grace—His *undeserved* favor—on *anyone* who comes to Him in faith, not trusting in His *own* goodness or religious deeds, but trusting *only* in God's love and mercy.

Tirzah: If there weren't any animals being sacrificed, how would God be able to punish sin?

Jacob: [The lighting now focuses more intensely on Jacob and Tirzah, zooming in over these last few lines, while darkening the rest of the set.] I can't answer that... Come to think of it, the rabbi didn't have an explanation for that either.

Tirzah: Hmm...getting rid of the sacrificial system...wouldn't that be something!? I wonder when that would happen.

Jacob: I don't know. Perhaps not for a long time. But, the rabbi said he thinks it's *possible* that Jesus...our Messiah, will eventually institute some *better way* for sinners to receive the love and forgiveness of God. [Jacob's facial expressions saying, "I have no idea what that could be."]

Tirzah: Really!?! [She is intrigued and puzzled by this new idea.]

SCENE 6: Divine Orchestration

[Same as scene 3. Tirzah is lying down. Jacob is standing nearby, looking out a window at the moon, thinking, before going to bed.]

Jacob: Tirzah, don't you find it amazing... Joseph and Mary are on their way to Bethlehem because, of all people, *Caesar Augustus* issued a decree that each head of family must register in the town of his ancestor?

Tirzah: [Still lying down, maybe makes a hand gesture. Jacob gets in bed while she's speaking.]
Why is that amazing? They had to travel to Bethlehem for the census, because Joseph is of the line of King David.

Jacob: [Propped up on one arm, in bed] God almighty is using a *pagan king* to insure that the Messiah is born in Bethlehem, the city of David, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Micah, even though Mary and Joseph are from Nazareth!

Tirzah: Oh yes, that *is* amazing! [Jacob lies down for 10 seconds, then props himself up again.]

Jacob: Before long, Mary's son will be born, and they will find themselves parents to a child who's destined to be the Savior and Deliverer of Israel! [Shaking his head in disbelief, he lies down, and then Tirzah sits up in bed.]

Tirzah: [Slightly annoyed] I still don't understand why Joseph and Mary couldn't have waited until you and your brother were ready to travel to Bethlehem, since you also have to go and register. Had they waited, they could have traveled with the two of you and received your help along the way, for the journey.

Jacob: [Sitting back up] Joseph wanted to get a head start, in hopes of finding a room for them at The inn in Bethlehem. It may be filling up, with so many travelling for the census. Besides, as you well know, [smiling] Mary can't go very fast in her condition. [He makes a gesture to indicate a very pregnant Mary.]

Tirzah: Oh yes, you're right about that! [her expression changes from laughing to concern]

Jacob, I'm concerned about Mary. She's so far along in her pregnancy! What if she goes into labor along the way? She can't deliver this baby on the side of the road you know! What if they can't find a place to stay in Bethlehem? You're right! It IS going to be extra crowded! And even if they make it to Bethlehem, how are they to find a midwife?!

Jacob: My, my! You are really worried! [teasingly...] Too much worrying is a sin you know. Perhaps you also should go talk to the Rabbi! [smiling smugly] Remember how he said that, "forgiveness is a gift?" You just have to believe that God is loving and mercif...

Tirzah: [She cuts him off] STOP TEASING ME, Jacob! I'm not "worrying," I am just... [she is embarrassed, visibly struggling to find a softer synonym] I am just...*wondering* about them. [She lies back down.]

Jacob: [Sarcastically] Oooh, I see... [He lies down also.] Well, good night. [pause]

Tirzah: [Sitting back up,] Aren't you even just a *little bit* worried about Mary and Joseph?

Jacob: [Sitting up.] No. I am *not* worried. Joseph will take good care of Mary. But, even if he runs into some difficulty, I'm sure that the Lord will intervene and watch over them all! Jesus is *no ordinary baby!* [Both Jacob and Tirzah lie back down to go to sleep, Jacob first. Tirzah has to think about it a minute.]

SCENE 7: A Man and More

[Bethlehem. Set shows a stable front, with a useable entrance to the stable. Mary is unseen, inside the stable with baby Jesus. Joseph is seen, outside the stable, either tending to animals, or doing some other work. Jacob walks up from off the set.]

Joseph: Greetings Father! You found us! Did it take you a long time? [They embrace.]

Jacob: Only a few days. First, my brother and I had to set up our tent, purchase some supplies, and get our own families registered for the census. Once I began looking for you and Mary, it didn't take long. After I learned that you weren't staying at the inn, the inn-keeper's son told us we could find you here.

Joseph: Yes, at first we were pretty discouraged when the owner told us the inn was full. But, when I explained to him Mary's condition, he offered to let us stay in his stable.

Jacob: So, you have been here with his animals, ever since you arrived?

Joseph: Yes, we have. But, it's worked out all right. There's plenty of clean hay for a bed, and at least we have a roof over our heads, and a little privacy. The Lord answered my prayers in providing a place for us. I knew He would take care of us! In a few days, I'll look again for a better place for us to stay. Maybe I can do some carpentry work here, so that we don't have to travel right away, while the baby is so small. [Enter Mary, holding a real baby. Joseph smiles warmly at Mary and puts his arm around her.]

Jacob: Ahh, yes, Mary! Highest greetings to the mother of our Lord and Messiah! [He gives her a sign of affection.] How are you?

Mary: Greetings, Jacob! It's good to see you. I'm doing well, thank you.

Jacob: And, greetings to Jesus!—the future King of Israel!! [He takes the baby and kisses Him.]
What a joy—to see His face, after so much anticipation!! When was Jesus born?

Mary: The second night we were here. It's a good thing we left Nazareth early to come to Bethlehem!

Jacob: Tirzah will want to know if you had any trouble finding a midwife...

Mary: Oh, the Lord took care of all that. The innkeeper's wife told us where we could find her.

Joseph: But, that's not the really amazing part...

Jacob: Why, what happened? [Jacob hands the baby back to Mary.]

Joseph: A few hours after Jesus was born, I heard some noise—men talking in low voices outside the stable. Naturally, I was concerned and even a little frightened. I didn't know why anyone would be out, especially since it was the middle of the night.

Jacob: Who was it? [If the baby is too fussy, Mary exit any time; Joseph takes over her lines.]

Joseph: It turned out that they were all shepherds, with quite a story to tell. They had been out on the hills nearby...taking turns. Some were sleeping, while others were watching the sheep. But, they all awoke when suddenly, guess what happened?

Jacob: Don't tell me they saw an angel, too!

Mary: YES, exactly! An angel of the Lord appeared to them, with the glory of the Lord shining all around them, in the sky and everywhere!

Jacob: Really!?! The angels have been busy these days! What did the angel say?

Mary: He told them not to be afraid because he was bringing them "good news of great joy which will be for *all* the people." Then, he told them about the birth of Jesus! [Mary can exit into the stable with baby Jesus, or stay on stage until the end, if baby is being quiet.]

Jacob: How strange...that God would announce the birth of His son to a group of common shepherds...

Joseph: Well, the angel did say that the news was for *all people*. After the first angel finished speaking, the shepherds said that the *entire night sky* was filled with *multitudes* of angels

who were all praising God!! Imagine what that would have looked like! They were all saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.”

Jacob: My, my...

Joseph: Meanwhile, the shepherds were all *terrified*, wondering about what exactly was happening. The sound of all the angels’ voices, all together, was the most beautiful sound...unlike any sound they had ever heard before. As the men described these events to Mary and me, we noticed that they looked really strange: giddy, shaken-up...some were even crying! Grown men! They all just kept staring at Jesus. Each one said they “will never be the same.”

Jacob: How did they find you?

Mary: The angel told them they would find Jesus here in Bethlehem. They even knew that we had wrapped Him in cloths and laid Him in a manger!

Jacob: Unbelievable! It is hard to grasp the magnitude of what God is doing and will do through little baby Jesus. [pause]

Joseph: I’ve been thinking about the names God has chosen for His son. [Don’t rush these lines.] “Immanuel” means, “*God* with us.” “Jesus” means, “God is salvation.” Put them together and you have “ God has come to earth, to be *with us* and to *save us*!”

Jacob: [foreboding mood] God has come to earth... The Savior of all, the King, the Messiah, God in the flesh...how wonderful and *terrible* at the same time.

Joseph: [His expression changes to being concerned] What do you mean, “terrible?”

Jacob: Think of the implications, Joseph. Jesus will be a blessing to all who believe in Him, and love Him, yes. But also...He will be an *irritation* to those who would reject His true identity and a *threat* to all who are in positions of power...

Joseph: I suppose that would be true. As He becomes well known, some will become envious of His popularity.

Jacob: That's right. And beyond that, He may even have outright enemies... all those who stand in opposition to truth and righteousness! There will be many who despise Him. Be on your guard, Joseph!! [Jacob looks back into the face of Jesus, if baby is still on stage,] He's not just any man, He is so, so much more...