

# Three Nativity Visitors

**VOICE OVER** *And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, with his wife Mary who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

There weren't many witnesses to the birth of Jesus, but there were some. And those who did come to see the infant Saviour, well they each came with their own unique story . . .

**JOSEPH** How was I feeling? Relieved. Very relieved. The prospect of being a new dad is pretty scary to begin with, but the thought of your beautiful bride giving birth in the street was just too much to handle, that's why I jumped at the chance to stay in the stable. It really wasn't much better, but at least we were out of the elements. And once he was born . . . well everything was great after that. How could it not be? . . . Until the people started to show up. I was not expecting that.

**INNKEEPER** Now don't get me wrong, I've got nothing against babies, but I've got my customers to think of. It's not every day you get a town full of guests coming to a sleepy village such as Bethlehem –there's good money to be made, and women in labour and newborn babies aren't high on the list of amenities people are looking for in an inn. If the screams and grunts weren't enough to drive everyone away, surely the mess would take care of the rest.

**SHEPHERD** Was I scared? Your darn right I was scared. You would be too if a band of marauding angels flashed in the sky. Shepherds are already a little on edge at night, looking out for wolves and thieves and what not; people shouldn't pop outta nowhere like that, not even angels. I swear, if they hadn't been way up in the sky I would've clubbed one of them square between the eyes –on accident of course.

**MAGI** If I asked them once, I asked them a hundred times, "Do we have *all* the gifts for the new king? I've got the gold, frankincense and myrrh, but three gifts are not enough for newborn royalty!" How many gifts did we bring? –*three! That's it!*

I planned every detail of this trip –planned the route, rented the camels, booked the inns, bought the gifts –everything! I did everything to make this trip perfect, but I swear these *wise guys* are out to ruin my perfect offering to the king!

**JOSEPH** When you have a baby you kind of expect your first guests to be your family and friends, people you know and love. But with Jesus, it seemed like he was welcoming every kind of misfit and odd-ball to come say hi. Not like he was actually inviting them, he was just a baby after all . . . but it did make us wonder.

**INNKEEPER** Of course once my ears picked up that the sweet child was born –and that infernal moaning had finally ceased –my maternal instincts kicked right in. I made sure to let everyone know that an adorable child had been born in *my* inn that night –or at least in my stable. And then once I heard the good news of the shepherds, it was truly my duty as a God-fearing Jew to ensure that everyone knew about my inn . . . oh, and that the Messiah was born too.

**SHEPHERD** Yeah, we went looking for the kid. I offered to stay and look after the sheep, but the others insisted we all go. I only went because the angel said we'd find him in a feeding trough. I figured as long as I didn't have to go into the synagogue or the temple I wouldn't get struck down by lightning or fire or nothing. I don't got nothing against the Lord and His good word, but I just figure He ain't interested in a regular guy like me. What would I do with a Saviour?

**MAGI** To say I was surprised we didn't find the newborn king at Herod's palace would be the understatement of the era –but no matter. We still made a spectacular entrance –truly worthy of a king – and it was a good practice run for the real thing. It was becoming very clear to me why we were chosen to present gifts to this new king – who else would do it with such splendor and grace?

**JOSEPH** They all had their own reasons for coming, but when they got here I think they realized their reasons were all wrong. I didn't know how to show them God's plan as opposed to their own –heck I hardly knew it myself. But I knew the promises the Lord had made, and when I looked at that baby, I knew those promises were beginning to be fulfilled. And it seemed as each of the visitors looked at Him, it's like they heard something . . . something that changed their hearts; something that made them see that this child was the chosen one . . . the Messiah . . . *their* Saviour.

**INNKEEPER** This kid's going to help me clean up. I'll be able to take the rest of the winter off, maybe the whole year off. Take a holiday to Rome perhaps; I'll be rich! This day will forever be remembered as a great day for innkeepers and shopkeepers everywhere. Commercial success at it's finest! (*Listen and react to Voice Over reading Scripture verses.*)

**VOICE OVER** "For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong." (Isaiah 61:8)

"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit . . . He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth." (Isaiah 11:1, 3-4)

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

**SHEPHERD** I couldn't really tell what he looked like to start –I didn't want to look at all. In fact, I didn't want to be there. If what the angels said was true, if this was the Saviour . . . I

should have stayed with the sheep, that's all I'm worth. I'm hardly a shepherd; you don't know what I'm really like. That Saviour wasn't for me. He couldn't be . . . not for me . . . (*Listen and react to Voice Over reading Scripture verses.*)

**VOICE OVER** "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on *him* the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

"Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep." (Ezekiel 34:11)

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness." (Isaiah 52:7)

**MAGI** Nothing was going to plan. We ended up having to follow *a star* to find the place, which is not nearly as easy as you might think. All my work for the perfect gift to the king was in shambles. I was ready to pack it in and head home –what's the point in worshipping royalty if all you have to bring is failed plans and broken dreams? (*Listen and react to Voice Over reading Scripture verses.*)

**VOICE OVER** "'What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?' says the Lord; . . . 'Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me.'" (Isaiah 1:11, 13)

"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6)

"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

**JOSEPH** We've all been waiting so long for this –maybe we didn't *know* it, but we knew that the world wasn't right, that our lives weren't right, that we weren't right –but what were we supposed to do about it? Now I see that *we* weren't supposed to do anything about it; *He* is supposed to do everything.

I don't know what the Lord has planned for Him, but somehow with this birth –the announcement of the angels, the worship of the shepherds, the visit of the magi – everything about Him points to the hope that God has finally come to make things right –to offer forgiveness unearned, to give life unending, to heal wounds incurable, to bring peace unfathomable. I don't think that's what these visitors came looking for, but that's most definitely what they left with.

**INNKEEPER** God gave his greatest riches to rest in my stable. What other treasure could I hope for now? How selfish I've been; how I've cheated so many; but still He came to me. I will deal out justice and compassion from now on. This humble inn will forever be known as a place to care for all in need of rest and Good News.

**SHEPHERD** It's still a wonder to me why he sent the angels to some shepherds first of all . . . but I'm sure glad he did. He chose me. I'm the sheep that went away, and He's the shepherd that chased me down and drew me back. I belong to Him, and so do you! I have to tell everyone!

**MAGI** What a fool I was, thinking that the Lord called me because I was so special. All I had to offer was metal and spices; I couldn't have given Him a humble spirit even if I tried. But of course, He is the greatest offering, the ultimate sacrifice for us all. And I am the one honoured to have this Good News shared with me.

**VOICE OVER** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord . . . Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:11, 14)

END

## Reflection

Tonight, we're all visitors to the Nativity, to the birth of Jesus. We draw close to the manger and stare in wonder at the miracle of the God who created all things, dwelling as a regular human child –and a poor one at that. Maybe as you've come tonight you identify with one of the three visitors that Jesus had – wrapped up in your business or the economy or just life in general, too busy to see the wonder unfolding before you. Or maybe you identify with the shepherd –just a blue-collar night-shift worker, a simple guy with no need for some baby to come and save Him. Or perhaps you were very aware about coming tonight –a little too aware maybe. In the whirlwind of Christmas preparations, in trying to ensure that every single detail is just right, you've lost sight of what Jesus came to bring to you.

Or any other number of things: we all come to the stable, each with our unique stories and histories, some ready and prepared to be welcomed by Jesus, others too wrapped up in one thing or another, or hardened by life and its knocks. Regardless of what your story is, where you're at right now, Jesus has called **you**, called you to witness His birth tonight, called you to receive His gifts. Because he didn't come just to be an adorable baby, decorating Christmas greeting cards everywhere, He came to be the perfect person that we never could be; He came to bind up the broken hearted, to free those who are bound, to comfort to all who mourn; He came to teach us what life with God should look like, how to worship, and how to love our neighbour. And if that wasn't enough, He came to die for us. Knowing our faults and our failures, our total inability to come before God as the perfect people He expects, He took our imperfection, and gave us His perfection to make us right with God. The Saviour that was laid in a crib, was nailed to a cross and then sealed in a crypt –all for you.

The Holy Spirit called here tonight, called to witness this birth and receive this gift: forgiveness and life in Jesus' name. So, as you continue to celebrate the birth of Jesus through the coming days –with presents, and food, and family, and laughter –remember this birth isn't just a Christmas thing. We're invited to be visitors of the manger –and the cross and empty tomb –everyday of our lives. To receive that forgiveness and life that He freely gives again and again and again. We may not always know that we need it, but we're so thankful when we receive it anyways.