

THE COMING OF THE PRINCE OF PEACE

by

Ursula Hedges

WM Director, North New South Wales Conference

Australia

Narrator: “When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His son, to redeem them that are under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” (Gal. 4:4,5)

SONG: Silent Night

SCENE 1

Angel 1: Over the years we have found such joy in giving love and constant watch care to the hearts and lives of men.

Angel 2: But now is a very special moment in the cosmic struggle between good and evil. Now the Saviour of fallen men has come as a baby to the fallen planet.

Angel 3: Alleluia! Praise God!

Angel 1: At last it is time to reveal the mystery which has been kept in silence. (Rom 16:25) Unfallen worlds will watch to see Jehovah arise. It is a time of crisis when Satan seems about to triumph, when the Son of God comes as the Ambassador of divine grace. (D.A. p. 37)

Angel 2: Yes, Jesus is certainly the assurance of every promise.

Angel 3: The Light of the world!

Angel 1: The sacrificial Lamb.

Angel 2: The sinless Saviour!

Angel 3: The Redeemer of sinners!

Angel 1: The Son of God. The Son of man!

Shep 1: Here we are keeping watch over our sheep where David once had his flocks under these very stars.

Shep 2: Yes, in one of his psalms he says: Unto the upright ariseth light in the darkness (Ps 112:4)

Shep 3: Hmm...I have been wondering more than ever lately when the promised Saviour will come. We need Him. The world seems to be getting worse and worse and I find it hard to find comfort in the priests' words and well, you know...

Shep 1: Yes. I too have been having similar thoughts and have been praying for the coming of the King, the Prince of Peace, to David's throne.

Narrator: And lo, the angel of the lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them: and they were sore afraid.
(*Bright light shines on them.*)

Angel 2: (*stepping forward*) Don't be afraid, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.

Shep 2: Saviour?

Shep 3: In the City of David?

Shep 1: Bethlehem! But I wonder whereabouts...

Angel 3: You will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

Angel 1: O, shepherds, hear our song for it tells wonderful news of joy for all men on this earth.

Angel 2: Yes, peace on earth and goodwill to all men.

SONG The First Noel (*The angels go off.*)

Shep 1: O, the angels have gone! It is so dark!

Shep 2: What an honour we have had to see and hear the angels of heaven!

Shep 3: What an experience! I can hardly believe what my eyes have seen and what my ears have heard!

Shep 1: O, it is so dark now! How they lit up the night sky with the glory of heaven!

Shep 2: Yes, yes, but now let us go to Bethlehem and see the wonderful thing that has happened which God has made known to us.

Shep 3: Yes. Let's hurry. O what about the sheep?

Shep 1: Forget them. This is of much greater importance. Why, God sent His angel messengers to tell us that the Saviour of the world is born!

Shep 2: You are right! Let's run! To Bethlehem!

Shep 3: To the Christ child!
(*They hurry off.*)

SONG
O Little Town of Bethlehem.

Narrator: "And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger." They fell on their knees and "worshipped him and then departing with great joy, they made known the things they had seen and heard." "And all they that heard it wondered at these things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God."

SCENE 2

Pr. Ben: (*Rushing in, bows to the High Priest who frowns at him*)

H. Priest: What is it? What is it, Priest Benjamin, that you come rushing in with such haste and rudeness into my presence?

Pr Ben: I do apologise, exalted High Priest, but I bring you news so important that I must relate it at once.

H. Priest: Not the Romans...

Pr Ben: No! No! Not the Romans!

H. Priest: What then, man? Speak up fast!

Pr Ben: It is a report I have heard that angels appeared on the hills outside Bethlehem. They lit up the night sky and...

H. Priest: It was probably a fire they lit to keep warm. It has happened before, you know, and idle tales...

Pr Ben: (*earnestly*) No, your eminence. I have actually interviewed two of these shepherds and their story is truly gripping.

H Priest: Angels and shepherds? (*Sneering*) A strange combination, priest.

Pr Ben: I know, High Priest, but they say that the angels announced the birth of the Christ child, the Messiah of the world! You yourself well know all the prophecies which point to...

H Priest: How can this be? I have received no notification at all. After all I am the High Priest. I stand in this exalted position to be the leader of God's people.

Pr Ben: Maybe you were so fast asleep last night that you missed the angels' announcement. After all you are such a busy man!

H Priest: Rot and rubbish, Benjamin! I wear the urim and thummin to give me direction. I noticed nothing in messages on them from God! (*pause*)

Pr Ben: Yes, High Priest?

H Priest: Now, you must promise me with great solemnity that you will not repeat this story to *anyone*! Do you hear me, Priest Ben? Do you give me your most solemn promise?

Pr Ben: (*Muttering*) I do.

H Priest: Speak up! I need to hear you properly. Now repeat it!

Pr Ben: I do, High Priest.

H Priest: Now go, and get on with your mundane duties and leave sensational stories alone. You can cause great harm to our people, especially if Rome hears such inflammatory stuff. Go!

Pr Ben: (*bowing*) I leave, High Priest. (*He goes out*)

Narrator: How human pride and self-sufficiency stand rebuked in the presence of the Saviour, lying in a humble manger in Bethlehem.

SCENE 3

Narrator: Forty days after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord, and to offer a sacrifice. This was according the Jewish law. The offerings they brought were without blemish, representing Christ for He was “the Lamb without blemish and without spot.” The law of the presentation of the first born was significant as a memorial of God’s wonderful deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Even the blood on the door post symbolised the blood of Christ with the power to save the world and set men free.

(*Mary, Joseph and the baby come in and stand in front of the priest.*)

Priest: I shall take the child in my arms and hold him up before the altar. (*He does*) There. Now, Mary, you may take him again.

Mary: Yes. Come, little Jesus.

Priest: Now I shall inscribe his name, Jesus, on the scroll. (*He does so*)

I dedicate this child to the work which God has given him to do.

Simeon: (*Coming in*) I am Simeon. Please, mother, let me hold this very special child in my arms. (*He seems full of joy.*) I would be very honoured to present this baby to the Lord.

Priest: But, respectfully, Simeon, I have already done so!

Simeon: I know, priest, but you, I think, are unaware of the significance of this special occasion. “This child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign that shall be spoken against.”

Joseph: O, Simeon, what do you know?

Simeon: I know that I have waited my entire life for this precious moment. I have prayed to the Lord God of Israel for it and He in His gracious mercy had given a positive answer to my request. (*He lifts the baby to heaven.*) I present this precious infant into you keeping, our great and wonderful God. He is yours and you share him with us now. Joy unutterable enters my soul. Amen. “Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared for the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people, Israel.”

Go in peace, my friends, for truly the Lord is with you. (*They all move away.*)

SCENE 4

Narrator: Now behold when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.

Wise Man 1: Let us ask this merchant about him, shall we?

Wise Man 2: Excuse us, merchant of Jerusalem. We would talk briefly with you.

Merchant: Yes. What is it you wish to know?

Wise Man 2: We are philosophers from the East and from a class of men of noble birth, great wealth and learning and are strangers in your country.

Merchant: Welcome to our holy city of Jerusalem, gentlemen.

Wise Man 3: Thank you. You see as we have studied the sacred books of your people we came to the conclusion that now is the time for the Messiah to come into the world.

Wise Man 1: Yes! This truth was so plain and so fascinating that we have travelled far to meet him. Could you please tell us where we may find Him and worship Him?

Wise Man 2: Where is He, merchant? Just point the way!

Merchant: Well, noble princes, and distinguished guests to my city, I ...I don't...

Wise Man 3: Please! We are in earnest and have only good motives. See, we have brought expensive gifts to honour him; not a sword to harm! *(They show their gifts.)*

Merchant: O, but I would tell you if I knew...

Wise Man 1: *(incredulous)* You mean you don't know of his arrival!

Wise Man 2: How can this be? You live here. The star guided us to this place!

Merchant: *(more flustered)* I don't know. I haven't heard! I cannot...

Wise Man 3: This is unbelievable! He doesn't know about the most important even in his nation's history - probably in the world's history!
(Pause)

Merchant: I said, I'm sorry. *(He slinks off.)*

Wise Man 1: Well, what do we do now?

Wise Man 2: I'm not sure but here comes someone who seems to be in a hurry to talk to us.

Roman: *(bowing)* Illustrious philosophers, I greet you in the name of King Herod.

Wise Man 1-3: And you we greet with all propriety.

Roman: My lord Herod invites you to follow me to his palace. He has a great interest in your mission and would be honoured to converse with you.

Wise Man 1: *(looking at his companions)* And we will be delighted and honoured to have an audience with him. Yes, we shall follow you.

Roman: *(leading them)* This way, nobles. This way to Herod's palace.
(They come into Herod's presence.)

Roman: Let me present the learned wise men of the East to you, King Herod. *(He stands as a guard by Herod's seat.)*

Herod: Welcome, upright nobles and wise men of the East. Welcome to my province and my palace.

Wmen 1-3: Thank you, King Herod. *(They bow before him.)*

Herod: Now it has been brought to my attention that you seek someone of importance. Would you be kind enough to explain the object of your search to me?

Wise Man 2: With pleasure, king. We believe that the light of God is ever shining in this world. As we have studied the starry heavens, and sought to fathom the mystery hidden in its bright paths, we beheld the glory of the Creator.

Wise Man 3: Yes, indeed! As we sought clearer knowledge, we turned to the Hebrew Scriptures. In our own land there are treasured prophetic writings that predicted the coming of the divine teacher. Unfolded to us was the appearing of the Messiah whose advent was clearly revealed.

Wise Man 1: O, with joy we learned that His coming was near! We saw a mysterious light in the heavens. When this faded, a luminous star appeared and lingered in the sky. We were impressed that the star had special import for us!

Herod: *(aside)* Hmmm... The angels above Bethlehem no doubt and a repetition of the shepherds' story.

Wise Man 2: Pardon, Sir, what did you say?

Herod: Nothing of importance, my good man. I was just thinking aloud. Please go on.

Wise Man 2: We consulted with priests and philosophers, and searched the scrolls of ancient records.

Wise Man 1: And then we found it!

Herod: Found what? Found what, Wiseman?

Wise Man 3: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob and a Sceptre shall arise out of Israel." You see, we knew for sure then that we must travel to welcome the new King!

Herod: New King? But *I* am the king!

Wise Man 1: (*patiently*) We understand that, your highness, and we do not come to take away from you your power, importance and position.

Wise Man 2: It is just that this is a cosmic, heaven ordained event that we had to attend.

Wise Man 1: Sir, can you tell us where we can find Him, this heaven-sent King? Our journey, though long and tiring, was a happy one as our quest and anticipation is for something so momentous.

Herod: (*Silently observes them and ponders.*) It is, gentlemen, with great sorrow that I have to inform you that I know nothing about the appearance of this King, this Messiah, this - whoever He is.

Wise Man 3: I bow to you, King Herod, and am disappointed to hear you say this, but we will not tarry longer and waste your valuable time.

Wise Man 2: We wish you well, Sir, and shall be on our way. Good day to you and we wish you all prosperity.

Wmen 1-3: Good day to you. (*They bow and move away.*)

Roman: This way, noble gentlemen. (*The wise men leave Herod's presence.*)

Wise Man 1: Let us go to the temple for the priests will be sure to have knowledge of the new born King.

Wise Man 2: I think you are right. Let us go!

SCENE 5

Narrator: But their inquiries were in vain. To their amazement they found none who seemed to have a knowledge of the newborn King. Their questions brought forth no expressions of joy, but rather of fear, mingled with contempt. The priests were rehearsing traditions, extolling their religion and their own piety. In contrast to the wise men who were seeking God, they who were appointed guardians of the Holy Oracles, had no sympathy for the wise men. They were not touched by the holy quest of the magi. At this point, the pride and stubbornness of Israel's leaders grew and settled into a hatred of the Saviour.

Wise Man 1: That was an extraordinary experience! It seems that those priests did not want to know of the arrival of the King!

Wise Man 2: Let us go. Night is falling with its shadows lining the hills of Jerusalem.

Wise Man 3: But where shall we go? We still seek Him, my colleagues.

Wise Man 1: I for one want to find Him.

Wise Man 2: O, look! There is the guiding star!

Wise Man 3: (*excitedly*) It's going in the direction of Bethlehem!

Wise Man 1: The great God of heaven is with us yet. Let us make haste!

SCENE 6

Narrator: At Bethlehem they found no royal guard stationed to protect the new born King. None of the world's honoured men were in attendance. In simple contrast, Jesus was cradled in a manger.

SONG - "Away in a Manger"

Narrator: Jesus parents, uneducated peasants, were His only guardians.

Wise Man 1: Could this be He of whom it was written that "He should raise up the tribes of Jacob" and "restore the preserved of Israel"; that He should be "a light to the Gentiles and come to bring salvation to the ends of the earth"? (Isa 49:6)

Wise Man 1: Here is the young child with Mary, his mother.

Wise Man 2: Let us fall down and worship Him.

Wise Man 3: I sense that beneath the lowly guise of Jesus that we can recognise the presence of sinless Divinity.

Mary: *(extending her hand in welcome)* Welcome, honourable guests.
Joseph: I fear we have nothing of value to offer you.
Wise Man 2: On the contrary, you have *everything* to offer us for we are in the presence of the Messiah of the world.
Wise Man 2: We bring you gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh fit for a king, but not sufficiently of value for the King sent from God. *(They each set their gifts before Joseph, Mary and Jesus.)*
Joseph: You overwhelm us, kind sirs.
Wise Man 3: O, no, good man. We are overwhelmed. We offer this holy Child our hearts and our life-long loyalty.
Wise Man 1: We have indeed been blessed for our eyes have seen Him. Now we can go in peace and in joy. We shall not speak to Herod of this. We do not trust his motives.
Wise Man 2: Ahh, but we do trust the God of heaven who has led us here to worship today. Praise Him!
Wise Man 3: In humility we return home, as changed men for the Lord of Heaven has led us.
Joseph: Go in peace!
Mary: Go in peace!
(The wise men bow reverently, nod to Mary and Joseph, and leave.)
Narrator: Indeed the Prince of Peace had come for His purpose was to bring peace on earth and goodwill to all men.
If you are ready to accept Him into you heart and your life today, then stand in consecration to Him and sing His praise for his love is immeasurable.

SONG - "Joy to the World"

Prayer