

The Promise and the Gift

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**A Nativity Play for
Primary Schools and Churches**



Cast (in order of appearance)

- A Tour Guide
- Tourist 1
- Tourist 2
- Tourist 3
- Melchior—the pompous elder wise man (actor needs to be an older child, around Year 6)
- Balthazar—a science nerd (perhaps slightly younger, around Year 5)
- Caspar—a young apprentice (a younger child, around Year 3)
- Herod—a riches-loving king with a bad hair-do
- Mary—a young girl
- Joseph—Mary's betrothed
- An angel

ALSO: And an ensemble for some smaller parts (including animals and angels at the Nativity) and to sing all the songs!

The staging in the script features a screen and projector—this is optional. The photos provided throughout the script can be projected as a background.

The Play

We hear the instrumental of the song "Turn to Wonder". Tour Guide enters the stage, map around his or her neck, followed by three tourists clicking their cameras.

Tour Guide: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Bethlehem!

An image of modern day Bethlehem appear on the back of the stage.



Suggested song: O Little Town of Bethlehem

Tour Guide: And here we see the Church of the Nativity, the very place where Jesus Christ was born!

The Church of the Nativity appears on the screen.



Tourists: (enthusiastically) Ooooooh!

Tour Guide: This church is one of the most important places in the Christian world.

Tourist 1: Jesus was born in a church? I thought Jesus was born in a stable!

Tourist 2: The church was built to mark the spot where the stable used to be, silly!

Tour Guide: Exactly. Two thousand years ago, there was a stable in this very place. The baby Jesus lay in a manger while he was visited by shepherds and the wise men.

Tourist 3: Weren't they three Kings?

Tour Guide: The story tells us it was Wise Men from the East who came to visit the baby Jesus.

Tourist 3: Can you tell us the story?

Tour Guide: Well, we don't have all day...

Tourist 1: Oh, please tell

Tour Guide: Alright, alright! Ahem.

As the tour guide clears his or her throat, the tourists go and sit to one side of the stage to watch the action, while the three wise men appear with a telescope, charts, a compass etc. The screen changes to show a starry sky.



Photo by David Billings on Unsplash

Tour Guide: A long time ago, in the faraway land of Persia, there lived three wise men who studied the stars.

Their names were Melchior...

Melchior steps forward, looking smug.

... Balthazar...

Balthazar looks up from his charts and waves timidly at the audience.

... and Caspar

Little Caspar grins at the audience, waving enthusiastically

Melchior: Back to work, child!

Caspar jumps and puts his eye to the telescope.

Tour Guide: Melchior was a strict tutor to the young Caspar.

Melchior: Caspar, you have failed to name a single constellation! I should never have taken you on as our apprentice...

Tour Guide: But that night, Caspar could see something that would change the world.

Caspar: But, Sir, can't you see it? That great big huge star that isn't normally there?

Melchior: Why, you cheeky little—

Balthazar: *(looking up from his books)* He's right, Melchior—look! He points to the sky

Melchior: *(stunned)* Great skies! I never thought I'd see... This is extraordinary. *(He pushes Caspar out of the way of the telescope to get a closer look)*

Caspar: What does the star mean, Sir?

Melchior: It means we must travel West. Summon the camels! We leave tonight!

Melchior and Balthazar spring into action, gathering up their equipment and calling for the servants. Caspar stays still.

Caspar: But I don't understand!

Balthazar: *(taking Caspar by the shoulder)* It is foretold, Little One, that this star means a King is to be born in Judea. We must go and pay him our respects. Now go and pack your things. Hurry!

Balthazar and Melchior run towards the exit. Caspar remains still.

Caspar: But what about presents?

Melchior and Balthazar whip round to face Caspar.

Melchior: Oh heavens, the boy is right! We must take gifts to give to this new king.

Balthazar: But what shall we take?

Melchior: A musical instrument?

A kid in the ensemble: Too loud!

Balthazar: Books?

Another kid in the ensemble: Too dusty!

Melchior: A telescope?

Another kid in the ensemble: Too heavy!

Caspar: What about baby clothes and toys?

A couple of kids in the ensemble: Now, there's a thought!

Melchior and Balthazar look at each other for a moment.

Melchior and Balthazar together: Nahhh!

Balthazar: Wait! Why don't we take symbolic gifts? After all, won't a king already have everything he needs?

Melchior: An excellent idea! I will see what we have in our stores.

The three wise men leave the stage.

Tour Guide: And so once they'd chosen their symbolic gifts, packed their maps, charts and provisions and saddled the camels, the three wise men set off on their journey into the night...

The three wise men return on camels (perhaps camel hobby horses!) The screen shows a desert landscape.



Tour Guide: They travelled for days...

Ensemble kid: And days...

Another ensemble kid: And days!

Song: *The chorus of 'We Three Kings'*

[O star of wonder, star of light,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.]

Tour Guide: Finally, the three wise men arrived in Jerusalem at the royal palace.

Balthazar: Oh, I really hope we got the gifts right!

Tour Guide: The wise men entered King Herod's hall.

The screen changes to the inside of a majestic palace.



Photo by Billy Pasco on Unsplash

Herod: Who are you?

Melchior: We are astronomers from Persia, experts in the stars. We followed the star to this land, for it told us of the birth of a king.

Herod: Indeed? A king, eh? Well, I'm the only king here, perhaps you got the wrong address?

The three wise men turn to leave, but Herod calls them back, rubbing his hands together evilly.

Herod: Oh, but one thing before you go! Promise me that when you find this king, you'll tell me where I can find him... so I can worship him too.

The three men exit, the evil Herod laughs manically before exiting too.

The screen changes to the hillside landscape of the Holy Land.



Tour Guide: The wise men got back on their camels and followed the star to the town of Bethlehem.

Song: *Repeat the chorus of 'We Three Kings'*

[O star of wonder, star of light,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.]

Tour Guide: Bethlehem didn't seem like the sort of place you'd find a king at all!

The screen changes to a market seen of Bethlehem today. Members of the ensemble create a noisy scene on stage.

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Tour Guide: It wasn't a very grand place, the streets were busy, and there were lots of tradespeople selling their wares just like today.

Melchior: Are you sure this place is right?

Balthazar: With respect, Sir, the star is now right over the top of our heads.

Melchior: Fair point.

The scene clears, and a stable appears on the screen with the star directly over its roof.



Tour Guide: The star brought the Wise Men to a stable, where they found a young woman called Mary who had recently given birth to a baby boy. The baby was lying in a manger.

The classic Nativity scene forms—Mary and Joseph sitting by the manger, with children dressed as various animals and angels in the background.

Song: *The last verse of 'We Three Kings'*

[Glorious now behold Him arise;
King and God and sacrifice;
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Sounds through the earth and skies.]

Melchior: *(bowing and holding up a bar of gold)* O King, I present you with the gift of gold, to represent your kingship on earth. *(He lays the gold at the feet of the manger)*

Balthazar: *(bowing and holding up a wooden incense box)* O King, I present you with the gift of frankincense, to represent your holiness. *(Lays down the gift)*

Caspar: *(bowing and holding up a small metal pot)* And I present you with the gift of myrr—

Melchior: *(hissing)* Myrrh!

Caspar: — erm, myrrh, as a symbol of death. *(Lays down the gift)*

Mary: Such lovely, thoughtful gifts! How very kind. Thank you.

The scene freezes while Mary stands up and speaks directly to the audience.

Mary: Please don't tell the Wise Men, but I really could have done with some baby clothes, toys, wipes, nappies and a casserole.

Ensemble kid: You'll just have to wait for the visit of the Wise Women!

The scene continues, Mary sits back down.

Joseph: Would you like to take a closer look at the baby?

The Wise Men huddle around the manger, looking awestruck.

Mary: We have named him Jesus, which means "Saviour."

Caspar: It suits him! Oh, he's so cute!

Melchior: Silence, child! We are in the presence of a King.

Tour Guide: As the Wise Men looked upon the baby Jesus, they felt the peace of the child and were overwhelmed with joy.

Melchior: The real gift is ours! This child is a gift—a gift to us, and to the world!

Song: *Turn to Wonder*

The Nativity scene disperses, and we see the Wise Men lying down, asleep. The screen changes once more to starry night.



Tour Guide: The Wise Men prepared to go on their way and tell all of what they had seen. But that night, all three of them had the same dream...

An angel appears, standing above the three wise men as they sleep.

Angel: The baby Jesus is in danger! You must not return to your country the way you came, for King Herod will capture you and force you to reveal the child's whereabouts.

Enter Joseph.

Angel: *(speaking to Joseph)* Take the young child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him.

Exit Angel and Joseph.

The Wise Men wake up, looking afraid.

Melchior: I knew that Herod was a bad egg! The baby is in danger, we must not go back the same way!

The scene changes to another desert scene, and the Wise Men get back on their camels.



Tour Guide: Once again, they got back on their camels.

Caspar: I told you I was right about that star!

Melchior: *(sighing)* Yes, Caspar, you were right about the star. You may stay as our apprentice.

Caspar: Yipeeee!

The Wise Men leave the stage, and the scene returns to the Church of the Nativity. The tourists re-appear on stage.



Tour Guide: And so the Three Wise Men travelled back to Persia by another route—

Tourist 1: — Did they make it out?

Tourist 2: Did Herod catch them?

Tourist 3: What happened?

Tour Guide: They made it back to Persia! Their heads and hearts were bursting with stories to tell everyone back home. They knew that the little baby they had met in Bethlehem was going to change the world... forever.

Tourist 2: It's a great story. And it really happened here?

Tour Guide: Right here.

Tourist 3: Wow.

Tourist 1: Cool!

Tour Guide: We're going to be late for our coach! No time to visit the gift shop now...
Let's be on our way.

(To the audience) Oh, and merry Christmas, everyone!

Reprise of the song 'Turn to Wonder'

THE END.



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