

## Closing Stories

**Ryan:** So, we've heard the story of Mary and Joseph. Is that all there is to say about it? Well, no. All sorts of things were happening...starting with these guys over here.

### The Three Magi

**Caspar:** When I first noticed the bright light in the sky, I couldn't believe my eyes. I hadn't seen or heard of anything like it before. I went to Melchior's house to see what he made of it. He, too, had noticed the light and was very excited. We both thought that there must be some meaning in it, didn't we?

**Melchior:** Yes, we did indeed. We threw some ideas around. You know, chewed the fat a bit. Then we said, you know what, Balthazar has a much deeper knowledge on theological matters than we have. So we went and talked to him about it.

**Balthazar:** At that point, I had not seen the light in the sky. All my attention was on the book I was writing, which has since been given the working title, "Responding to the light of God". It's not available yet!

**Caspar:** I'll read your book, Balthazar. It will be the first book of yours that has some real-life experience behind it. I find your more theoretical works a little hard to follow.

**Melchior:** You see, the light in the sky could not have come at a better time for Balthazar, because the book he is writing has the potential to become the true story of our journey in search of a new-born king.

**Balthazar:** When Caspar and Melchior pointed out the light in the sky to me, and shared their theories as to its meaning, I quickly realised what was going on. I told them it was a sign that a new king had been born. But it couldn't possibly be a common-or-garden king. Such kings don't get their own light in the sky announcing their birth. This must be a great king.

Well, after I had explained this to them, I assumed that my job was done. Having told them what I thought was going on, I just wanted them to leave so I could carry on writing. Instead, they came back the next day and asked me to go with them in search of this "great king".

**Caspar:** I told Balthazar that the adventure we were going on would dramatically change the nature of the book he was writing.

**Balthazar:** Yes, and I told Caspar, I didn't want to change the nature of the book I was writing!

**Melchior:** So, then I pointed out to Balthazar that the experiences he would write about were bound to make the book a best seller... and then, kerching, it seemed to get his attention...and he showed a bit more interest after that!

**Balthazar:** Yes... well, bills have to be paid, and travelling long distances doesn't come cheap!

**Ryan:** So they had a long journey ahead of them. But they were not the only ones. Poor Mary and Joseph found they had a journey to make too...and just when Mary was at her most pregnant.

### Joseph & Mary

**Compère:** So, Mary and Joseph, can you tell us what happened when you were told that you had to go to Bethlehem.

**Joseph:** Well, I was really angry, but I couldn't exactly say no to the Roman authorities, could I? Emperor Augustus had decreed that we should all return to our ancestral hometown to register for his census. Just as Mary and I were settling into married life together and getting ready for the birth of our first child. Suddenly, we were ordered to travel all the way to, in our case, Bethlehem. I talked to various people to see if we could get out of it, but everyone said the same thing – “you've got to go.” But it was Mary's conversation with our priest that settled the matter.

**Mary:** Yeh. I was feeling quite upset and scared about doing the journey, being heavily pregnant. I went to the priest to ask him to pray for me. He hadn't heard about our problem. He knew about the decree, but not about us having to travel to Bethlehem because of it. In fact, he started chuckling when I told him, which I found quite annoying! But then he explained. He said, “You're carrying God's baby...and where in the Scriptures does it say God's baby will be born?... In Bethlehem!” So, it all made sense...but I still didn't find it very funny!

## Others

**Ryan:** But not everyone was travelling. Just by being where God wanted her to be, Anna found she was able to do exactly what God wanted her to do.

**Anna:** I have a rule that goes, if I see someone who is obviously in great need, I must try and help them somehow. I don't always keep this rule, especially if my mind is on other things, but I try to.

Well, my mind WAS on other things earlier today. I had a strong sense that God wanted me praying in the Temple, and I was hurrying through the streets of Jerusalem to get there.

But then I saw a couple, a husband leading a donkey, with his wife sat on it. She was heavily pregnant. They both looked exhausted. I'm sorry to say that since praying in the Temple was what I was focussed on, I almost ignored the couple. But something told me STOP! To stop walking and to see.

Then I realised their need was the priority for that moment in time. So, I spoke to them and invited them back to my house for some rest and refreshment. They came and spent a few hours with me.

After that they seemed to feel a lot better and were ready to continue their journey. But I could see that time was running out for them. They needed to reach Bethlehem before the sun went down, and the baby was clearly about to arrive!

I helped them on their way and then headed for the Temple. It was obvious by then that it was this couple and their baby that God was wanting me to pray for.

**Ryan:** Oh yes, and then there were the shepherds.

**Joab:** Abe's dream about the King and the enormous birthday cake turned into a tale that got told many times by the parents of young children in Bethlehem. In case you haven't heard of it, the king longs for some of the cake, but it is intended for the servants only. I won't spoil the ending. You never know, it may get published someday. In fact, Abe became a sort of...village storyteller because of this story.

Meanwhile, my comment about only believing in the Messiah if the sky was filled with angels announcing his arrival, went round the town faster than a wildfire! People would wink at me and snigger. They usually misquoted me. This annoyed me, but I would just laugh along with them and try not to show how I really felt. I'd say to them, "It's never going to happen." To which they usually replied something along the lines of, "Never say never, Joab."

But the three of us still work as shepherds. Ezra is still bored and irritates everyone with his complaining! I'm trying to ignore him, but it really isn't easy. Tonight, Abe and I will have to put up with Ezra as we look after the sheep on the hills outside Bethlehem. At least we can get away from the crowds of people who have descended on our little town for the census. Our homes are crowded with distant relatives who have turned up on our doorsteps looking for shelter. It's actually nice to be out in this fresh, cold, clear night, and my wife has given me an extra warm fleece to wrap around me. I don't know about angels, but there's at least one brighter than normal star up there in the darkness...and it looks like it's shining right above us!

**Ryan:** Well, I hope you have enjoyed our little story. We have now arrived at Christmas eve. It was, at least, on the surface, a peaceful night. But the Son of God was being born into a dark and deeply troubled world; just as it is today. But the forces of darkness could not prevent Jesus growing up into the man, of whom God said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17 And so today this is what Jesus says to us, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33