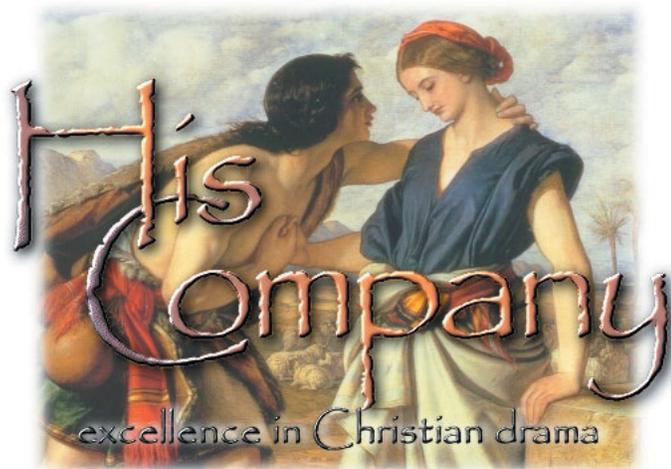


THE PROPHECY

A MUSICAL WITH ZECHARIAH & ELIZABETH

by
David S. Lampel



Notes on Using This Script

Character dialogue is in this typeface.

Stage directions for characters are in this typeface.



5 **Directions for the light crew are preceded by the symbol above this paragraph (a candle) and are in this typeface.**



10 **Directions for the sound crew are preceded by the symbol above this paragraph (a tape reel) and are in this typeface.**

(Note: Sound crew should also look for the tape reel symbol imbedded in dialogue for precise cueing of trax.)

Page numbers (located in the lower right-hand corner of each page) are for script pages only; they do not include any inserted music literature pages.

15 *Scripture references supplied upon request.*

The Scenes

PROLOGUE

20

ACT ONE

Scene 1 - Zechariah's house, in a city of Judah

Scene 2 - Jerusalem Temple; the next week

Scene 3 - Zechariah's house

25

Scene 4 - The local synagogue

ACT TWO

Scene 1 - Zechariah's house; six months later

30

ACT THREE

Scene 1 - A street outside Zechariah's house; three months later

Scene 2 - Zechariah's house; eight days later

The Songs

35

PROLOGUE - O Come, O Come Emmanuel

ACT ONE

Scene 1 - A Promise is a Promise : Zechariah & Elizabeth

40

- Where Do We Go From Here : Zechariah, Elizabeth & Anna

Scene 2 - He Will be Great : Gabriel & Zechariah

ACT TWO

Scene 1 - I Can't Believe It : Elizabeth

45

- Trust His Heart : Mary & Elizabeth

ACT THREE

Scene 2 - Blessed be the Lord : Zechariah & Company

50

- Go Change The World/Trust His Heart : Anna & Company

The Characters

(in order of appearance)

55

Zechariah

Zechariah is a priest in his sixties. He is a pious and Godly man, ever mindful of scripture and the law. While Zechariah is a righteous man in God's eye, he is nevertheless human, with human frailties. He has a quick temper. He loves his God passionately but is not afraid to vent his anger in God's direction. He loves nothing more than reasoning with his colleagues over the scriptures. Zechariah is a man impatient with the weaknesses in others.

60

Elizabeth

The wife of Zechariah is a quiet and mature woman in her sixties. She contributes the reasoned balance to their household. Of the two, Elizabeth is the one aware of the social atmosphere of their village and the political situation of their country. While she is bitter that God has not given her a child she delights in the children of others. The love she feels for all people surpasses her resentment for her barren marriage.

65

70

Anna

Anna is a prophetess of eighty-three years. She is visibly older than Zechariah and Elizabeth. However, her reasoning powers and scriptural scholarship have not been clouded by the years. She retains a clarity of thought surpassing most of her colleagues at the temple and local synagogue. Anna's years give her the advantage of not having to put up with anything the least displeasing to her. She assumes a position of authority around others—an authority accompanied by a crusty delivery; yet, beneath her gruff exterior lies an empathy with her people. Anna loves a good fight—especially a verbal battle over the scriptures.

75

80

The Rabbi

The rabbi is the elder of the community, guiding the spiritual education of his people from the classroom of the local synagogue. He brooks no levity and is particularly short of patience with youth. He is a stern teacher, unhappy with compromise.

85

Thomas & Aaron

The friends of Zechariah are local family men in their thirties (or forties). Thomas is the elder of the two and a bit more serious in nature than his companion, Aaron. Both are spiritually hungry and spend much time in the tutelage of the rabbi.

90

Mary

We meet the virgin Mary just after the angel has announced the conception of Jesus and John. The girl has come to visit her "cousin" (used in the broader sense of their being somehow related). She is a fresh-faced--yet Spiritually receptive and insightful--young woman.

95

The Midwife

Our good midwife is the neighborhood "nurse". She is the radiant, bustling type, who immediately takes charge of the situation. She is in her sixties or seventies and a mother-figure for the neighborhood

100

105

Prologue



Slow dim on houselights to black.

The Storyteller enters in darkness and takes a position (ideally) set apart from main set.

110



Spot or small area lights up on Storyteller.

Storyteller

115

God's salvation in Christ is a miracle—a miracle of grace. The virgin birth of Jesus was a miracle; His resurrection and ascension were miracles. But before these could even take place there was another miracle: the birth of John to a woman well past her child-bearing years.

120

God's plan for our salvation always included John. He was not the long-awaited Christ, but was—as he himself said—not even worthy to untie the Christ's sandals. John said that the one who would come after him had already surpassed him, because he was before him.

(pause)

125

Together these two men—the first, a righteous man; the second, holy God—these two men would forever change the world—and forever change how we would come to our God.

(pause)

130

Both of these men—John the Baptist and Jesus, the Christ—came during a time of troubled expectation for the nation of Israel. For centuries the people had waited and longed for their Messiah to come and save them. The prophets encouraged their faith, but with each generation their hopes dimmed. ☹ Under the Romans and wicked Herod their trust in God grew bitter and old. When would He come? When would the Savior come to deliver them from the evil of the world?

(pause)

135

They expected a political savior who would fight their wars, win their battles—finally rid them of the Romans.

(pause; with greater intensity)

They weren't prepared for the savior they got.



140

Lights out on Storyteller.

Storyteller exits in darkness.



Cue O COME, O COME EMMANUEL - Playing under rest of Prologue; timed to end abruptly at p.16, last meas., as Zechariah enters.

145

Act One, Scene One

Zechariah's house in a city of Judah

The interior of Zechariah's house can be as simple or detailed as you wish. Here are the minimum set pieces you need:

150

- a table, with bench or stool
- another bench or stool
- some type of rack or holder for firewood

These are the minimum props needed for Act 1/Scene 1:

155

- large armload of firewood
- something domestic, such as shelling peas or mending clothing, as handiwork for Elizabeth
- walking stick for Anna (optional)
- a bag for Zechariah's belongings for his journey to Jerusalem

160

The scene may be dressed up with more set pieces or props at the discretion of the Director.



Lights up gradually on interior set of Zechariah's house as program music nears end, so that lights are up full just before Zechariah's entrance.

165

Zechariah enters through doorway. He is loaded down with firewood and is visibly straining under the weight and/or clumsy arrangement of sticks and branches.

ZECHARIAH

Elizabeth!

170

(he struggles with his load; more insistently)

Wife!

(about ready to drop the load of wood)

Lord, in all your wisdom, why did you give me a wife who's never at home?

175

Elizabeth enters just as Zechariah's load of wood crashes to the floor.

ZECHARIAH

(irritated)

Elizabeth! Where have you—

180

ELIZABETH

(unaware he has even addressed her)

Oh, husband. What a beautiful baby Rachel has.

(excitedly)

He talks and talks and is so cute, but never cries—never's a bother.

185

Zechariah takes a deep breath, preparing to scold her for being gone so long, but Elizabeth continues before he can speak.

ELIZABETH

(continuing)

And that's their third child in as many years! O, God has richly blessed that house.

190

ZECHARIAH

God would bless this house if the wife would stay home once in awhile.

(wincing, holding his back; pouting)

I think I hurt myself bringing in the firewood.

195

ELIZABETH

(going to him; not taking Zechariah entirely seriously)

There, there; I'm home now.

(together they pick up the pieces of wood, as Elizabeth continues)

Forgive me for spending more time at the neighbors than here. It's the emptiness of this house that drives me to others.

200

(now feeling sorry for herself)

God has forgotten me in my old age and the barrenness of this home only reminds me of my shame.

(with a martyred sigh)

At least I can share in the joy of others.

205

ZECHARIAH

(with firm, yet tested, patience)

Elizabeth, our God doesn't forget. There's purpose in all that He does. Is it not written—

210

Elizabeth turns her eyes pleadingly toward heaven; he's always quoting the scriptures.

ZECHARIAH

(continuing without pause)

—in the book of Ecclesiastes, "For everything there is set a time; and there is a time for every pleasure under heaven. A time to give birth and a time to die; a time to—"

215

ELIZABETH

(interrupting)

I want to give birth before I die. Is that too much to ask of God?

(pause)

220 You can quote the scriptures all you want, but it takes away none of the pain.

ZECHARIAH

(sharply)

Now you forget. I'm without a son. You're not alone in your pain.

225 *(pause; visibly trying to suppress his anger; measured)*

If God has chosen for us to remain without children, then we must not question His wisdom—

(releasing his pent-up frustration)

—no matter how ridiculous that wisdom seems!

ELIZABETH

(quietly ashamed)

Our neighbors say it's God punishing us.

ZECHARIAH

(defensively)

235 No one is more obedient to the Lord than I!

ELIZABETH

(accusatory)

Then why? You're the priest. Explain to me why I must go through this humiliation.

ZECHARIAH

(holding up his hands)

240 Enough. We must not question.

ELIZABETH

(resigned; with a sigh)

245 It doesn't matter. I'm far too old, anyway.

(picking up some handiwork and sitting)

ELIZABETH

(proudly)

280 And what does my learned husband say?

ZECHARIAH

It's clear! The answer lies not with the bones, but with the previous line:
"The Lord delivers Him out of them all." Surely it speaks of the Messiah.
Earlier in the passage it says, "The righteous cry and the Lord hears, and
285 delivers them out of all their troubles."

(Zechariah is agitated by now.)

An idiot can see it!

ELIZABETH

(after a pause; protectively)

290 You were alone in your opinion, weren't you?

ZECHARIAH

(sighing)

They won't listen to me. I tell them day after day: The Messiah comes,
and soon! They're a strange group of men, Elizabeth. With all their being
295 they want our Savior to come and deliver us from these horrible
Romans—yet they deny the very evidence of His coming.

ELIZABETH

But don't you all have the same scriptures and study together?

ZECHARIAH

300 Each person has his own idea of what the Savior will be. Each person has
his own problems, and for that person, the Messiah is the one who will
take away those problems.

ELIZABETH

(with a reflective tone)

305 To me, the Messiah has always been someone who'll take away sickness
and sorrow. A person of compassion and tenderness. ☹️

ZECHARIAH

Many would agree. The scriptures say that. But the scriptures also say
(with growing intensity)

310 He'll be a mighty ruler, who will reign over all nations to the end of the
 earth—and will break them with a rod of iron. He'll be the Son of Almighty
 God.

ELIZABETH

And what about you? What will the Messiah be to my husband?

315

ZECHARIAH

(after a pause to put his thoughts together)

320

He'll be all things to all people. To those who need comfort, He'll bring
 peace; to those who need a deliverer, He'll bring release. My peace
 comes from knowing God has promised the Messiah will come. When and
 how don't matter—only the promise.



Cue A PROMISE IS A PROMISE - Duet, Zechariah & Elizabeth 3:55

325

Suggested blocking for "A Promise is a Promise":

p24, mA (1st time): Zechariah, roughly DC.

p26, during 1st ending: Elizabeth X to Zechariah.

p24, mA (2nd time): Elizabeth.

p25, bottom line (2nd time): Zechariah joins singing; they take hands, singing to each other.

330

p27, mB (3rd verse): lights kick brighter, they step apart, slightly, and face out.

p30, "He'll do.": end song in unison.

As Zechariah and Elizabeth finish the song and go back to their domestic business, the prophetess Anna arrives.

335

ANNA

(shouting from outside the house)

Zechariah!

Elizabeth and Zechariah hear Anna, but are slow to respond.

340

ANNA

(impatiently)

Zechariah! Elizabeth!

As Elizabeth turns toward the doorway Anna enters on her own.

345

ELIZABETH

(politely, respectfully)

A good day to you, Anna. You're looking well.

ANNA

(wryly)

For an old lady, you mean?

350

ELIZABETH

No, no, I—

ANNA

(raising her hand to cut Elizabeth short)

The priests sent me to remind Zechariah it's his time for duty at the temple.

355

(aside to Elizabeth or audience)

He occasionally forgets things, you know.

ZECHARIAH

(bowing with forced respect, his voice tinged with sarcasm)

May the Lord shine upon you—old woman.

360

ANNA

(in kind—she doesn't much like him either)

May the God of Abraham smile upon the priest of Abijah.

ELIZABETH

(coming between them)

365 Please, Anna, sit and rest your feet.

Elizabeth direct Anna to a nearby bench, where she sits.

ELIZABETH

(continuing after Anna is settled in)

Tell us, what's the news from Jerusalem?

370

ANNA

(disgustedly)

Jerusalem's the same as always; the Romans poke at us from one side and the Pharisees prod from the other. There's quibbling and argument in the holy temple every day. I wait for Messiah to come and rid us of the lot of them.

375

(getting up and going to Elizabeth; bending over, putting her ear to Elizabeth's stomach)

Any rumblings of late?

ELIZABETH

(backing away; embarrassed)

380

Anna, please!

ZECHARIAH

(sternly)

Why do you mock us so?

ANNA

385

You're the ones who mock the Lord. You say you walk closely with God, yet you tie His hands.

ZECHARIAH

Watch your tongue, woman!

ANNA

(to Zechariah)

390

Do you believe God created this world of ours?

ZECHARIAH

(where's she going with this?)

Yes.

395

ANNA

(to Elizabeth)

Do you believe the creatures that soar in the air and swim beneath the sea and walk about the land were designed by Him?

ELIZABETH

(confused)

400

Why yes.

ANNA

(to Zechariah)

405

And do you, priest, believe that Almighty God can take the breath from your body in an instant?

ZECHARIAH

(impatiently)

Of course, but what—

410

ANNA

(interrupting)

But in this one thing you tie the Lord's hands; you say He can do all this, but hasn't the power—or the inclination—to grant a child to this woman.

ZECHARIAH

(firmly)

415

God created the laws of nature and His creations must abide by them. When people—when women—reach a certain age, it's simply not possible for them to bear children. God has decided we'll be childless. So be it.

ELIZABETH

420

Anna, no woman in this town wants a child more than I. But, if it's His will that I remain barren, then I have to accept His decision.

ANNA

(to Elizabeth)

425 What you've accepted is His inability to work a miracle in your life. And in that, you deny the power of our God.

(pause)

Do either of you question that God will send us a deliverer?

ELIZABETH

No—

430

ZECHARIAH

Our very lives are committed to His coming.

ANNA

435 My God tells me that our Messiah and savior won't spring upon us unannounced—as a storm might catch a ship by surprise. No, I've heard the voice—the voice Isaiah speaks of, crying in the wilderness: “Clear the way for the Lord; in the desert, make smooth the highway for our God. Let every valley be raised, and every mountain and hill be lowered; let the rough ground become a smooth plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; then—then shall the glory of the Lord be revealed and all will see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

440

Zechariah tries to interrupt.

ANNA

(continuing)

445 Our prophet, Malachi, was told the same by God: “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.”

ZECHARIAH

Why do you speak of a messenger? What has this to do with us?

ANNA

450 The Lord has always used the impossible to accomplish His will. From dust He made man, from a rib He fashioned woman; out of Sarah he built a nation that passed from slavery into dominance.

(pointedly, to Zechariah)

455 And you doubt that he can take a woman, barely entered into old age,
and bless her with a child?

(with a measure of ridicule)

Where is this great faith you speak of?

ZECHARIAH

(somberly, after a pause)

460 Weakened by years of disappointment.

(pause)

Withered by hope unrewarded.

ANNA

465 Well, Zechariah, your Lord requires just a bit more patience from you. He
has immeasurable patience with your human weaknesses; show Him a
little patience in return—and He'll accomplish great things.

ELIZABETH

(to Anna)

470 Why would He subject me to a lifetime of shame, only to answer our plea
at this late hour? Why not give me a child in my youth instead of waiting
until my feeble old-age. I tell you, if He is to answer our prayers He'd
better hurry.

(pause)

Every time the weather changes, my joints tell me: He had better hurry.

ZECHARIAH

475 *(with wearied anger)*

Anna, you've only reminded us—once again—of what we most want and
still do not have. Why?

ANNA

(firmly)

480 I speak for God; I'm His messenger in this pitiful land. I bring the message
that His promises stand! However much you give up on Him, He'll not
forsake you.

(pause)

485

In the Psalms He speaks to this house: “How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine, within your house, your children like olive plants around your table. ☹ Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord.”

490



Cue WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE - Zechariah, Elizabeth & Anna 6:05

Suggestions for blocking during "Where Do We Go From Here":

495

p32, mA: Zechariah sings to Anna; change verbs to present tense (see changes in book).

p34, mB: Elizabeth sings to Anna.

p35, bottom: Zechariah joins (tenor line).

p36, during interlude: Zechariah and Elizabeth slowly move to opposite sides of the stage (DR/DL).

p37, mC: Zechariah sings out, to God.

p38, top: Elizabeth sings out, to God.

500

p39, mD: Zechariah, same.

p40, top: Elizabeth sings while Zechariah X to her.

p40, 2nd line: they sing unison.

p41, mE: Zechariah sings out, to God.

505

p41, bottom line: Elizabeth joins.

p42, pickup to mF: Anna sings.

p44, top line: Zechariah and Elizabeth join Anna, agreeing.

p44, mH: Anna solo.

p46, end of 2nd line: Zechariah and Elizabeth join Anna, agreeing again.

510

ANNA

Well, the Lord will forgive, but the High Priest won't if you're late. Get your things and we will return to the temple together.

ZECHARIAH

(caught off-guard; looking to Elizabeth)

515

But, I haven't—

ANNA

You see, he had forgotten!

ELIZABETH

(with wifely patience)

520

I remembered. I packed your belongings, Zechariah.

(hands satchel to Zechariah)

Here. And may the Lord protect you on the road to Jerusalem.

(She kisses Zechariah on the forehead)

525

ZECHARIAH

(eyeing Anna with suspicion and dread)

May the Lord protect me from my traveling companion.

Anna scowls as they exit together.



530

Lights go to black.

Act One, Scene Two

Jerusalem temple



535 **Lights up ¼ to ½. “Glowing” lights up in altar.**

Zechariah is before the altar, burning incense.

540 The altar would be a simple, perpendicular cube, painted to look like stone. There would be "horns" at each corner (or, put another way, each top corner, around the basin, would be raised to a point; picture supplied if requested). Use lights inside the altar to make it seem that something is burning.

The incense could be that, or anything that would make a small amount of smoke.

ZECHARIAH

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!

Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

545 Your law, O Lord, is perfect, restoring the soul;

Your testimony is sure, making wise the simple.

Your precepts are right, rejoicing the heart;

Your commandment is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Your judgements, O Lord, are true;

550 They are righteous altogether.

Accept the sweet aroma of this offering and hear my prayer.

Make me know Your ways, O Lord;

Teach me Your paths.

Lead me in Your truth and teach me,

555 For You are the God of my salvation;

For You I wait all the day.

Remember, O Lord, Your compassion and lovingkindness,

For they have been from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;

560 According to Your lovingkindness remember me,

For Your goodness sake, O Lord.

Hear my cry, O God!

Give heed to my prayer! ☹️

565



570

Do something dramatic with the lights simultaneous with music—such as kicking them up full at downbeat.



575

Song: HE WILL BE GREAT - Zechariah and “Gabriel” 4:21

p59, mH: begin dimming lights slowly or (better) mixing in darker colors until final beat of song go to black.

Act One, Scene Three

Zechariah's house

580



Lights up on interior of Zechariah's house.

585

Elizabeth is seated, facing the audience, busy with something domestic—such as fixing vegetables for a meal. Zechariah enters excitedly. His eyes are aglow with the wonder of his temple experience. He rushes to Elizabeth—who is seated with her back to his entrance. Just before Zechariah reaches her, Elizabeth hears him approach.

ELIZABETH

(standing and turning; putting out her arms to embrace him)

Welcome home, Zechariah!

590

Zechariah stops her with his hands on her shoulders. He tries to speak, excitedly, but nothing comes out.

ELIZABETH

(mystified)

What's the matter?

595

Zechariah then remembers he can't speak (hits his forehead) and guides her back to her chair (you aren't going to believe this!).

ELIZABETH

(with greater urgency in her voice)

What's happened, Zechariah?

600

Zechariah pauses to collect his thoughts (how am I going to explain this).

ELIZABETH

(insistently)

And what happened to your voice? Why can't you speak?

605

Zechariah lifts his eyes to heaven in frustration and presses on. He points back in direction from which he has come (Jerusalem) and makes motions of worship similar to those in his previous scene before the altar.

ELIZABETH

(impatiently)

610 Yes, I know, you've been at the temple

(begins to stand)

and I'm sure glad you're back; there're plenty of things that need work
around here—

615 *Zechariah stops her by gently pushing her back into her chair and
continues, shaking his head no, that she has misunderstood. He goes
through the motions again and points to Jerusalem, more insistently.*

ELIZABETH

(patiently)

Okay, okay; you were at the temple. What happened at the temple?

620 *Zechariah points to heaven, stretches his arms out (as something
descending) tries to portray something glowing (open hands framing face,
look of wonderment on his face).*

ELIZABETH

(irritated)

625 You were out in the sun? Zechariah! You know that's not good for you—

*Zechariah shakes his head, wearily, no. He assumes attitude of prayer,
then looks up, as if seeing something wonderful.*

ELIZABETH

(cautiously)

630 God spoke to you?

*Zechariah nods excitedly and makes the motion again with arms
outstretched.*

ELIZABETH

Oh, an angel! An angel of the Lord spoke to you.

635 *Zechariah nods happily, breathes a sigh of relief that he's finally got
through. With great moment, he points to her stomach then pretends he is
holding a baby.*

ELIZABETH

(after a pause for it to sink in; with great excitement)

640 I'm going to have a baby?

(quick disbelief; sternly)

Zechariah, have you been in the wine offering again?

Zechariah holds up his hand (honest) and breathes on her face to prove his sobriety.

645

ELIZABETH

(belief slowly spreading across her face)

Praise God! I'll be a mother, after all. The Lord has blessed me and I'll have a child!

(stopping herself; back to Zechariah; more seriously)

650

But how is this to be? How will it happen?

They both stare at the floor, then slowly look up at each other, thinking; together they realize if this is to happen, they must do something about it. With eyes twinkling, they join hands, turn toward the interior doorway and exit.

655



Lights go to black quickly as Zechariah and Elizabeth exit.

Act One, Scene Four

The local synagogue

Minimum set for Act 1/Scene 4:

660 All you need is something for each man to sit on--plus something else for Anna when
she joins them. This should be in keeping with the rest of your production. If the
opening scene (Interior of Zechariah's house) is detailed, then you should do the same
with this, making it look like the interior of a synagogue. If, on the other hand, you are
665 taking a more minimalist approach with the other scenes, the same should apply here.
Just make the rabbi's seat slightly higher than the rest.

The Rabbi, Thomas and Aaron are sitting together, discussing the scriptures.



670 **If possible, begin with rabbi in small spot. If not, lights at ½.**

RABBI

(simply; reading from a scroll)

“O God, give your judgments to the king, and your righteousness to the king’s son.”

675



Lights widen; up full.

RABBI

(continuing without pause)

680 “He shall judge your people in righteousness and your poor in justice. The
mountains shall lift up peace to the people, and the little hills through
righteousness. He will vindicate the poor, save the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor.”

(placing the scroll before him or rolling it up before continuing; to his students)

685 What is this psalm of Solomon telling us? Who is this King of whom he
speaks?

AARON

(after he and Thomas spend a moment in thought; beginning hesitantly)

It sounds to me as if Solomon speaks of himself and his father, David.

THOMAS

(quickly agreeing)

690

Of course. There was never a king so just as Solomon. Surely his wisdom came from the Lord.

RABBI

(shaking his head; irritated and disappointed in them)

695 You'll never grow in the knowledge of God's word until you learn to read beyond the literal. Our books of scripture are more than a telling of our nation's history. They're truths we're to use in the conduct of our lives.

Aaron and Thomas begin to speak, but the Rabbi continues.

RABBI

700 More than that, in the scriptures you'll find beacons of light showing us the way of the future—prophecies telling the future as if it were already history.

THOMAS

So tell us: who is this mysterious king?

705

AARON

(innocently)

Is it our King Herod?

Anna silently enters the synagogue.

RABBI

710

(reacting with horror at what Aaron has just said)

Get out of the synagogue! How dare you blaspheme in a place of worship!

THOMAS

(quickly)

715

Rabbi, forgive us.

AARON

We wish only your knowledge. Please, have patience with us.

ANNA

(from a distance; sarcastically)

720

Thrashing your students again, I see. Is this a new technique for learning the scriptures?

RABBI

(noticing her for the first time; curtly—they've never got along)

725

Mind your business, Anna. You'd also thrash those who refer to Herod as the Messiah.

ANNA

(curious; moving closer; eyes twinkling with delight)

Oh, this is new—and in what book will I find such information?

THOMAS

(his feelings hurt)

730

Come, Aaron. We have better things to do than to listen to others laugh at our ignorance.

RABBI

(taking charge)

735

Please, sit down. Let's continue our lesson.

ANNA

(sitting with them)

Oh, by all means.

RABBI

(casting a wary and wearisome eye towards Anna)

740

This passage, written by Solomon, is clearly a prophecy of our glorious Messiah—our savior. And from this passage we can learn something of the nature of our coming King.

Anna leans forward, expectantly.

745

RABBI

(continuing)

Notice the strength of the words: "He will judge the people with righteousness; He will vindicate the poor; save the needy; and crush the oppressor!"

750

Anna lifts her eyes to heaven.

RABBI

(continuing)

Certainly, Solomon in all his wisdom, is telling us that our savior will be a powerful king—ruling with a just, iron hand.

755 *Anna interrupts by raising her hand for attention.*

RABBI

(with irritation—he had hoped to be able to ignore her)

What?

ANNA

760 Is the good rabbi familiar with Isaiah—?

RABBI

(wearily)

Of course I am.

ANNA

(continuing)

765 —where he writes, “He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street.”

RABBI

(losing patience with the woman and resenting her intrusion into his class)

770 What is your point?

(sarcastically)

That our king will become the footstool for others?

ANNA

(firmly)

775 I suggest that our Lord will have a strength foreign to us—because it will be a strength displayed by humility. More to the point, how can we, with our simple minds, know the character of our Anointed One? We don’t know His nature—nor do we know the nature of His coming. Why, for all we know, one of these fine boys will be the Anointed One!

780 *Thomas and Aaron glance at each other and preen at the thought.*

RABBI

(with a withering look)

Anna, just what was your reason for coming here?

ANNA

(after a beat, having to remind herself)

785

Oh, yes. Have you heard about Zechariah's adventure in Jerusalem?

AARON

(interested)

No!

790

THOMAS

(Zechariah's a good friend of everyone in the community)

Is he back already?

ANNA

(slyly)

795

Well, most of him.

AARON

Huh?

RABBI

(curtly)

800

None of your riddles, old woman. Tell us what happened.

ANNA

(relishing the chance to tell her tale)

805

I was in a crowd of people at the temple—in prayer while, inside, Zechariah burned the incense. Our prayers were ended and still he remained inside. It was strange for him to stay in there so long. We were getting worried. Suddenly, Zechariah came running out. At first, we thought him a madman. His eyes glowed as if they had beheld something not of this world; his face radiated some miraculous experience. We tried to calm him down—but we could see that something extraordinary had happened inside.

810

AARON

(after a beat, waiting for Anna to continue)

Well, what was it?!

ANNA

(enjoying the suspense)

I'm getting there! At first we thought he was only in shock and couldn't find his voice. But we soon realized his voice was completely gone. His arm-waving and signs were difficult to translate, but eventually we understood.

(pause; dramatically)

While in the temple, burning the incense offering, he had seen a vision—an angel of the Lord. This angel told Zechariah that his prayers had been answered—and he would have a son!

AARON

Wow!

THOMAS

(not disrespectfully)

Good old Zechariah. He'll finally be a father.

RABBI

(with awkward solemnity)

Does Elizabeth know this yet?

ANNA

(getting up; grinning)

Oh, I think she knows by now.

(pause)

Well, if you'll excuse me, I have others to tell.

(with teasing formality)

Good day to you, gentlemen. I leave you to continue with your lessons.

As Anna reaches the door, Thomas calls out to her.

THOMAS

But Anna, you didn't tell us why Zechariah lost his voice.

ANNA

(turning back slowly; now truly serious; with weight)

845

Because he did not believe.

Anna exits.



Lights slowly go to black.

Act Two, Scene One

Zechariah's house

850

The ideal activity for Elizabeth as this scene opens would be knitting or crocheting booties.

The only other props need in this scene are as follows:

855

- some kind of domestic activity for Zechariah to get tangled up in (such as cutting up vegetables or, better, trying to knead a pile of flour-dusted bread dough)
- give Mary some traveling items, such as a shoulder bag for her belongings, walking stick, etc.
- water jar, drinking cups and water for Elizabeth to offer Mary something to drink

860

Elizabeth is seated, alone in their house. She is in profile to the audience—and clearly 6 months pregnant. She is making something for the baby. While she busies herself, the baby kicks and she reacts happily—and begins talking to the baby.

ELIZABETH

865

(in a soothing tone)

Oh patience, my baby John. There's time enough before you'll be joining us in this world.

(with a sigh)

God has surely chosen a strange time for you to be born.

870

(sarcastically)

We're a part of the great Roman Empire—aren't you proud? We're surrounded by the affectionate troops of Augustus Caesar! Why, they see to all our needs and guarantee we'll always have work—the better to pay our taxes, you know.

875

(still sarcastic)

And our good and kindly King Herod sees to our protection. You'll like Herod—such a stable person.

(a more normal tone)

The world's ready for you, John.

880

(with pride mixed with wonder)

You're to be part of the Lord's solution. Just how is still a mystery to me—but I trust in my God. He's answered my plea and has promised great things for you.

(pause, thinking)

885 You'll have a good life, John. Our hill country is a rugged place—the
desert's at our door—but it's a suitable school for a young boy.

(pause)

You'll learn the way of the land. And your father will teach you the ways of
the Lord.

890 *(short pause)*

Well, what do you think of your father so far? Oh, I know, his head's
buried in the scriptures all the time, and he too easily loses touch with
things going on around him. But right now you're the most important
person in his life. And he already loves you so.

895 *(short pause)*

Zechariah will be a good father, and it'll be easy for you to obey him.

(after a longer pause)

You'll have to be patient with us, John. You see, we're already old and
unaccustomed to having a baby about the house. This will be a new joy
900 for us—a joy that will teach us patience.

(shaking her head)

Oh John, sometimes I just can't believe this is happening to me!

(with gathering excitement)

905 For the first time, there's new life inside me—placed there with the
blessings of God! Sometimes it's too much for me to comprehend— that I
would be so blessed in my old age. What have I done to deserve God's
favor? ☹️



910 **Cue I CAN'T BELIEVE IT - Elizabeth 2:20**

Zechariah enters while Elizabeth is singing. He (for example) takes a seat at the table,
watching and listening to his wife with pride and admiration.



If facilities permit, lower lights to ¼, except on Elizabeth.

915 *After the song, Zechariah, having entered during the previous song, is seated at the table.*

ELIZABETH

(turning and noticing Zechariah)

O, Zechariah! Isn't it wonderful? Soon we'll be parents—really parents!

920 *Zechariah fiddles with something on the table.*

ELIZABETH

(sweetly)

Dear, why don't you see who's at the synagogue today.

925 *Zechariah shakes his head no; he'd rather stay home—something he's been doing quite often, since losing his ability to argue at the synagogue. At the table he is creating more of a mess than helping Elizabeth.*

ELIZABETH

(sweetly, but with more force)

930 Zechariah, I'm sure they miss you at the synagogue. Even if you can't teach, you can be there to assist—and maybe learn yourself.

Zechariah gives her a “don't bother me” look and continues what he is doing, fumbling all the more, and making quite a mess of things.

ELIZABETH

(finally losing all patience; taking the things away from him as one would a child; sternly)

935 Zechariah! Go to the synagogue!

Elizabeth shoves him out the door. (Zechariah exits) She then returns to the table, redoing what Zechariah has done and cleaning up the mess.

ELIZABETH

940 My poor husband; he's gone from priest to pest in six short months. He is a dear, but my nerves are—

MARY

(from offstage)

Elizabeth? Elizabeth, it's Mary!

ELIZABETH

945 *(grasping her stomach as the baby gives a good kick; with joy spreading across her face)*
Mary?! Oh, come in Mary.

Mary enters and they embrace; they are not only relatives, but good friends.

ELIZABETH

950 *(her voice bordering on awe)*
How is it that the mother of my Lord should visit me? Why am I so honored?

MARY

955 *(pleasantly surprised)*
Then you know!

ELIZABETH

(embracing her again)
Mary, when I heard your voice outside the door the child in my womb leaped for joy.

960 *(with great wonder bordering on confusion)*
The child within me recognized who it was outside the door before I did. I only know what the Spirit of God placed in my heart as you entered.

MARY

965 It's still so new to me. I'm not sure I'm here to share in your joy or tell you of mine.

(soberly)

All I can say is, I was compelled to come to you after the angel of the Lord came to me.

ELIZABETH

970 *(directing Mary into the room to a bench or chair)*
You must be tired after your journey. Come, sit down.

MARY

(after sitting; explaining further)

975

The angel told me—he told me even about you.

(reciting; working through the recollection)

980

“Your relative, Elizabeth, in the city of Judah, has conceived a son; and she, who is of old age and was once called barren, is now in her sixth month.”

Elizabeth hands her something to drink, then sits down next to her.

MARY

(continuing)

985

I thought— I don’t know what I thought! Why has God suddenly chosen to smile upon this family?

(with youthful exuberance)

This is fantastic! Why me?

ELIZABETH

(incredulously)

990

Why you? Why me? An old woman who had given up on God hearing her prayers and now . . .

(motioning to her stomach; maturely)

It’s not for us to always know the “why”; it’s enough for us to realize that for our God, nothing is impossible.

995

MARY

(quickly)

That’s what the angel said to me!

(pause; maybe getting up and moving about)

1000

I was still in shock, and he said, “Your womb will be filled, and you will give birth to a son—and you’ll name him Jesus.”

(losing her tone of wonder and awe—more like herself)

I was quick to point out I was still a virgin. But he looked me straight in the eye and said, “Mary, nothing is impossible with God.” Well, let me tell you, I believed him!

1005

ELIZABETH

You are special, because you've believed. You've been selected by our Lord because you have the simple faith that what He says, will be fulfilled. And fulfilled for all people through you. ☹️

1010

MARY

But it's too much. I'm only a girl.

ELIZABETH

(quickly)

God sees the maturity of faith inside you.

1015

MARY

(measured)

I want to be His servant, but there are others much more deserving—



Cue Trust His Heart (from From Heaven's Throne) - Elizabeth and Mary 4:42

1020

Suggested assignments for "Trust His Heart":

fade in trax from p27, m13 (From Heaven's Throne) as intro under dialogue.

p28, m1 to p29, m9: Elizabeth sings to Mary in answer to her (Mary's) misgivings.

p29, m9-12: dialogue.

p29, m12: Mary sings in reply to Elizabeth.

1025

Note lyric change! On page 30, beginning at m24 (when Mary is singing) change "So when your pathway grows dim, and you just can't see Him, remember, you're never alone." to "So when my pathway grows dim, and I just can't see Him, I'll remember, I'm never alone." (add an eighth-note on beat 4, m26 for added word "I'll".)

p30, m29: dialogue; trax continue.

p31, m38: Elizabeth (or Mary) sings.

1030

Note lyric change! Change the line that begins with the last note on p31 from "So don't live as those who have no hope" to "We won't live as those who have no hope."

p32, m46: Mary (or Elizabeth) sings.

m49: Both sing to each other.

p34, m63 to p38, cutoff: no choir; Eliz and Mary continue

1035

Elizabeth sings.

MARY

(at interlude p29; soberly)

Yes. From now on, His will is my will. Let it be done to me just as He said.

Mary sings.

1040

(During Interlude that begins p30, m29)

Elizabeth warmly embraces Mary as she finishes singing.

ELIZABETH

You've done a lot of growing up since I last saw you.

1045

MARY

(becoming serious)

Maybe not enough.

(more to herself than Elizabeth)

I don't know . . . Am I ready for this?

1050

ELIZABETH

Is anyone?

MARY

People won't understand.

ELIZABETH

(after a moment's thought; agreeing)

1055

No, they won't. But He's already worked that out. Just leave tomorrow to the Lord.

Elizabeth continues singing (p31, m38).

1060



Lights slowly fade to black on the two women as the Trax fade.

Act Three, Scene One

Outside the house of Zechariah

1065



Lights up ¼ (evening).

1070

Zechariah, the rabbi, Thomas and Aaron are seated closely together awaiting the birth of Zechariah's son. The other men are in a good-natured—almost celebratory—mood, but Zechariah is uneasy and concerned about the event taking place inside.

THOMAS

(with comfortable bonhomie)

Soon our good priest will be a father.

1075

AARON

(with gentle sarcasm)

A bit gray around the edges for a new father, but deserving of the position.

1080

THOMAS

(jokingly)

His gray hair is his wisdom.

AARON

I'm glad I haven't that much wisdom!

1085

THOMAS

(to Aaron)

When you're Zechariah's age you'll wish you could still have children.

AARON

When I am Zechariah's age I'll wish only to be alive!

1090

RABBI

(sternly)

Be still, you two! Let the poor man suffer his anxiety in peace. It's bad enough he must suffer in silence, he can do well without your insolence.

Zechariah tries to interject.

THOMAS

1095

(flippantly; ignoring Zechariah's attempt to say something)

Don't worry, Zechariah—these things are in the hands of God, and He'll see that all goes well.

(strutting)

Why, my two sons came into this world with little effort—

1100

AARON

Ha! Let's ask your wife about that.

RABBI

I hear it was no holiday for her.

Zechariah tries to interject again.

1105

THOMAS

(to the others; ignoring Zechariah again)

What I mean is, we already have our Lord's word that this will be a healthy child. God himself has ordained the birth. We even know that it'll be a son.

1110

(pause)

So what is there to worry?

Zechariah tries again, even more insistently, to interject.

RABBI

(still ignoring Zechariah)

1115

Yes, we know the child will have a healthy birth, and we know he'll be a great man for our tired nation,

(to Thomas)

but you're forgetting that your wife was still in her youth when she gave you two sons.

1120

Zechariah nods his head vigorously; this is what he has been trying to say all along.

RABBI

(continuing)

1125 Elizabeth is well-past her youth and inexperienced in these things. God's hand may be on the child, but the delivery will be hard on the mother.

AARON

But we have the assurance from the Lord.

RABBI

(somberly)

1130 Only for the child.

AARON

Surely the Lord won't harm the mother of a prophet on the happy day of that prophet's birth.

RABBI

1135 Remember the story of Moses? How on the most important day of our faith—the day God gave us His laws and commandments—three thousand men were put to the sword because of the wrath of God.

AARON

1140 But—

RABBI

The Lord works His will through us—not for us. We can't question the wisdom of His ways.

THOMAS

(to the rabbi; angrily)

1145 I won't hear any more of this! This God you describe is not logical—and I don't think He is my God.

RABBI

(flaring back angrily)

1150 Then you don't know your God.

(pause; cooling off; to Zechariah)

I wish no ill upon Elizabeth. She's a good and righteous woman and the Lord is surely watching over her.

(to the others)

1155 But understand this for your own good: Don't apply human logic to the Lord's will. He's not bound by our self-centered ideas of right and wrong. He sees beyond our short-sighted logic to the culmination of His plan.

Thomas and Aaron grudgingly accept the rabbi's wisdom and nod their heads in agreement.

1160

RABBI

(continuing, more boldly)

When you two have a few more gray hairs on your head, then you'll better accept the "logic" of the Lord.

(pause)

1165 But you were right about one thing—this is a happy night. Our priest is finally to be a father after all this time—

AARON

(jokingly)

1170 And none too soon! One more day without his tongue and I do believe Zechariah would have gone mad.

(searching for the imagery)

A priest without his voice is like a jar, filled with rich wine—but with no spout to let the wine out.

THOMAS

(with mock solemnity)

1175

I've come to prefer Zechariah just as he is—without his intoxicating words. He—

They are interrupted by a commotion offstage. The midwife enters, opposite, and all attention is drawn to her.

1180

MIDWIFE

(proudly; so everyone can hear)

Zechariah, you have a son!

The men rejoice at the good news as Zechariah quickly goes to the midwife. As he moves toward her she continues.

1185

MIDWIFE

He's pink and healthy, and happy—and—beautiful!

Zechariah grabs her by the shoulders and glares silently into her eyes. He is not yet convinced.

MIDWIFE

1190

What is it? The baby's fine.

(pause; finally understanding Zechariah's concern)

Oh, that. Elizabeth is resting comfortably. She came through it like a woman half her age.

1195

At this Zechariah brightens instantly, embraces the midwife, and embraces the men, joining in their celebration.



Lights go to black quickly.

Act Three, Scene Two

1200

Interior of Zechariah's house

Props and set pieces for this scene:

- use the original table, but drape a blanket or cloth over it to denote the ceremony
- small, slate board for Zechariah to write on
- a crude knife for the circumcision (optional; it wouldn't really be used)
- bowl of water (optional)

1205

All are gathered to witness the circumcision and dedication of John. Elizabeth, Mary, Anna and the midwife are gathered at a respectful distance. Around the child are the rabbi, Zechariah, Thomas and Aaron. The rabbi begins his lines before the lights come up on scene.

1210



Small spot on rabbi only.

RABBI

O Lord, fill this child with the Holy Spirit,
To accomplish Your righteousness;
Give unto him the strength of many,
To make ready the people for the Lord.

1215



Lights up on rest of characters.

RABBI

(continuing without pause)

Bless his substance,
And accept the work of his hands;
Shatter the loins of those who rise up against him,
And those who hate him, so that they may not rise again.
Into Your hands we commend this one,
The first-born of Zechariah and Elizabeth;
May he know Your wisdom,
and serve you without fear.

1220

1225

1230

The rabbi kisses the forehead of the child.

THOMAS

(joyfully)

Praise be to God!

1235

AARON*(to Zechariah)*

May the God of Abraham bless this child.

The women murmur their approval as Elizabeth beams proudly.

1240

RABBI*(confidently)*

And now for his name.

(lifting the baby)

Almighty God, we offer unto You the child . . .

(hesitating; looking to Elizabeth)

Elizabeth?

1245

ELIZABETH*(firmly)*

His name will be John.

RABBI

John?

1250

ELIZABETH*(with resolve)*

He will be called John.

THOMAS

Why that?

1255

(to Aaron)

A curious choice.

ELIZABETH

He'll be called John. You may ask his father.

1260

RABBI

Zechariah, what will you name the child?

Zechariah requests a tablet. It is handed him by Aaron and all wait expectantly as Zechariah writes in bold letters "John". He holds up the tablet so that all, including the audience, can see. Everyone registers astonishment—except, of course, Zechariah and Elizabeth.

1265

Zechariah suddenly regains his voice.



Cue BLESSED BE THE LORD - Zechariah and Company. 2:37

As the song ends, the rest of the cast gathers around Elizabeth and the child—all but Zechariah and Anna.

1270



Lights fade down to ¼ on everyone but Zechariah and Anna.

ANNA

(grudgingly; a bit awkward)

So, Zechariah, you're now a father.

1275

ZECHARIAH

(beaming; happy to set aside past differences)

So, Anna, I have a beautiful son, don't I.

ANNA

(looking toward the child; soberly)

1280

He'll know hardship.

ZECHARIAH

(drawing back)

What are you saying?

ANNA

1285

This child—this servant of God—he'll have a hard life. He'll know bitterness and anger.

ZECHARIAH

(angry himself; disappointed)

Must you always bring rain upon a sunny day?!

1290

ANNA

(quickly)

I bring only the word of God.

(pause)

1295

You foolish man. Do you think the one who paves the way will not soil his knees? Will the one who tells the sinner to repent be welcomed into the sinner's home? This child will grow to know the solitude of piety. In the

harsh embrace of the wilderness he'll meet his God—and it'll be there that his God will prepare him for his task.

ZECHARIAH

1300

(solidly; refusing to relinquish the joy of the moment)

This child—my John—will be great. The angel of the Lord told me so!

ANNA

Yes, he will be great and he'll accomplish great things, but—

ZECHARIAH

1305

(returning to his celebratory mood)

Then this is a great day for rejoicing! This day we've become an important part of God's plan for our salvation. ☺

Zechariah steps back to his other guests, while Anna crosses directly to the baby John.

ANNA

1310

(with quiet strength)

We're only a small part—of the beginning—of something much more than we can comprehend.



1315

Fade in Trax to GO CHANGE THE WORLD (from p54, m108) - Anna, Zechariah & Elizabeth 1:45

Suggested assignments for "Go Change the World":

fade in Trax from p54, m108 for intro to Go Change the World.

p55, m5: Anna sings to the baby John.

1320

p57, m21: Zechariah and Elizabeth.

p58, m31: as Zech and Eliz cutoff, trax continue with a very slow fade out as entire cast enthusiastically congratulates the two new parents.

As Zechariah and Elizabeth hit p58, m30 ("heart—") they are joyously surrounded and congratulated by all in attendance.

1325



At p58, m30, fade out trax slowly.



Lights slow fade to black as trax fade.

1330

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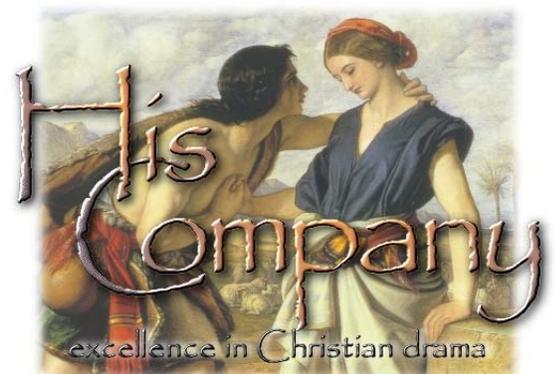
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