

** The Nativity, A Christmas Cantata **

~ By Thomas Parks ~

Lyrics, Recitative, & Sources

Lyrics are by, or freely adapted from Scripture by, Thomas Parks.

~ Revised Standard Version unless noted ~

1. **Overture** Orchestra: Flute, French Horn, Cymbal, Timpani, Harp, Violin, Viola, Cello, and Contrabass.

(Note: Recitative is indented and in bold type)

(Speaker:) Welcome to this presentation of “The Nativity, A Christmas Cantata” by Thomas Parks. The word “nativity” means birth, especially the place, conditions, or circumstances of being born. It also means the birth of Jesus, or a representation of it, such as a painting.

10. **Unto Bethlehem** Luke 2:15 (From “The Shepherds”)

(Lyrics)

“Now let us now go, even unto Bethlehem,
and see this thing, that has happened there,
which the Angel of the Lord has made, known to us.”

On our way to Bethlehem we’re going to take a few steps to see how the birth of Jesus fulfilled some of the ancient prophecies.

Genesis, the first book in the Bible, tells how God made a covenant with Abraham from whom the faiths of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam all trace their origin.

At the time of the Israelite’s captivity in Babylon, Isaiah prophesied the virgin birth and said that the child would be the Emmanuel which means “God with us” in Hebrew.

The Gospel of Matthew begins with the lineage from Abraham to David to Jesus.

11. **Emmanuel** Isaiah 7:14 KJV, Matthew 1: 7-14

Fourteen generations after Father Abraham,
David played his harp and sang there in the Promised Land.
Fourteen generations after David sang his song,
Israel was gone, off to Babylon.
Isaiah said to keep in mind, the Lord himself will give a sign.
A virgin shall bear us a son,

*** The Nativity, A Christmas Cantata ***

~ By Thomas Parks ~

Lyrics, Recitative, & Sources

and his name, shall be Em-man-u-el. God with us.
Fourteen generations after Babylon,
there came amongst us Christ the Lord,
and his name, shall be Emmanuel. God with us.
God is with us! And his name shall be Emmanuel.

John the Baptist came just before Jesus to baptize and prepare the people for His coming. He was the son of Zechariah, a priest, and Elizabeth, a cousin of Mary. Elizabeth could not have children. Imagine her surprise at finding herself expecting a baby in her old age!

20. Zechariah

Luke 1:5-17

In the days of King Herod, there was a priest named Zechariah,
And his wife was Elizabeth. They were righteous before the Lord.
But Elizabeth was barren. They were childless in their old age.
One day, in the Temple there appeared an Angel of the Lord.
He said: "Fear not Zechariah for your prayer is heard
and Elizabeth will bear you a son.
Rejoice Zechariah! You will have a son!
And you shall call his name John.
He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even in his mother's womb.
Many will rejoice at his birth. He will be great before the Lord.
And you shall call his name John.
And he will go before him, to make ready, for the Lord,
a people prepared."

Elizabeth was in her sixth month when God sent the angel Gabriel to speak with Mary, a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. Gabriel said that God had favored her and that she would conceive in her womb and bear a son, and call his name Jesus. When she asked "How can this be, since I have no husband?" He said "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God."

25. Mary and Gabriel

Luke 1:26-38

God sent the Angel Gabriel, to Nazareth in Galilee,
there to speak with Mary,
betrothed to Joseph descended from David the King.
"Hail to thee, o favored one, the Lord is with you.

** The Nativity, A Christmas Cantata **

~ By Thomas Parks ~

Lyrics, Recitative, & Sources

Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”
Mary replied “How can this be? I am a virgin still,
But I am the handmaiden of the Lord, and I would do God’s will.”
“God’s Holy Spirit will come upon you,
with the power of the most high.
You will conceive and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.
He will be great, and He shall be called, the son of our God.
And God will give him the throne of David,
and his His kingdom will never end.”

“Now when Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.”

But an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet Isaiah.

30. Joseph and the Angel Matthew 1: 18-25

(Joseph, in a dream:)

“What will I do? What will I say?

We can’t get married when she’s this way.

She is with child! I should have known!

If they find out, she’s going to be stoned!

Where is my Mary, so meek and mild?

Who is the father that gave her this child?”

(Gabriel, descending:)

“Joseph. Joseph! Joseph!!!

Listen to me! Hear what I say! I am an Angel of the Lord!

Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary,
and doubt not her chastity.

That, which she within does host, is of God’s own Holy Ghost.

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus,

for He will save his people from their sins,

as foretold by the prophets.

Isaiah said, a virgin shall conceive, and she will bear a son,

Emmanuel, which means God with us. God is with us!

** The Nativity, A Christmas Cantata **

~ By Thomas Parks ~

Lyrics, Recitative, & Sources

When Joseph woke, 'twas as the Angel said.
He took Mary, to wife, and they were wed,
but knew her not, before the child was born.
He raised the child, as if he were his own son.
And Joseph did, as the Angel had commanded,
and he called his name Jesus.

“In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechari'ah and greeted (her cousin) Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”

38. Mary And Elizabeth Luke 1: 39-45

Now Mary went to the hill country, to see her cousin Elizabeth,
For the Angel said that she, who was barren in her old age,
had also conceived a son.
As she drew near, the baby leaped in the womb of Elizabeth,
And she was filled with the Holy Spirit, and cried out in a loud voice,
“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”
Blessed too is she, who believed there would be,
a fulfillment of that, which was spoken to her from the Lord.

The Canticle of Mary,” is one of the three great canticles of the New Testament. A canticle is a song or chant with words taken from a biblical text. This one is known as “The Magnificat” beginning "Magnificat anima mea Dominum" in Latin. There are many musical versions of it. It is sung here by Mary and Elizabeth.

42. The Canticle of Mary Luke 1: 46-55 The Magnificat

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden.
For, behold, from henceforth, all generations will call me blessed.
For He that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is His name.
And His mercy is on those that fear Him,
throughout all generations.
He hath shown strength with His arm, He hath scattered the proud

** The Nativity, A Christmas Cantata **

~ By Thomas Parks ~

Lyrics, Recitative, & Sources

in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
and exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich He hath sent empty away.
He remembering His mercy hath holpen his servant Israel,
as He promised to our forefathers, Abraham, and his seed forever.

All Israelis yearned for the promised one, the Messiah. Anointed by God, he was to be at once King and Savior. He would drive the Romans out by force of arms and free Israel.

“The Canticle of Zechariah” begins with “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel” and thus is known as “The Benedictus.” Zechariah thanks God “for He has visited and redeemed His people.”

In the second part Zechariah tells his newborn son, John the Baptist, that “he will be called the prophet of the Most High; for he will go before the Lord to prepare his ways.”

This is sung, in the manner of a Psalm, accompanied by a harp.

46. The Canticle of Zechariah Luke 1: 68-79 The Benedictus
"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for He has visited and redeemed His people,
and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David,
as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old,
that we should be saved from hands of our enemies,
and from the hand of all who hate us;
to perform the mercy promised to our fathers,
and to remember His holy covenant,
the oath which He swore to our father Abraham,
to us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
might serve Him without fear,
in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
through the tender mercy of our God,
when the day shall dawn upon us from on high
to give light to those who sit in darkness

*** The Nativity, A Christmas Cantata ***

~ By Thomas Parks ~

Lyrics, Recitative, & Sources

and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Can you imagine going back to the city of your birth to register and pay your taxes? The Romans ruled Israel with a heavy hand, and "in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled and all went to be enrolled, each to his own city."

51. The Census

Luke 2: 1-3

When Caesar Augustus was Emperor of Rome,
He needed new taxes to run the Empire.
To make sure everyone paid their taxes,
He decreed all the world would be counted in a census,
And, every person twelve and older,
they shall go to the places where the records are kept,
in the city of their family's origin,
to register, and pay their taxes, to the rulers in Rome.

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child." The trip was about 75 miles on the map...about a 100 on the road. Some accounts say "many days." Some say "3 or 4 days. December 16 - 24, the Nine Days of Posada, is a Latin American celebration commemorating the journey of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

55. Mary's Little Donkey

Luke 2: 4-5

(Children:)

Joseph was a carpenter. He made things out of wood.
He had a little donkey, and he carried all he could.
He carried Joseph's tools and things, until there came a day,
when Joseph put his saddle on, and he said "we're going away."
He loaded him with bags of clothes, and food, and water in a skin.
Then Mary climbed on top and Oh! She and her babe within!
The little donkey somehow knew, how careful he must be.
He must not make her fall off, so he walked s o s m o o t h l y.
They finally got to Bethlehem. The stars were shining bright.
The inn was filled up. They had to sleep,
in the stable Christmas night.
And Joseph said to Mary, "He was your donkey when,
he carried you, you and the child, three days to Bethlehem."

*** The Nativity, A Christmas Cantata ***

~ By Thomas Parks ~

Lyrics, Recitative, & Sources

(And the little donkey went “BPPPPPPPPPPPP!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”)
(Close your mouth and blow!)

Now the Messiah; anointed by God, expected to be at once King and Savior, comes into the world...not in a royal palace, but in the lowest place...among the animals in a stable.

“And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

59. In The Stable Luke 2: 6-7
Bethlehem was full of people for the census.
Joseph pleaded, but there was no room inside the inn.
The innkeeper said that they could use the stable,
The oxen and the hay would keep them warm.
He would send over food, and send a midwife ‘round to see them.
That, was the best, that he could do.
She’d spent three days on a donkey, and her with child!
She was exhausted! Her time was at hand!
And so they went to the stable in a cave.

(The Vigil - Harp, Contrabass)

(The Birth - SATB, Harp, Contrabass)
There, among the oxen and the donkeys, she gave birth,
to her first-born son,
and she wrapped him up in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger,
and thus, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ was born.

And who were the witnesses? The first were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and said "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

65. Glad Tidings Luke 2: 9-11
Now in that country near Bethlehem,
there were shepherds, living in the fields,
and they watched their flocks by day,

** The Nativity, A Christmas Cantata **

~ By Thomas Parks ~

Lyrics, Recitative, & Sources

and also in the night.

That night the Angel of the Lord, came upon them, and lo!

The glory of the Lord, shown round about them.

They were filled with great fear.

The Angel said, fear not, I bring to you,
glad tidings of great joy, to all the earth.

For unto you is born this day, in the city of David,
A Savior which is Christ, the Messiah, and the Lord!

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”

70. Glory to God in The Highest! Luke 2: 13-14

(The Gloria in Excelsis Deo) (ET&T)

And suddenly there was, with the Angel of the Lord,

a multitude of the heavenly host,

Praising God and singing, “Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to His people on earth! Lord, God, Heavenly King,

almighty God and Father, we worship You! We give You thanks!

We praise You for all of Your Glory!

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world,

Have mercy on us.

You are seated at the right hand of the Father. Receive our prayer.

You alone are the Holy One. You alone are the Lord.

You alone are the Most High. Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit,

In the glory of God the Father, Amen, Amen.

Then the Angel said “this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

79. The Shepherds Luke 2: 12-20

And when the Angels had finished their song,

They spread their wings and departed into heaven.

And then the shepherds arose and they said to one another,

“Now let us now go, even unto Bethlehem,

and see this thing, That has happened there,

which the Angel of the Lord has made, known to us.”

And so they went with haste to the town of Bethlehem,

‘Twas as the Angel said, they found the babe,

** The Nativity, A Christmas Cantata **

~ By Thomas Parks ~

Lyrics, Recitative, & Sources

all wrapped up in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.
When they saw the newborn child, they fell down and praised Him.
They made known what they had heard, spoken by the Angels.
All who heard it were amazed, at the gladsome tidings,
but Mary kept all of these things, reflecting on them in her heart.
Then the shepherds returned to their flocks,
And they glorified God,
and they praised Him, for all they had heard and seen,
just as it had been told.

**The other witnesses were “wise men from the East saying,
“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have
seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him.” When
Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem
with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the
people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.
They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the
prophet: `And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no
means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come
a ruler who will govern my people Israel.”**

**“Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained
from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to
Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and
when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come
and worship him.”**

**“When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the
star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it
came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw
the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into
the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell
down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they
offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.”**

88. The Magi

Matthew 2: 1-11

They were wise men, Magi of the East, ever watching for a sign.
One night, a new light came, shining brightly, in the sky,
Telling of a new King, to be born soon, as foretold.
Now they go to find the King. Gifts and praises they shall bring.

*** The Nativity, A Christmas Cantata ***

~ By Thomas Parks ~

Lyrics, Recitative, & Sources

Herod's priests and Herod's scribes, tell them Jacob's star will rise, over Bethlehem, over Bethlehem. They bring gold for the new King, frankincense for veneration, and myrrh, for Him who will rise. They came. They saw, the child in the manger. They came. They saw, our God's newborn Son. They came. They saw. They worshiped our Lord.

“And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.” When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.”

That's the story of the Nativity of Jesus the Christ. Everything fits together... The place, conditions, and circumstances of His ' birth. The prophecies from Genesis, and Numbers, and Deuteronomy, and Isaiah, and Daniel, and Micah were all fulfilled. There were two sets of witnesses. There was verification of the place from the priests and scribes of Israel. “There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.” (or tumult) That night, there in Bethlehem, Jacob's star was shining brightly, telling of our Savior's birth.

94. There in Bethlehem Luke 2: 6-7
Mary had a little baby, that night, there in Bethlehem,
there in Bethlehem,
and she laid him in a manger, that night, there in Bethlehem,
there in Bethlehem.
Shepherds, keeping watch by nighttime, saw an Angel of the Lord,
there in Bethlehem.
Angels filled the starry night sky, singing of the newborn King,
there in Bethlehem.
Glory to God in the highest! Peace to men of good will,
To men of good will.
Jacob's star is shining brightly, telling of our Savior's birth,
of our savior's birth.
Wise men place their gifts before Him. He is the Emmanuel,
the Emmanuel.

** The Nativity, A Christmas Cantata **

~ By Thomas Parks ~

Lyrics, Recitative, & Sources

He comes as the lowest person. He comes, slipping out of heaven,
through the needle's eye.

God has come to live among us, saving us from all our sins,
us from all our sins.

Mary had a little baby, that night, and she named him Jesus,
there in Bethlehem.

Finally there is "The Canticle of Simeon." Many years before, he
"had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not
see death, before he had seen the Christ of the Lord." When the
baby Jesus was taken to the temple for circumcision, he was
seen by Simeon, who said "Lord now lettest Thou Thy servant,
depart in peace according to Thy word, For mine eyes have seen
Thy salvation." "Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine" in Latin.
We include the "Gloria Patri" to end the cantata with a doxology.

109. The Canticle of Simeon

Luke 2:25-32

The Nunc Demittis & Gloria Patri

Lord now lettest Thou Thy servant,
depart in peace according to Thy word,
For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,
which Thou hast prepared before the people,
to be a light to lighten the gentiles,
And to be, the glory of Thy people Israel.
Glory be unto Thee Father,
and to Thy Son, and to Thy Holy Ghost.
It was, it is, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen!

114. Encore

(Optional)

Luke 2: 6-7 Reprise from "In The Stable"

There, among the oxen and the donkeys, she gave birth,
to her first-born son,
and she wrapped him up in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger,
and thus, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ was born.

116. Postlude

Orchestra

Reprise from "There in Bethlehem"