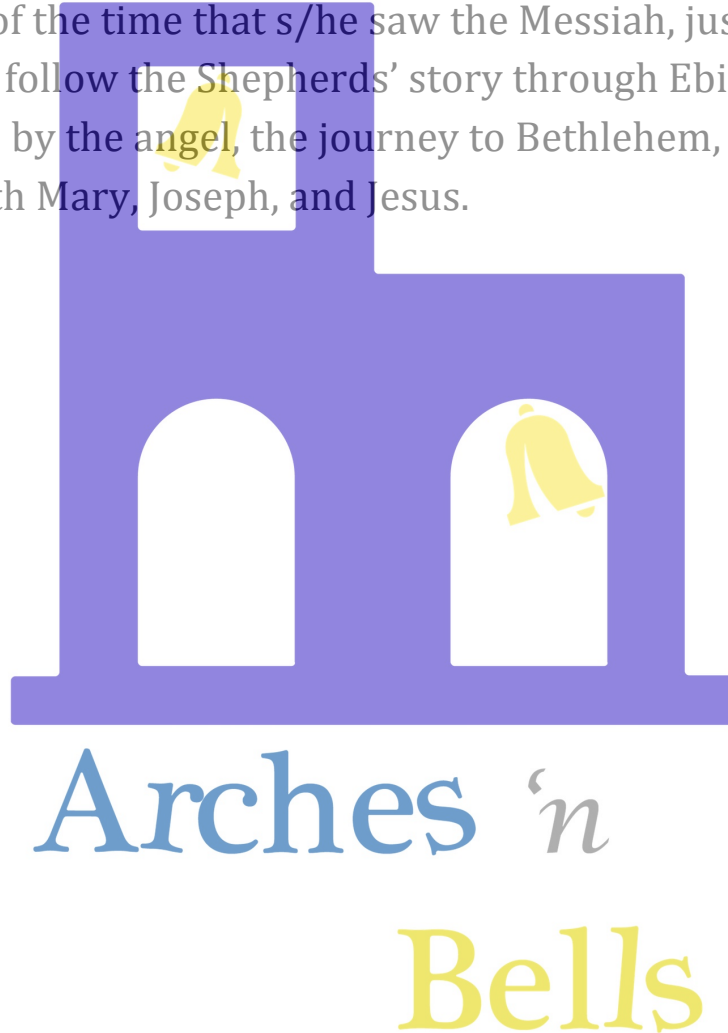


Summary to

## **Shepherds, Assemble!**

*by David Clauson*

Old Ebi, an elderly shepherd, introduces him/herself. S/he begins to tell the story of the time that s/he saw the Messiah, just after Christ was born. We follow the Shepherds' story through Ebi's eyes, from the revelation by the angel, the journey to Bethlehem, and their encounter with Mary, Joseph, and Jesus.



# Shepherds, Assemble!

*by David Clauson*

**Text:** Luke 2:1-20

**Theme:** The awesome power of God taking human form

**Time Needed to Perform:** Approximately 22-25 minutes

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***What going on?*** The shepherds, told by the angel that Christ has been born, go to Bethlehem to see the child and worship him.

***When is it all happening?*** Bethlehem area, nighttime, Bible times.

***Who are the characters?*** (twelve to twenty or more)

**Col**, a soft-spoken shepherd

**Gib**, a warm, parental shepherd

**Dav**, a wise shepherd

**Mak**, a sassy shepherd

**Gill**, a blunt shepherd

**Yeni**, a protective shepherd, sometimes given to worry

**Kabo**, an enthusiastic shepherd

**Old Ebi**, an elderly shepherd

**Young Ebi**, Old Ebi as played by a child.

**The Angel**, the announcer

**Mary**, the mother of Jesus

**Joseph**, the adoptive father of Jesus

**Assorted shepherd children**

***How should this play or skit be performed?*** A simple playing space with little scenery is best. If you need to cut some of the shepherds or condense some of the roles to make it work for your

congregation, go ahead!

The seven shepherd's lines were written to be broken up and reassigned to meet the casting needs of the congregation. You'll also note that all the characters in this play, with the exception of Mary and Joseph, are not referred to by gender. So you're free to cast whomever you like in any role.

The play calls for at least three child actors, one to play Young Ebi and at least two to speak the lines assigned to the other shepherd children.

***What props will we need?*** Manger, bowl of dates, bowl of food, travel bags and things to put in them, a top, a ribbon, a piece of cheese, slices of bread, jerky, coins.



## ACT ONE: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

*In Act One, the shepherds receive the message from the angel and go down to Bethlehem.*

**Setting:** The fields near Bethlehem.

**Characters:** Col, Gib, Dav, Mak, Gill, Yeni, Kabo, Old Ebi, Young Ebi, Angel, Shepherd Children

SCRIPT:

**Shepherds, Assemble!**



1 *[A space set with a few tents and the trappings of pastoral life. Ebi, an*  
2 *old shepherd, enters, sits, and addresses the audience.]*

3 **OLD EBI:** I have told this story many times before.

4 I tell it again and again because I am searching for the right words.

5 *[Pause between phrases]* "Joyful." "I was transformed." "Full of light."

6 As soon as the words leave my lips I say, "No, that doesn't quite  
7 capture it." The words are jars into which I pour the feeling. But they  
8 are never quite the right shape or size.

9 So I tell this story--again and again--because I am searching for the  
10 right jars to hold the feeling I had upon seeing the Savior.

11 Who knows? Maybe this time I'll find them. I'm not a saint or a poet.  
12 I'm just a little person--a shepherd trying to describe a moment.

13 Well. I should begin. *[As Ebi speaks, the other shepherds and shepherd*  
14 *children begin to enter; the children playing games and the shepherds*

1 *laughing, strolling with each other.]* It was a warm night. The songs  
2 all say it was cold, but there was a warm wind in the air that made it  
3 feel like all the world was breathing at the same time.

4 Everything was quiet and still. Our simple dinners eaten, we had  
5 assembled to relax and say good night.

6 **COL:** Warm night.

7 **GIB:** I know. We're going to have a hard time getting the kids to  
8 settle down and go to sleep.

9 **YENI:** Tell me about it. They're running all over the place. *[Calling]*  
10 Hey, Ebi! Don't wander too far now. When it's dark like this, we  
11 don't want to lose sight of you.

12 **OLD EBI:** That was me! We kids were full of an excitement we  
13 couldn't name. *[Mak wanders in with a bowl of dates.]*

14 **MAK:** Is whoever was eating these dates finished?

15 **GILL:** Go ahead, Mak. Knock yourself out.

16 **MAK:** Ex-cellent.

17 **DAV:** Think I'll take my flock over the ridge tomorrow. It'll be good  
18 grazing for 'em. *[Two of the shepherd children run up.]*

19 **SHEPHERD CHILD:** The sheep are talking a lot tonight!

20 **SHEPHERD CHILD:** Listen to them: Baaaaaa! Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaa! It  
21 sounds so weird.

1 **GIB:** Well, that's just because you haven't learned to speak sheep  
2 language yet.

3 **SHEPHERD CHILD:** *Sheep language?*

4 **YENI:** Oh, don't let's confuse them by telling them that sheep have  
5 their own language.

6 **GIB:** I'll teach you how to speak sheep tomorrow.

7 **SHEPHERD CHILD:** Yay! Then we can speak to the sheep!

8 **SHEPHERD CHILD:** BAAAAAaaaaa!

9 **SHEPHERD CHILDREN:** Speak to the sheep! Speak to the sheep!

10 **YENI:** IF you are good and go to bed right away.

11 **SHEPHERD CHILD:** How come we move around all the time? How  
12 come we don't live in the towns?

13 **KABO:** That's the way we live, kiddo. We travel with our herds from  
14 place to place. We follow the food and the water and sun and the  
15 changing seasons.

16 It's how our parents lived, and how their parents lived, and their  
17 parents, all the way back to the Very Beginning.

18 **COL:** That is how our community operates. We're professional  
19 wanderers.

20 **DAV:** And because we travel around all the time, we can go  
21 wherever we need to, whenever we need to.

1 **MAK:** Even if sometimes we don't get to have the kinds of nice  
2 things that the people in the towns have.

3 **GILL:** Eat your dates, Mak.

4 **SHEPHERD CHILD:** I like it. Every day there's something new.

5 **YENI:** I think you might be on to something there, sweet. Now go  
6 and get yourself ready for bed.

7 **OLD EBI:** But I was still out in the field among the flock, breathless,  
8 dancing in the starlight.

9 And that's when: KABOOM! It happened! Everything changed. The  
10 Angel appeared.

11 *[If possible, lights shift. The Angel enters from somewhere unexpected,*  
12 *perhaps from the back of the space, and might give a toot on a train*  
13 *whistle, or a quick blast on trumpet or another instrument.]*

14 **THE ANGEL:** Joy! Joy! Glory to God and joy to God's people!

15 **OLD EBI:** We were dumbstruck. The Angel's sound and light  
16 overpowered everyone around, in their fields and in their tents.

17 **THE ANGEL:** Oh, friends, good shepherds, I'm so sorry!

18 Don't be afraid! I didn't mean to scare you. I'm so happy to see you  
19 all. I'm bringing you good news of great joy for all the world.

20 Here. Let me come down and sit with you for a moment. Maybe that  
21 will help you to be less afraid.

1 **OLD EBI:** The Angel sat with the shepherds and talked to us like old  
2 friends.

3 **THE ANGEL:** Come, come! Gather round! Good news is meant to be  
4 shared. Neighbors and friends, good to see you! Mak, Gibb, Yeni!

5 Oh, it's so good to see everybody here. Please, please, come close,  
6 don't be afraid.

7 *[Young Ebi, Ebi as a small child, approaches.]* Ah, Ebi, dear. I'm so  
8 glad I finally get to meet you.

9 **YOUNG EBI:** You... you know *our names*?

10 **DAV:** What kind of being are you?

11 **GILL:** And how did you make the sky light up as if it were day?

12 **SHEPHERD CHILD:** Are you an Angel?

13 **GIB:** I don't know if it's polite to ask our visitor if they're an angel...

14 **THE ANGEL:** Haha, why yes, indeed, little one, I am! I've been sent  
15 to tell the world the good news. Starting with you folks! I suppose  
16 some congratulations are in order.

17 **KABO:** Angel... you, er— must have had a long journey. Would you,  
18 uh, care for something to eat? Mak, are there any dates left?

19 **MAK:** Uh...yeah, a few?

20 **YENI:** Well, then, let's share some with our visitor.



1 **THE ANGEL:** Ahhhh, no need, no need. Angels don't need to eat!

2 Though I wouldn't say no to a piece of *angel-food* cake...! [*The*  
3 *Shepherds stare blankly.*]

4 So I guess what I'm saying is... *save the date!*

5 Oh, never mind, never mind. Those aren't my best jokes. And  
6 besides! Tonight isn't about jokes! It's about the birth of the Savior!

7 **COL:** The Savior?

8 **DAV:** Can it be? What we've been waiting for?

9 **GILL:** The Savior is to be born today...?

10 **THE ANGEL:** The short answer to all of your questions is: YES!

11 I was trying to make sure you're all comfortable.

12 What I have to say is brief, but you still might want to make sure  
13 you're sitting down before I begin.

14 [*The Shepherds sit. Focus shifts back to Old Ebi.*]

15 **OLD EBI:** And so, by the glow of our campfire hearth, the Angel told  
16 us of Jesus's birth.

17 [*Enter Mary and Joseph, laden with bags, packs, and sundries.*  
18 *Throughout the following scene, they pack things into the bags.*  
19 *They've definitely got things under control, but there's a bit of the last-*  
20 *minute urgency that precedes any big trip.*]

1 **MARY:** Will the clothes we're bringing be warm enough?

2 **JOSEPH:** I think we should be all right. The clothes on the bottom  
3 here are pretty heavy-duty wool. And you can always have my shawl  
4 if you feel like you're catching a chill.

5 **MARY:** Thank you. I just wish that we had a better idea of how long  
6 we'd be gone.

7 **JOSEPH:** I know. I don't like it either. But what are we supposed to  
8 do?

9 **MARY:** I hope the Romans don't make this "registration" thing a  
10 yearly event. After the baby comes, I think it'll just be tougher.

11 **JOSEPH:** Aww, but think how much fun! An annual family getaway,  
12 all thanks to the decree of our friendly overlord: Emperor Augustus!

13 *[He blows an imaginary trumpet in a silly Roman fanfare, trying to*  
14 *make her laugh. It works.]*

15 **MARY:** And it will be nice after all to be in the city where your family  
16 is from.

17 **JOSEPH:** Well, I mean, I just wish that I had family still living there.  
18 It's not my idea of a joyous homecoming to have you sleeping on  
19 some mat that hasn't been cleaned in who-knows-how-long in some  
20 inn.

21 **MARY:** It's true. But I'm not worried. I have a good feeling about  
22 how everything will turn out.

23 **JOSEPH:** A good feeling? Is that your feminine intuition speaking?

1 **MARY:** No, silly--it's faith. I have faith that God will make sure our  
2 child's born in a place that's clean, and warm, and full of life and  
3 love.

4 **JOSEPH:** *[Smiles.]* My thoughts exactly, love. *[They embrace.]* Now,  
5 let's get a-schlepping this stuff of over to Bethlehem, shall we?

6 **MARY:** Right! Is everything all packed?

7 **JOSEPH:** That was the last of it. Look at it all! So elegantly wrapped  
8 up! It's like I'm the King of Packing or something.

9 **MARY:** And you remembered to leave some money out for the toll  
10 roads?

11 **JOSEPH:** Uh... if by "out" you mean "at the bottom of this bag." And—  
12 er... if "by at the bottom of this bag," you mean... "at the bottom of  
13 one of these bags"... then, yes?

14 **MARY:** *[Playfully]* Don't tell me Mr. King of Packing made a *mistake*?

15 **JOSEPH:** I made a *slight miscalculation*. And besides, these toll roads  
16 are a newfangled Roman thing! I had other, more important things  
17 to think about. Like the fact that we're about to be the parents to the  
18 Savior of Mankind.

19 **MARY:** *[She know's she's making understatement of the millennium:]*  
20 Yeah, that is pretty cool, isn't it?

21 **JOSEPH:** Downright *amazing*!

22 **MARY:** It's also terrifying. Do you ever worry that we're going to...I  
23 don't know, mess up?

1 **JOSEPH:** Oh, yeah. Do you ever worry he'll *really hate* carpentry?

2 But seriously: I know how you feel. I do. Every day I worry that  
3 we're going to be terrible parents...

4 **MARY:** Or that God could get really mad at us...

5 **JOSEPH:** Or I won't know what to do if he hits his head and loses a  
6 tooth.

7 **MARY:** But we've got faith, right? And even if we don't know exactly  
8 what's going to happen, we can trust in God and God's love, right?

9 **JOSEPH:** That love will hold us together, no matter what.

10 **MARY:** All right, let's get going. We've got to make good time before  
11 sundown. Think you can find the coins we need on the way?

12 **JOSEPH:** I only do one thing better than packing, and that's fishing  
13 for change at the bottom of luggage. Well, I guess I'm a pretty good  
14 carpenter. Okay, so I do *two* things better than packing.

15 **MARY:** Come on, goofball. We're burning daylight. Let's hit the road.

16 *[Joseph picks up their bags. Mary loops her arm around his waist. He*  
17 *puts his arm across her shoulders, and they walk out together.]*

18 **THE ANGEL:** The child is to be born this very day, in the City of  
19 David.

20 **GILL:** The City of David? You mean *Bethlehem*, right?

21 **COL:** 's not very far off...

1 **KABO:** We've got to go!

2 **THE ANGEL:** Well, yes, I admit, that's all part of the plan.

3 *[The Shepherds all hastily stand]*

4 **THE ANGEL:** Woah there! Wait wait wait! Don't head off just yet!  
5 You haven't heard the last part yet.

6 And this shall be a sign to you: you will find a child wrapped in  
7 bands of cloth and lying in a manger.

8 And with that, folks, I leave you. There's *trumpets and bells* to be  
9 sounded elsewhere! The day of *grace* has begun!

10 *[Lights change, if they can. A HOST OF ANGELS appears. The more you*  
11 *can make it seem as if they've come out of nowhere, the better.]*

12 **THE ANGEL:** Glory to the Lord!

13 **HOST OF ANGELS:** Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on Earth  
14 peace among those who God favors!

15 **OLD EBI:** It was the most beautiful and terrifying spectacle we had  
16 ever seen—I mean, you have to remember: we lived our lives among  
17 sheep! And then the heavens opened up and the angels vanished in a  
18 single kaleidoscopic moment.

19 **SEVERAL SHEPHERDS:** *[Whispered]* "Glory to God in the highest  
20 heaven, and on Earth peace among those who God favors..."

21 **MAK:** Hey guys. Is it just me, or does it seem a lot darker now that  
22 the sky's not filled with angels?

1 **GILL:** So what do we do now?

2 **DAV:** The Angel said that we must go down to the City of David?

3 **MAK:** All of us? All together? Who's gonna keep an eye on this heap  
4 of sheep?

5 **GIB:** Okay, hands up whoever wants to stay behind.

6 *[Nobody's' hands go up.]*



7 **GIB:** Right. Well, I think that settles it. It's unanimous. We've all got  
8 to go together.

9 **YENI:** And take the kids with us?

10 **KABO:** Of course! This could be the most important moment of our  
11 lives!

12 **GILL:** Heck, this could be the most important moment for the *whole*  
13 *world!*

14 **YENI:** What about the sheep?

15 **GIB:** Why not bring 'em along too? If we're all going, we might as  
16 well bring them with us.

17 **KABO:** Well, we'll have to pack up the tents and the gear and round  
18 up the animals...All right, one hour! Everybody, gather your things  
19 and let's meet up in one hour!

# Arches 'n Bells

- 1 **YOUNG EBI / OLD EBI (TOGETHER):** Hooray, hooray! We're all
- 2 going, going to see the Savior! Joy! Joy and glory! *[Clear stage]*

## END OF ACT I





1 **ACT TWO: The Christ-Child**

2 **Setting:** On the road to Bethlehem and in the city itself.

3 **Characters:** Col, Gib, Dav, Mak, Gill, Yeni, Kabo, Mary, Joseph,  
4 Shepherd Children, Old Ebi, Young Ebi

5 **SCRIPT:**

6 *[The stage having been cleared, Old Ebi comes back out and sits.]*

7 **OLD EBI:** Now, where were we before we took that short pause?

8 Ah, yes! We had hit the road. Taken down the tents, rallied the  
9 sheep, wrangled the kids, and were headed down to Bethlehem, the  
10 City of David!

11 *[The Shepherds enter, all walking together. Over the next few of Old  
12 Ebi's lines, they collectively decide to take a break.]*

13 Our hearts pounded together in fear and excitement. Would we  
14 make it? What dangers would we meet on the road? And, most  
15 importantly, what would it be like to see the Savior?

16 For me, I had *one question on my mind...*

17 **YOUNG EBI:** Everybody's saying "the Savior is born." What's that  
18 mean?

19 **GILL:** Well, a savior is somebody who saves you from something.

20 **SHEPHERD CHILD:** But what is the Savior saving us from?

21 **GIB:** Well, I think the answer you get depends on who you ask.

22 **KABO:** Some people might say: the Savior is here to save us from  
23 death and give us everlasting life.