

Nativity:

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Joseph, shared his thoughts on what he thinks Joseph may have been thinking.

"It's hard to challenge the providence of God," Brandt said. "God was leading Mary and Joseph and He came to Joseph in a dream and He changed his whole perception of what he needed to do. That made all the difference."

Joseph's dream — and Mary's visitation from an angel — explained the immaculate conception and directed them to name the child Jesus, "because He will save His people from their sins."

Angels and shepherds

The Bible tells us that the first people to receive the announcement of Messiah's birth were shepherds — the lowest of the low in first-century Jewish culture.

Savanah Ritch, of Joseph, portrayed the angel Gabriel, who announced Mary's pregnancy to her. Ritch also portrayed the angel who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds in a field near Bethlehem. Asked what she thought of having God delegate such a momentous pair of announcements to her, Ritch was at a loss for words at first.

"I'd probably be really happy," she said.

Samuel Winters portrayed a shepherd who seemed to know something about tending sheep.

"You have to keep them in order so you have to whack them with your staff,"



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

King Herod (James Hambleton) asks the Magi (from front, Scott Schmidt, Bob Hipple and Phil McGregor) to let him know where to find the newborn King of the Jews "so I can worship Him, too," not telling them of his devious other plans during the first night of the live Nativity presentation put on by the Enterprise Seventh-day Adventist Church outside Wallowa Valley Eye Care on Saturday, Dec. 18, 2021.

he said.

But he also recognized the honor of being one of the first to hear the Good News.

"It's cool and it's kind of sad that I never got to see it in real life," he said, adding that he wished he could have been there on the first Christmas.

Shepherdess Kytanna Ballard of Enterprise said the sudden appearance of the heavenly host singing "Glory to God in the highest" would've been startling and even a bit scary.

"At first, yeah," she said. "It's not every day you see such a bright light in the sky."

Mr. and Mrs. Innkeeper

Jaden Dunbar, who portrayed the innkeeper, seemed flustered that he couldn't

offer a room to Joseph and his obviously pregnant wife.

"I tried. There was not enough room," Dunbar said. "There were too many people here because of the census" ordered by Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus.

His wife, portrayed by Kasara Ballard, was a little more sympathetic to the holy family and not to her "husband." She admitted she couldn't keep him in line.

"Nah, he's just too stubborn, and we had too many animals," she said.

The Magi and the bad guy

David Ballard, as narrator, read, "From the east came scholars and philosophers searching for this promised Messiah. We refer to them as Magi. They

belonged to a large class of men of noble birth who were prized for their learning."

Some scholars believe they studied the religions of the people their country had conquered to have a better understanding of them — or to spy on them. They also were astrologers who were impressed with star that showed up in line with an Old Testament prophecy from the book of Numbers: "A star will come out of Jacob ... a scepter will rise out of Israel." This set them on the road traveling to find the newborn prince.

"We traveled a long time," said Magus Phil McGregor of Joseph. "We're following the star. We've studied for years and years ... and we saw it over this town and that's why we're asking all

the townspeople 'Have you seen Him?' We're asking anyone who might know."

But before they got to Bethlehem, they stopped in Jerusalem and visited with Herod, who styled himself king of the Jews. The Roman-Jewish historian Flavius Josephus wrote that Herod wasn't really a Jew, but a descendant of Esau — an Edomite — who had converted to Judaism.

James Hambleton, of Enterprise, recognized he was playing the heavy in the play, whose plan was to have the newborn King of the Jews killed.

"Speaking from the Bible's perspective, I guess I don't want Him to be there," Hambleton said. "But, honestly, for real, I'm glad He's making it through my orders to find Him and my secret plan to destroy Him is not going to happen."

So the Magi, portrayed by

McGregor, Bob Hipple and Scott Schmidt, brought their gifts to the baby Jesus. The Bible tells us they brought gold for a king, frankincense for the high priest and myrrh, an embalming spice looking forward to his death on the cross.

"We have come to worship this prophesied Messiah," the Magi said. "May you have the blessing and perfection and help as you raise this Child."

Ballard, the narrator, concluded the performance with: "The scene you have before you is one that reveals the incredible picture of God's blessing, a God who wants to save us, a God who wants to be with His people. Humble, loving and self-sacrificing is the picture of the baby Jesus in a stable lying in a manger. Will you, too, come and worship the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?"

Snow:

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one-day snowfall amount recorded in Joseph in at least 128 years, per data from the NWS.

Only one other day, according to NWS data, has seen more snowfall in Joseph. That was on Jan. 21, 1894, when a whopping 16 inches of snow was recorded.

Fourteen inches of snow also fell on March 12, 1906. It also is the wettest December day on record in Joseph, with the 14 inches of snow translating to 1.04 inches of precipitation.

The previous snowfall record on Dec. 14 was more than 100 years ago, when 8 inches of snow fell on Dec. 14, 1915, according to NWS data. Only one other December day in Joseph has seen at least 10 inches of snowfall, when 10 inches came down on Dec. 22, 2002.

The last time at least 10 inches of snow fell in Joseph was more than a decade ago, when 12 inches came down on Jan. 28, 2008.

While it would likely take another large dumping of snow, December 2021 is also within striking distance of being the snowiest on record in Joseph. NWS data as of Monday, Dec. 20, had 20.3 inches of



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Aaron Murdock shovels snow to clear the alley he and others use as a driveway in Joseph after it was plowed closed following the heavy snowfall during the wee hours of Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021.

snow recorded in the town this month. The record for December is 32 inches more than a century ago in December 1916. The month

is already well above the 30-year snowfall average of 8.2 inches.

Joseph snowfall records kept by the NWS date back

to 1893, though the website does not have snowfall data for the town from about 1955 to 1995.

While near-record snow fell in Joseph, other areas of the county, even if heavily impacted, did not reach the snowfall level Joseph did. Readings taken just south of Flora showed 5 inches there on Dec. 14, while 4 inches fell just south of Lostine and 2.7 inches fell in Wallowa. Over two days, from Dec. 13-14, a total of 15.5 fell in Joseph, 11.5 in Flora, 5.5 in Lostine and 4.9 in Wallowa, according to maps.cocorahs.org.