

**Chester Cycle 1572/2010****Play 8****Octavian and the Nativity**

CAST: MESSENGER, OCTAVIAN, FIRST SENATOR, SECOND SENATOR, SIBYL, JOSEPH, MARY, ANGEL, TEBEL, SALOME, EXPOSITOR

MESSENGER    Make room, lords, and give us way  
                   and let Octavian come and play,  
                   and Sibyl the sage that beautiful may                    *maiden*  
                   to tell you of prophecy.  
       5            That Lord that died on Good Friday,  
                   he save you all both night and day!  
                   Farewell, lords, I go my way  
                   I may no longer abide.

OCTAVIAN     I, proved prince most of power,  
       10            under heaven highest am I here;  
                   fairest fellow to fight together.  
                   No one my face may flee.  
                   All this world, without were --                    *doubt*  
                   king, prince, baron, bachelor --                    *knight*  
       15            of destruction are in great danger  
                   through virtue of my degree.

                  My name Octavian called is --  
                   all me about, full in my bliss,  
       20            for certainly all this world, iwis,  
                   is ready at my own will.  
                   No man in the world dare do amiss  
                   against me -- I tell you this --  
                   nay no man may say that anything is his  
                   unless my leave give I will.

      25            For I have multiplied more  
                   the city of Rome since I was born  
                   than ever did any before,  
                   since I had this kingdom.

      30            For what with strength and strokes sore,  
                   leading lordship, lovely lore,  
                   all this world has been yore                    *for some time*  
                   tributary unto Rome.

      35            King, emperor, clerk, or knight,  
                   sultans, senators here in sight,  
                   princes, priests here now dight                    *arrayed*  
                   and present in this place,  
                   peace! Or here my truth I plight -  
                   I am the most manly man of might -  
                   take heed of my menace.

      40            All men in land will be at my liking -  
                   castles, conqueror, and king -  
                   obedient to do my bidding;  
                   it will none other be.

      45            Right as I think, so must all be;  
                   for all the world does my willing  
                   and are obedient when I did bring  
                   homage and fealty.

50	<p>Since I was lord, without lies, with my wit I can more increase the empire here than ever it was, as all this world it wiste.</p>	<i>knows</i>
55	<p>Since I was sovereign, war clear has ceased, and through this world now is peace, for so dread a duke sat never on dais in Rome - that you may trust.</p>	
60	<p>Therefore, as lord now likes me to prove my might and my posty, for I will send about and see how many heads I have.</p> <p>All the world shall registered be, great and small, in each degree, that dwell in shire or in city - king, clerk, knight or knave.</p>	<i>power</i> <i>i.e. people I rule</i>
65	<p>Each man one penny shall pay. Therefore, my beadle, do as I say. In the midst the world by any way this game shall begin.</p>	
70	<p>The folk of the Jews, in good fay, must tallied be - that is no nay. Therefore go there, day by day! And keep going till thou blin.</p>	<i>truly</i> <i>stop</i>
75	<p>Warn him that there is precedent that this is fully mine intent: that each man appear present, his penny for to pay.</p> <p>and by that penny as well is meant the knowledge to be obedient to Rome, by gift of such a rent, from that time after ay.</p>	<i>at once</i> <i>forever</i>
80	<p>When this is done thus in Judee, that in the midst of the world shall be, to each land, shire, and city! To Rome make them so thrall!</p>	
85	<p>Warn them, boy - I command thee - they do the same. Say thus from me, So all this world shall know that we are sovereign of them all.</p>	
	<p>Have done! Boy, art thou not bound?</p>	
MESSENGER 90	<p>All ready, my lord, I shall be found! No tail-less tupp in all this town shall go further, without fail.</p>	
OCTAVIAN 95	<p>Boy, therefore, by my crown thou must have thy warrison! The highest horse beside Boughton take thou for thy travail.</p>	<i>[the location of the Chester gallows]</i>
MESSENGER 100	<p>Grammercy, lord, perdy; this hackney will well serve me - for a great lord of your degree should ride in such array.</p> <p>You are high in dignity, and also high and swift is he!</p>	<i>indeed</i>

Therefore, that reverence takes ye,  
my dear lord, I you pray.

105 But your errand shall be done anon. *at once*  
First into Judee I will be gone  
and summon the people every one,  
both shire and also city.

OCTAVIAN Boy, there been ladies many one;  
among them all choose thee one.  
110 Take the fairest, or else none,  
and freely I give her thee.

1st SENATOR My lord Octavian, we be sent  
from all of Rome with good intent.  
115 Thy men there have each one i-meant  
as god to honour thee.  
And to that point we be assent,  
poor and rich in parliament.  
For so loved a lord, verament,  
was never in this city. *truly*

2nd SENATOR Yea, certainly, sir, their will is this  
121 to honour thee as a god with bliss,  
for thou did never to them amiss  
in word, thought, nor deed.  
Peace hath been long, and yet is.  
125 No man, in thy time, lost ought of his.  
Therefore their will is so, iwiss,  
to honour you indeed. *joyfully  
amiss*

OCTAVIAN Welcome, my friends, in good fay,  
for you are obedient to my pay. *faith  
pleasure*  
130 I thank you, all that ever I may,  
the homage ye do to me.  
But folly it were by many a way  
such sovereignty for to assay,  
since I must die - I know not what day -  
135 to desire such dignity. *attempt*

For all of flesh, blood and bone  
made I am, born of a woman;  
and certainly other matter none  
shows not right in me.  
140 Neither of iron, tree nor stone  
am I not wrought, you know each one  
And of my life, most part is gone -  
age shows him so, I see!

145 And godhead requires in all thing  
time that hath no beginning  
nor never shall have ending;  
and none of these have I.  
Whereof, by very proof showing,  
though I be highest worldly king,  
150 of godhead have I no knowing.  
It would be unkindly. *unnatural*

155 But yet enquire of this will we  
of her that has grace for to see  
things that afterward shall be  
by a spirit of prophecy.

And, after her advice, by my lewty,  
having discussed this difficulty  
I shall act; but take no more on me  
than I am found worthy.

*faith*

160 Sibyl the sage, tell me this thing,  
for thou has understanding as no man living;  
shall ever be any earthly king  
to surpass me by degree?

SIBYL  
165 Yeah, sir, I tell you without leasing  
a child born shall be, bliss to bring,  
the same who never has beginning  
nor never shall ended be.

*truly*

OCTAVIAN  
170 Sibyl, I pray thee specially,  
by sign thou confirm for me  
what time the lord so royally  
to reign he shall begin.

*Sibyl speaketh:*

SIBYL  
175 Sir, I shall tell you certainly  
his signs when I see truly;  
for when he comes, through his mercy  
on Mankind he will have mind.

180 Well I know, forsooth iwis,  
that God will bring Mankind to bliss,  
and send from Heaven - believe well this -  
his Son, our saviour.  
Jesus Christ, nothing amiss,  
called he shall be, and is;  
to overcome the Devil and his cleverness  
and be our conqueror.

185 But what time, sir, in good fay  
that he will come can I not say.  
Therefore in this place I will pray  
to great God of might.

*faith*

190 And if I see ought to your pay  
at all spiritual by any way,  
alert you I shall anon this day,  
and show it in your sight.

*pleasure*

*display it to you*

*Then Sibyl prays, and the Messenger shall speak in a loud voice:*

MESSENGER  
195 Peace I bid, king and knight,  
men and women and every wight;  
till I have told what I have tight,  
stand still, both strong and stout.  
My lord Octavian, much of might,  
commands you should be ready dight;  
tribute he will have in height  
of all this world about.

*person  
prepared*

*prepared  
at once*

200 He will have a record of each country,  
castle, shire and also city,  
men and women - believe you me -  
and all that be therein.

205 A penny from each man have will he -  
the value of ten pence it shall be -

to acknowledge that he has sovereignty  
fully of all Mankind.

- JOSEPH  
210 Ah, Lord! What business does this man have here?  
Poor men's prosperity is ever in were. *doubt*  
I know by this boaster's bere *noise*  
that tribute I must pay -  
and for great age and no power *lack of strength*  
I earned no wealth this seven year.  
Now comes the king's messenger  
215 to get all that he may
- With this axe that I bear,  
this piercer and this auger  
and this hammer all together  
I have earned my meat.  
220 Castle, tower, nor rich manor  
had I never in my power;  
but, as a simple carpenter,  
with these what I might get.
- If I have saved up anything,  
225 that must I pay unto the king.  
But yet I have a liking,  
the angel to me told  
he that should Man out of bale bring  
my wife had in her keeping.  
230 That seems all good to my liking,  
and makes me more bold.
- Ah, dear sir, tell me, I thee pray  
shall poor as well as rich pay?  
By my faith, sir, I hope nay.  
235 That were a wondrous wrong.
- MESSENGER Good man, I warn thee in good fay, *faith*  
to Bethlehem to take the way,  
lest thou in danger fall today  
if that thou take too long.
- JOSEPH Now since it may none other be,  
241 Mary, sister, now hasten we  
An ox I will take with me  
that there shall be sold.  
The silver from him, so mote I thee, *so may I thrive*  
245 shall find us in that city,  
and pay tribute for thee and me;  
for thereto we are hold, *constrained*
- Then Joseph shall tie the ox and the harness of the ass, and shall gather Mary up  
on to the ass; and when she shall have come to the stable, Mary shall say:*
- MARY Ah Lord! What may this signify?  
250 Some men I see glad and merry  
and some sighing and sorry.  
Why ever should this be?  
Since God's Son came, Man to forbuy - *redeem*  
is come through his great mercy -  
I think that Man should kindly *naturally*  
255 be glad that sight to see.
- ANGEL Mary, God's mother dear,

	the significance I shall thee here. The common people, as thou seest here, are glad - as they well may -	<i>teach</i>
260	that they shall see of Abraham's seed Christ come to help them in their need. Therefore they rejoice without dread for to abide this day.	<i>experience</i>
265	The mourning men - take this in mind - are those that shall be put behind, for they passed out of kind through Christ at his coming. For they shall have no grace to know that God for Man shall light so low;	
270	for shame on them that soon shall show. Therefore, they are mourning.	
JOSEPH	Mary, sister, sooth to say, lodging, I think, get we not may; for great lords of stout array occupy this city.	
275	Therefore we must truly lie in this stable till it be day. To make men meek, believe I may, appear here will he.	
MARY	Help me down, my husband dear, for I hope my time be near. Christ in this stable that is here I hope born will be.	
281		
	<i>Then Joseph shall take Mary in his arms.</i>	
JOSEPH	Come to me, my sweet dear, the treasure of Heaven without were! Welcome in full meek manner! Him I expect for to see.	<i>doubt</i>
285		
	<i>Then he shall place Mary between the ox and the ass.</i>	
JOSEPH	Mary, sister, I will assay to get two midwives if I may; for though in thee be God verray - he is coming against kind - for convention here in this city and manners' sake, as thinks me, two wives I will fetch anon to thee if I may any find.	<i>contrary to nature</i>
290		
295		
(to the midwives)	Women, God you save and see! Is it your will to go with me? My wife is come into this city with child, and time is near.	<i>watch over</i>
300	Help her now for charity, and be with her till day be; and your travail, so mot I thee, I shall pay you right here.	<i>so may I thrive</i>
TEBEL	All ready, good man, truly! We will do all that ever we may. For two such midwives, I dare well say, are not in this city.	
305		

SALOME           Come, good man, lead us the way.  
                     By God's help, before it be day  
 310               that know our job thy wife shall say -  
                     and that thou shalt well see!

JOSEPH           Lo, Mary, heart, brought I have here  
                     two midwives as is the manner,  
                     to be with thee, my darling dear,  
 315               till that it be day.

MARY             Sir, they be welcome without were.  
                     But God will work of his power  
                     full soon for me, my husband dear,  
                     as best is now and ay.

*certainly*

*Then for a little while they are quiet.*

MARY             Ah, Joseph, tidings aright!  
 321               I have a son, a sweet wight.  
                     Lord, thanked be thou full of might,  
                     for proved is thy posty.  
                     Pain none I felt this night.  
 325               But right so as he in me light,  
                     come he is here in my sight -  
                     God's Son, as thou may see.

*true*

*power*

*descended*

*Then the star shall appear.*

JOSEPH           Lord, welcome, sweet Jesu!  
                     Thy name thou hadst before I thee knew.  
 330               Now I believe the angel's words true,  
                     that thou art a clean maid.  
                     For thou art come Man's bliss to brew  
                     to all that thy law will shew.  
                     Now man's joy begins to new  
 335               and misery to pass away.

*bring  
 profess*

MARY             Lord, blessed mayst thou be  
                     that simple born art, as I see;  
                     to deprive the Devil of his posty,  
                     come thou art today.  
 340               Lodging place is none for thee.  
                     Therefore thy sweet body free  
                     in this cradle shall lie with lee,  
                     and lapped about with hay.

*power*

*joy*

TEBEL            Ah, dear Lord, Heaven-king,  
 345               what! this is a marvelous thing!  
                     Without pain or labouring  
                     a fair son she has one.  
                     I dare well say, in truth iwiss,  
                     that clean maiden this woman is,  
 350               for she hath born a child with bliss;  
                     so know I never none.

SALOME           Be still, Tebel, I thee pray,  
                     for that is false, truly.  
                     Was never woman clean maid  
                     and had child without man.  
 355               But nevertheless, I will assay  
                     whether she be a clean maid,

*test*

and know it if I can.

*Then Salome shall attempt to touch Mary in her private parts, and at once her hands shall dry up; and crying out she shall say*

360 Alas, alas, alas, alas!  
I suffer an evil case!  
My hands be dried up in this place,  
that feeling none have I.  
Vengeance on me is now light, *descended*  
for I would tempt God's might.  
365 Alas, that I came here tonight  
to suffer such annoy. *harm*

*Then the star shall appear and the Angel shall come, saying as follows*

ANGEL Woman, beseech this child for grace  
that he forgive thee thy trespass;  
and ere thou go out of this place  
370 helped thou may be.  
This miracle that thou seest here  
is of God's own power,  
to bring Mankind out of danger  
and restore them, believe thou me.

SALOME Ah, sweet child, I ask mercy  
376 for thy mother's love, Mary.  
Though I have acted wretchedly,  
sweet child, forgive it me!  
Ah, blessed be God! All whole am I!  
380 Now believe I well and certainly  
that God is come, Man to forbuy, *redeem*  
and thou, Lord, thou art he.

EXPOSITOR Lo, lordings all, of this miracle here  
385 Friar Bartholomew<sup>1</sup> in good manner  
bears witness, without were *assuredly*  
as played was you before.  
And other miracles, if I may,  
I shall rehearse ere I go away,  
390 that befell that same day  
that Jesus Christ was born.

We read in chronicles express *clearly*  
some time in Rome a temple was  
made of so great riches  
that it a wonder was certainly.  
395 For all things in it, believe you me,  
was silver, gold, and rich perry; *gems*  
third part of the world, as read we,  
that temple was worth surely.

400 From each province, that chronicle says,  
a god's image set there was;  
and each image about his neck has  
a silver bell hanging,  
and on his breast written also

<sup>1</sup> Friar Bartholomew is alleged to be the authority for the material in the source of this part of the play *The Golden Legend*. That reference may be to an apocryphal Gospel of St Bartholomew which has not survived. But the ascription to an authority seems more important than his historical identity.

- 405 the land's name and the god's, both two.  
And set was also in midst of them *those*  
the god of Rome, just like a king.
- About the temple also moving there  
was a man on horse – men stood to stare -  
and in his hand he bore a spear,  
410 all quite ruthlessly.  
That horse and man were made of brass;  
turning about that image was.  
Save certain priests, there might none pass  
for Devil's fantasy. *fear of the Devil*
- 415 But when an enemy with battle  
was ready a land for to assail,  
of that land, without fail,  
the god's image rang in his bell  
and turned his face piteously  
420 to the god of Rome, as read I,  
in tokening that there were ready  
to fight them men both fresh and fell. *brave and fierce*
- The brass horseman above standing,  
when the bell beneath began to ring,  
425 turned him all sharply, showing  
toward that land his spear.  
And when the emperor saw this tokening,  
he ordained without tarrying  
an host to await their coming,  
430 long before they came there.
- And in this manner truly,  
by art of necromancy,  
all the world certainly  
to Rome were made to lout. *bow*  
435 And that temple there doubtless  
was called therefore “the Temple of Peace,”  
that through this trick battle can cease  
throughout the world about.
- But he that cunningly this work cast  
440 asked the Devil before he passed  
how long that temple it should last  
that he there had built.  
The Devil answered subtly  
and said it should last certainly  
445 until a maiden spotlessly  
had conceived a child.
- They heard, and believed therefore  
it should endure for evermore.  
But that time that Christ was born,  
450 it fell down immediately.  
In Rome this house is seen today  
partly standing, truly.  
But no man dare well go that way  
for fear of the Fiend's fantasy.
- 455 When Christ was born, verament *truly*  
three suns were seen in the firmament,  
and wondrously together went  
and turned into one.

460 The ox, the ass, where they were lent,  
honoured Christ in their intent;  
and more miracles, as we intend  
to play right here anon. *stabled  
will*

*Then he shall point to the star, and Sibyl shall come to the emperor.*

SIBYL 465 Sir emperor, God thee save and see. *watch over*  
Look up on high after me.  
I tell you surely that born is he  
that surpasseth thee in power.  
That child thou seest so great shall be  
as none like him in any degree *rank*  
to pass all kings, and also thee,  
470 that are born or ever were.

OCTAVIAN 475 Ah, Sibyl, this is a wondrous sight,  
for yonder I see a maiden bright,  
a young child held in her arms tight,  
a bright cross in his head. *being*  
Honour I will that sweet wight  
with incense throughout all my might,  
for what reverence is most right,  
if that it be thy read. *advice*

480 Incense bring, I command, quickly  
to honour this child, king of mercy.  
Should I be God? Nay, nay, certainly!  
Great wrong truly it were.  
For this child is more worthy  
than such a thousand as am I.  
485 Therefore to God most mighty  
incense I offer here.

*Then the Angel shall sing "Haec est ara Dei caeli," etc. (Let the setting be  
according to the judgment of the performer.)*

OCTAVIAN 490 Ah, Sibyl, hears not thou this song?  
My parts of my body it goeth among.  
Joy and bliss makes my heart strong  
to hear this melody. *power*  
Surely it may none other be  
but this child is prince of posty  
and I his subject, as I see.  
He is most worthy.

SIBYL 496 Yea, sir, thou shalt believe well this;  
somewhere on earth born he is,  
and that he comes for Man's bliss -  
his tokening this can show.  
500 Reverence him, I advise iwiss,  
for other God there none is;  
who believes otherwise doth amiss,  
but him for Christ to know. *acknowledge*

OCTAVIAN 505 Sir senators, go home anon *immediately*  
and warn my men every one  
that such worship I must forgone  
as they would do to me.  
But this child worship each man  
with full heart, all that you can,  
for he is worthy to believe upon;

