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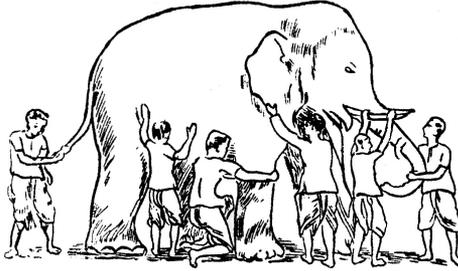
NATIVITY STORIES

Nativity stories, scenes, plays, art, and songs help us remember the birth of Jesus. During the Christmas season, families and churches put up nativity scenes, read the nativity story, and present nativity programs. Often children dress up and play the parts of Mary, Joseph, angels, shepherds, or wise men while the nativity story is read or Christmas songs are sung.



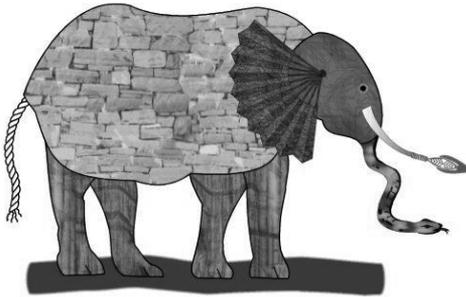
The nativity story can be more meaningful as we become aware of other versions of the story based on relevant historical and linguistic information. Writers and

artists are like the six blind men who each felt different parts of an elephant. They recorded their observations of the size, shape, and flexibility of the part they felt.



Elephant and the Blind Men © Jain World

Then they shared their elephant “stories” that explained their observations. In the six stories, an elephant was like a wall, rope, tree, fan, spear, or snake. They all argued about which story was right (Saxe).



Elephant illustration © Jason Hunt

This story is comparable to our knowledge of the birth of Jesus. The New Testament only says that in Bethlehem, Mary “brought forth her firstborn son ... and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7). To this account, writers and artists add *other information* (e.g., Bible language, customs, and history) and *imagination* to tell us different stories that answer questions about when and where Jesus was born.