

They that Wait

By
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But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. —*Isaiah 40:31*

Scene 1.

[The Eleven, except Matthew and John, are sitting in various states of shock or are pacing restlessly]

Little James: Shhh! Someone is coming! May-maybe we should put out the light?

Thomas: Calm down, Little James. No one is after us. They got what they wanted.

Andrew: Thomas is right, young James. We—are hardly worth their effort to arrest. What have they to fear from us?

Simon: *(Bitterly)* What indeed. *(Shakes a sword)* Would that we could give them something to fear.

Andrew: Simon—it is too late for that; much too late. *(Checks at the door)*

Little James: Andrew! Do not open—

Andrew: *(Opens)* Ah, it is you, Matthew and John. Come in. What is it like out there?

Matthew: *(Enters with John)* Mmph. There is much fear in the streets after yesterday's bizarre occurrences. Everyone is either heartsick or suspicious—or both.

Andrew: Occurrences, Matthew? What news is there? *(Hands each of them a cup as they sit)*

Matthew: Thank you, Andrew.

Little James: You were not followed were you? I mean, you were careful.

Matthew: Oh yes. We have been careful. We have all been very careful. *(Takes a swig from the cup)* Would you speak first John or shall I? *(John gestures for him to go on)* You have heard about the dead reviving, I assume?

Peter: *(He has been sitting on the floor against the wall, arms across his knees, head down, now looks up)* The what?

Matthew: *(Turns toward Peter)* There are reports, Peter, from quite a number of people that, at the moment of— *(he struggles to say the words)* of His death, people recently buried came out of their graves and now live. *(Peter lowers his head again)*

Philip: *(Previously sitting sullenly he suddenly perks up)* What people?

Matthew: It is hard to say, Philip. The reports come from many places and are difficult to get straight. As soon as one hears of a specific individual and seeks to confirm the report, a conflicting report says it was someone else. Some of the names I do not know, but there is one I have heard consistently. It is Zecharias son of Eleazor. You will remember we met him this time last year—a good and godly man. Indeed, the one common thread among all these reports is that they are all holy men and women.

Philip: (*Brows furrowed in frustration*) I do not understand. People once dead now walking around alive again? How is it that the streets are not abuzz with wonderment and celebration of such a miracle? Is no one able to confirm or deny such incredible stories? What do the authorities say?

Matthew: They pass it off as false rumors started by those sympathetic to Jesus. They say it is an attempt to create hysteria in the wake of our failed rebellion.

Philip: But this Zecharias—I do vaguely recall him—would it not be a simple thing to verify whether or not he lives? Surely there must be those who recall his death and burial. Why does he not show himself?

Thomas: Why do we not show ourselves?

James Boanerges: Well said, Thomas. Claiming to have been part of a miracle in any way associated with Jesus puts one at odds with the Sanhedrin. And they have shown such a position to be deadly.

Matthew: (*To Philip*) James is right. These people probably think it best just to rejoice and praise God privately with family and friends. No doubt they hope that if word does get out it will be in the form of rumors and that the authorities will prefer to refute rather than investigate them.

Philip: (*Frustrated*) I cannot believe that such miracles—and did you not say there were many?—are being kept hidden from the world.

Thomas: (*Irritated*) Philip, has it not occurred to you that they might also be hidden because they did not happen? That these are just rumors; stories of the type that often surround extraordinary events? There is no substantiation, only a confused muddle that someone heard from someone's friend's relative who knows someone who saw it. Such stories are always just vague enough that no one can ever verify whether or not they are real.

Matthew: (*Not so quick to dismiss the stories*) Time will reveal whether or not these stories are true. However, there is one that even the chief priests are admitting to. (*He lets his statement to hang in the air*).

Andrew: What? Tell us.

Matthew: The curtain.

Andrew: Curtain?

Matthew: The Temple curtain that hangs between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

Philip: Yes? What about it?

Matthew: At the precise moment of Jesus' death on the cross, the curtain was torn in two—on its own—from top to bottom.

James B.: But that is no ordinary piece of cloth. It is woven as thick as rope. Two yoke of oxen pulling opposite each other on it could not begin to tear it. How could such a thing occur?

Philip: And why?

John: Can you not see the meaning of it? The separation between the presence of God—the Holy of Holies—and man was torn apart when the Lord died on our behalf.

Thomas: On our behalf? You mean He let them take Him to keep us from each going to crosses of our own?

John: No. It is difficult to put into words but His death had a greater purpose than that. I—I cannot quite piece it all together but I feel certain there is eternal significance in His death.

Simon: There certainly is. It means we will remain eternally under the thumb of the Romans. Our best hope to rid ourselves of them and once again be Hebrews died on that cross. Now there can be no confrontation to arouse the sleeping swords of our complacent brothers. *(He glares menacingly at Matthew)* More and more will become traitorous sheep bleating for their Roman shepherds and stealing from us, their own people!

James B.: *(Quickly stepping-in)* Is there other news, Matthew? John?

John: There have been so many strange occurrences these two days. The darkness at midday yesterday. The earthquake. The death and burial of the Lord.

Peter: *(Zombie-like)* Someone—has taken Him down, then?

Matthew: Hmph. Yes, Peter. And now that is an amazing story. Can anyone venture a guess as to who did so? None other than two members of the Sanhedrin. Yes,

you heard me right. Those brave, outspoken supporters of Jesus: Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Nicodemus! The midnight visitor who skulked through the shadows, trembling in fear to speak with Him. I am told the two of them marched right up to Pilate and requested the body. Such bold lions—now that He is dead. Such meek little lambs while he was alive. Could not they have said one word in His defense?

James B.: Enough! Who are we to condemn anyone? We who scurried like insects at His arrest, have we license to condemn any other for cowardice? *(To John)* You alone, my brother, dared stand at the foot of His cross. And even so, who among us offered to die with him?

Thomas: *(Bitterly)* I did—at least, in the safety of the countryside where no threat presented itself. “Let us also go,” I said, “that we may die with him.” Humph, such noble words; so hollow and empty now—now that He is dead.

Thaddaeus: But Thomas, we thought He was the Son of God. How could *we* have protected *Him*? I—I assumed He would display His power and overcome His enemies.

James B.: Display His power to whom, Thaddaeus? Our backsides as we scattered off into the night in cowardice and terror?

Thaddaeus: We were not cowards, James. We—we were just—confused, is all. Everything happened so—so fast. There was no time to think—

Peter: *(Rising)* No time?! There was plenty of time! He was on trial all night. We had all night to have stepped forward in that assembly of jackals and cry out, “He is my Lord! I am His follower! Whatever you would do to Him, do to me also!” *(He sits and covers his face).*

Simon: It should never have come to that! We should have followed your lead, Peter, and drawn our swords against that bunch of traitorous collaborators that came out against Him. We should have fought our way through them and escaped or died in the attempt. We should have died honorably, like Hebrews! Like men. If we had all done like Peter—

Peter: Do not call me that! Do not use that name for me!

Andrew: But, my brother, that is the name the Lord gave you.

Peter: Yes, and do you remember why? It was when I, so bold and outspoken proclaimed Him the Messiah, the Son of God. He said to me, “You are Peter, a stone. And upon this boulder I will build my church.” He gave me that name because my words were the foundation of His kingdom of believers. But I have proven myself to be not rock, but the poorest and most brittle of clay. I stood

trembling before a little maiden scarcely more than a child and denied that I ever knew Him. Not only once but again and again. Three times! At the last I even called down curses upon myself from God if I knew him. And so God has responded, for I am indeed accursed. I am not Peter! I am not a rock! I am nothing. (*Andrew tries to console him*).

James B.: Pete—Simon—**Peter**. Who among us does not have cause for remorse? (*Gestures at John*) What of us? “Sons of thunder” He called us, with that twinkle of humor in His eye we all saw so often. Remember, John, when we wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans? So bold were we then. But when He was nailed to that cross, the sons of thunder became the daughters of fear. (*John puts his arm on James’ shoulder. There is a pause as everyone is deep in thought*)

Philip: What other news, Matthew?

Matthew: Pilate gave the chief priests a squad of guards.

Little James: I knew it! They are looking for us.

Matthew: No, the guard is not for us. They are guarding the tomb.

Thomas: Tomb? You mean where they laid Jesus?

Matthew: Yes.

Thomas: I do not understand. Why would they guard a tomb?

Matthew: The chief priests told Pilate that Jesus predicted he would rise from the dead. They thought we might steal the body and claim He arose. So he gave them a guard and placed a royal seal across the stone door of the tomb.

Nathanael: (*Laughing sarcastically*) A guard? Against us? So tell me, Matthew Levi, what kind of guard would they dispatch against such an ominous force as us? A crippled old woman wielding her crutch as a weapon?

Matthew: Not at all, Nathanael son of Tolomai. Pilate has granted them a fully armed squad of soldiers with orders to make certain nothing happens to His body.

John: You see? It is as I have been trying to tell you. The chief priests understand what Jesus’ words meant. They know that when He said the sign we would be given is that of Jonah that He meant he would return to life on the third day. If they believe, why do we not believe?

Thomas: (*Exasperated*) John, get your head out of the clouds. No one is saying the chief priests believe anything. Quite the opposite, in fact. They did not ask for the tomb to be guarded to keep Jesus in. It is to keep us out.

John: But what about us? Are we not to look for Him to arise? After all He did raise Lazarus and the widow's son. We all saw it.

Thomas: Yes, but that is precisely the point. It was Jesus who raised them—a living Jesus. There is no living Jesus to raise the dead Jesus. Besides, John, did you not tell us that those at the foot of the cross insisted that He come down from the cross and show His power over death? That they said were He to do that, even they, his murderers and scorners would believe? They were right, of course. If He had such power He could have shown it then and there and left no doubt. What use would there be in dying and taking a spear through the heart and being buried first?

John: But think about His words to us, Thomas. Everything He prophesied would happen here in Jerusalem has come to pass. He spoke to us about it, don't you remember? Don't any of you remember? He said he would be mocked and beaten and killed by Lawless men. Matthew? Nathanael?

Matthew: Yes, yes. I remember words to that effect but—

John: But what?

Nathanael: But who could understand what He said? "Eat my flesh, drink my blood. Hate your father and mother. Whoever would gain his life must lose it." I was confused more than I was clear when He spoke. Who could make sense of many of His words?

John: But these were plain; and they were prophetic. Peter, surely *you* remember.

Peter: Remember? To remember is to grasp an open wound. (*He pauses in thought*). I only know that if, somehow, He were to return to us, I could never face Him. Never.

Thomas: (*More gently*). John, I know how much you want Him to still be alive. So do all of us. But wanting something to be true does not make it so. He predicted that He would be arrested, humiliated and killed. We all warned Him that very thing would happen if He entered Jerusalem; and we were not prophesying inspired words from God. We were simply stating the obvious to try to keep it from happening.

John: Do you not remember how He said that the chief priests and teachers of the law would condemn Him to death and hand Him over to the Gentiles? It happened exactly as He said. Then He said that on the third day He would rise.

Thomas: This proves nothing. Of course it would be the chief priests and teachers of the law. Were they not the ones who opposed Him and sought His death at every turn? As for Him being handed over to the Gentiles, how else would it happen? Only the Romans have the power to put a criminal to death.

Simon: Did He not also say He came not to bring peace but a sword? Then when Peter used one on Malchus, He stopped him—and healed Malchus! I agree with Nathanael, He spoke in figures and parables so much, who can know what He meant?

Thomas: All I know is that He is dead. After we have invested three years of our lives, abandoned our homes and businesses, we are left with nothing.

Little James: Shh! I hear voices outside. Who is it, Andrew?

Andrew: *(Checks)* It is the women. *(Opens door. Enter Mary Magdalene, Salome, Mary—Jesus' mother, Joanna, and Mary "mother of James" who goes immediately and hugs Little James)*

John: *(Gets up and helps Mary, Jesus' mother, to a seat).* Dear Mother, are you well? Our hearts all ache for the pain you must feel for your beloved Son.

Mary(Jesus'): If only I could rid my mind of the horror of what was done to my Jesus. If only these images could be ripped from my thoughts for just an hour. In that hour alone I might find rest from my grief. Well did Simeon prophesy when he told me that day in the temple as I held my infant Jesus in my arms, "And a sword will pierce even your own soul." And so it has. *(She weeps quietly in John's arms).*

Philip: Is there any news, Mary Magdalene?

Mary Magdalene: Just that we should all praise God for Joseph of Arimathea.

James B.: We heard how he and Nicodemus took the body. If you see Nicodemus and Joseph again, let them know we are grateful.

Joanna: I should think more than grateful. They, at least, were unwilling to just leave His body hanging there over the Sabbath. More than I can say for His closest friends!

Salome: Joanna! It does no good to condemn each other. We all failed Him.

Joanna: Some of us at least stood by him as He suffered and died.

Mary M.: Joanna, Salome is right. Whatever anyone did or did not do yesterday cannot be changed now. The result would have been the same in any event.

Matthew: I heard that Joseph used his own tomb. Is that true?

Mary M.: Yes, a tomb hewn for his family only recently out of rock at the edge of his own garden. Do you know where I mean?

James B.: (*Nodding at the other disciples who also nod*). Yes, we are all acquainted with the place—a lovely garden, quite nearby.

Matthew: Joseph; he is a man of some wealth. We should indeed be thankful for such generosity. At least Jesus has a burial place of honor.

Simon: (*Thoughtfully*). Honor...Did they have a chance to—prepare Him?

Salome: They did the best they could. With the Sabbath so near, they wrapped him in haste. Perhaps there is more that could be done.

Mary M.: As soon as the Sabbath is over, we will see to it.

Thaddaeus: Matthew says the entrance to the tomb has been closed and sealed with a stone. How will you move it? And there are guards there. They will not allow the tomb to be opened; there is a royal seal upon it.

Joanna: We will deal with it. Certainly we would not dream of taxing you with such a burden and risk, Judas Thaddaeus.

Thaddaeus: Do not call me that name! I repudiate the name Judas. The mere sound of it brings to mind that thieving traitor. That foreigner who would sell his very soul for half a denarius. I have heard that he delivered up the Lord for a mere 30 pieces of silver. Would to God that a robber would spot it on him and slit his throat to take it from him!

Salome: Have you not heard, Thaddaeus? Judas Iscariot is dead.

Thaddaeus: Dead? How?

Salome: By his own hand. It is said that when he saw that the Lord was condemned he was stricken with guilt and rushed to the temple to give back the money. When they would not take it he threw it into the temple and ran away. The chief priests would not put blood money into the treasury, so in his name they bought the potter's field near Gehenna—do you know the one? (*Several nod*) They plan to use it as a burial ground for the poor.

Nathanael: Humph. How honorable. We are fortunate indeed to have priests whose every action is guided by compassion and mercy! So, are we to conclude that Judas died from the pain of having let loose of 30 silver pieces?

Salome: (*Solemnly*) No. He hanged himself—from the large gnarled tree in the middle of that same potter's field.

Thaddaeus: May he hang there until his body bursts and turns that into a field of blood! And may the name Judas die with him. The very sound of it speaks of betrayal.

Mary(Jesus'): Judas Thaddaeus, do not be so quick to deny your name. Do not forget that I have a son of that same name who is no betrayer.

John: Mary is right, Judas. And now that Iscariot is dead, no one will associate you with him.

Joanna: Certainly not. Why your bravery and boldness will more than restore the reputation of your name—while you all cower here behind locked doors!

Mary M.: Joanna!

Simon: (*To Joanna*) Woman! I will tolerate no more of your venomous tongue. You coil and hiss like a viper. Leave us at once and find somewhere else to sink your fangs.

Peter: (*Jumps to his feet*) Leave her be! There is no insult she can use against us that is not true. We are deserving of a tongue sharp as a sword and even so her words do not cut deeply enough. (*Quieter and with despair*) Woman, we are indeed worthy of your scorn.

Joanna: (*Bursts into tears and embraces Peter*) I'm sorry. Forgive me, please; all of you. It's just that His death—it hurts so much!

Peter: I know, dear sister. We all struggle to find a way to escape the pain. Yet I fear there may be no escape.

John: Except to love one another. Of all the teachings of our Master, that one is most clear. In love, we may yet find the way of escape from our loss; a way that joy may one day return to our lives.

Mary M.: Dear sisters, we must be going.

Mary(James'): Yes. (*To Little James, her son*) Son, are you well? Have you and the others food enough?

Little James: Yes, Mother, we are well supplied.

John: (*His arm around Mary, Jesus' mother; to women*). You will tell us at once if she has need of anything?

Mary M.: Of course. (*They exit, sadly*)

John: (*After a thoughtful pause*). What devastating pain His death has brought.

Simon: If only He had not died. How different things would be.

Andrew: His death makes no sense. How many times did mobs try to lay hold of Him and kill Him and He just sort of vanished in the confusion. Why not this time?

Little James: And when we feared the storm, did He not calmly ask us where our faith was; as if we should have known no storm could kill Him? Yet now He is dead?

Philip: Maybe He is not dead! (*Several laugh bitterly*) No, seriously, it might be possible.

John: Philip, I was there. I heard Him give up His spirit. I saw the spear go into Him.

Philip: But He died so quickly—only six hours on the cross. Could it not be possible that he is still alive?

Thomas: They put Him in the tomb. Of course He is dead. There can be no question.

Philip: No question? But why?

Thomas: They put Him in the tomb! They buried Him. Are you not listening?

Philip: Yes, I am listening. They put Him in the tomb; so you keep saying. How does that prove anything?

Thomas: Nathanael, I give up. See if you can talk some sense into your friend here.

Philip: I do not understand. What? What?

Nathanael: Philip, what Thomas is saying is that Joseph and Nicodemus *buried* Jesus.

Philip: Yes, yes, I know. “In the tomb, in the tomb.” So what?

Nathanael: Stop and think about it, my friend.
(*Pretends to be wrapping a body*) “Nicodemus! Nicodemus! The body of Jesus is still warm! I feel a pulse!” (*Faces the opposite direction; continues wrapping*). “Shut up and keep wrapping, Joseph, only an hour until the Sabbath! Eh? What is

that Jesus? I am wrapping too tightly? Oh, sorry, I would not want You to be uncomfortable while we bury You alive!"

Philip: All right, all right, I get it now. So, there is no hope then.

John: Only that perhaps, somehow, death cannot hold Him.

Thomas: Oh, not this again! How many times must we go over this? You said it yourself, John, He had a spear stuck clear into His heart. How will it beat again? How will the flesh be restored onto his back where the flogging tore it off? What will fill-in the holes in His hands, His feet and His side? None of us knows of anyone, not in scripture or even in legend who has risen from the dead of His own power. Why? Because the dead have no power. Jesus is dead, can you not see that? He is dead, He is in a tomb and He is not coming out! Not now, not tomorrow, not ever! Why are we sitting around here? What are we waiting for? Jesus is gone. Forever. And I am going too. (*Grabs cloak and heads for the door*)

James B.: Thomas, where are you going?

Thomas: I do not know. I only know I cannot stay here any longer. I need to clear my head. I will see you again—perhaps.... (*Just shakes head; Exits*)

James B.: Thomas! Wait!

Little James: Be careful! Keep to the shadows! (*Stares after him; turns to James B.*) What if they catch him? Would he lead them here?

James B.: (*Shrugs, unworried*). They would gain nothing by arresting Thomas. What the chief priests want most right now is exactly what is happening this very moment.

Little James: I know of nothing happening.

James B.: Precisely. Nothing is happening. Their most fervent desire is for the memory of Jesus to die out as quickly and quietly as possible. It would make no sense for them to stir things up by arresting one lone disciple.

Little James: So as long as we remain here, we are safe?

Simon: Safe! I am sick of being "safe." Sheep led to the slaughter think themselves safe. I agree with Thomas. There is a limit to how long I can sit here waiting. Humph. Waiting? Waiting for what?

John: Waiting on the Lord. "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and

they shall walk, and not faint.” So says the prophet Isaiah.

Nathanael: There you are, Simon. You are waiting to grow eagles’ wings. (*Looks at Simon’s back*) Ah, I think I see some sprouting now.

Simon: Be silent!

Nathanael: (*Flinching*) I see you already have the talons.

Andrew: John, what does it mean to wait upon the Lord? What *are* we waiting for?

John: I do not know, exactly. Only that our Father will reveal what we are to do, and when. (*Laughs lightly*) Is it not fascinating that for all those centuries no one spoke of God that way until Jesus called Him “Father”? Not just *the* Father, but *our* Father.

Andrew: Peter? What do you think is going to happen?

Peter: After tomorrow, when no attempt is made to steal the body, the guards will leave the tomb and we will be ignored. In a month, few will even mention the name of Jesus.

Nathanael: (*Contemplative*) Except us. We will never forget. How could we?

Little James: (*Looking out the window; after a pause*) Sunset. The Sabbath is over.

James B.: We should all try to sleep. Perhaps tomorrow—somehow—things will look differently. (*One by one, all exit to another part of the house*).

Scene 2.

[Peter is sitting at the table in the dim light. James Boanerges enters as a rooster crows; Peter stiffens at the sound.]

James B.: You are up early, Peter, before even the first cock-crow.

Peter: It is a sound I have come to despise. Yet I am unable to sleep long enough to avoid it.

James B.: (*Sits at the table*). Humph, sleep. To what purpose? Sleep is supposed to prepare one for the activities of the day ahead. But what activities are there for us, hmm? Another day of grief, confusion, and aimlessness. We cannot go on like this, Peter; we will all go mad. We must—do—something.

Peter: I know, I know but what? Wander the countryside casting out demons and healing the sick? Jesus enabled us to do that but now that He is gone...*(shrugs)*

James B.: You bring up a good point though, Peter. We did indeed perform wonders; that is undeniable. The power of God was at work through us. Jesus of Nazareth was no mere pretender. You said it yourself; He was the Son of God.

Peter: But how can God's Son be killed and left to decay in a tomb like any other man? Worse than that, like a criminal? Why did He not stop it? He said over and over again that God's ability to work through us was based on our faith. How can I have faith enough to heal and work miracles when the object of our faith lies dead in the grave? None of this makes any sense. How can I have faith in that which I do not understand?

James B.: Could this be a test of our faith? Of our commitment to Him?

Peter: *(Slowly).* If so, I have already failed the test.

James B.: As we all have. But there is nothing to be gained by giving-in to despair. If only we knew what to do next; where to go.

Peter: *(Wistfully).* How good it would be to return to the simple lives we had as fishermen. To cast out, haul in a catch, quietly clean and mend our nets. If things could just be as they were before...

John: *(Just entering room).* But things can never be as they were before, can they? *(Joins them).* He told us that He had shown us the Father. That means we have seen things no one else in all the world has ever seen, known things no one else has ever known. Are we now just to forget all that, get onto our little boats and behave as if this past three years had never happened? God *must* have a purpose in all this.

Peter: That is the point: what purpose could God have in letting His Messiah suffer death on a cross? Never having redeemed Israel, never having thrown off the yoke of Roman oppression, never having accomplished any of the things the Messiah was supposed to do. What purpose is served?

James B.: I agree Peter. When, only a few days ago, He rode into Jerusalem to the multitude shouting "Hosanna!" I was sure the time had come. Now, at last, I thought, the Anointed One will rule Israel in glory and splendor not seen since the days of Solomon. Instead His body rots in a tomb. How could this be true of the Messiah?

John: Perhaps we have not understood the prophecies regarding the Messiah. Perhaps His death has served a greater purpose. Do you remember Him saying that the

Son of Man had come to give His life as a ransom for many? We have looked for the Messiah to be a mighty champion who would make Israel a great power. Could it not be that He came to provide Israel with great spiritual power instead?

Peter: (*Sighs wearily*). John, we are fishermen. Such questions are for the rabbis to debate—and even they rarely agree. How can we understand these things?

James B.: There is another possibility. Perhaps we misunderstood who Jesus was. Perhaps He was not the Messiah. Could it be that we wanted Him to be the Messiah so much that we deluded ourselves?

Nathanael: (*Just entering*). Ha! (*All turn toward him*).

James B.: Nathanael? Up before noon? What has caused this?

Nathanael: The loud rattling of empty heads. I said last night that many of Jesus' words were difficult to understand. But that He knew Himself to be the Messiah is beyond question. John, do you recall His prayer for us just before we went to Gethsemane? Just before His arrest?

John: Yes, quite vividly.

Nathanael: Do you recall how He referred to Himself as He spoke to God?

John: (*Remembering*). Yes. Surprisingly I remember His exact words: "Father, the time has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You. For You granted Him authority over all people that He might give eternal life to all those You have given Him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus the Messiah, whom You have sent."

Nathanael: He refers to Himself as the Son of the very God to whom He is praying, and names Himself as the Messiah. Whatever confusion there might be about some of His teachings, there can be no doubt that He claimed to be the Messiah—and the Son of God.

James B.: You surprise me, Son of Tolomai. For one known for his joviality, your words are quite profound.

Nathanael: (*Nods at the compliment*). And here are some even more profound words. I believe we are all in great need... of breakfast before I perish with hunger! (*Others laugh; rest of disciples enter*).

Thaddaeus: It is good to hear laughter again.

Andrew: (Looking out). The sunrise is glorious. Ah, here comes Cleopas. (Cleopas enters). Welcome, Cleopas. It is good to see you; but so early?

Cleopas: Ah, thank you, friend Andrew. I am here to fetch Thaddaeus; he agreed to accompany me to Emmaus. I cannot say I will regret to leave Jerusalem after—after all that has happened here. Are you ready Thaddaeus?

Thaddaeus: Very shortly, my friend. Will you first join me in some bread to break your fast?

Andrew: I see someone coming.

Little James: Soldiers? Is it the guard?

Andrew: No, young James, it is four women. (Looks more closely). It is Mary Magdalene and the others.

John: Is the Lord's mother with them?

Andrew: No, I think not. (Opens door; Mary Magdalene, Mary—the mother of James, Joanna, and Salome enter excitedly).

Philip: What brings you ladies here so early? (The women talk excitedly all at once).

Mary, James': We have been to the tomb.

Joanna: There was an angel there.

Mary M.: The tomb is empty.

Salome: No, there were two angels.

Mary, J: The soldiers were gone.

Joanna: He spoke to us.

Mary M.: We do not know where Jesus is.

Salome: Their clothes were like lightning.

James B.: Ladies! Ladies! One at a time, please! (They fall silent). There, that's better. Now, what happened? (There is a pause. Then they all begin speaking at once again exactly as before; James' efforts are to no avail). Ladies! Ladies! One at a time! One at a time!

Peter: Mary Magdalene! (*All fall silent*). Mary Magdalene, tell us where you have been and what happened.

Mary M.: We went to the tomb to finish preparing the Lord's body. But when we got there the tomb was open; the stone had been rolled away. Jesus' body was not there.

John: Not there?

Joanna: Mary, tell him about the angel.

John: (*Frowns at Joanna for butting-in*). Mary, what is this about an angel? Are you trying to tell us that an angel appeared to you?

Mary M.: (*Very upset*). Yes, I—I think so. I—

Philip: (*Dubious*). Now why would an angel appear to you and not to Peter or James or John?

Andrew: (*Gently*). It must have been terribly difficult for you to go back to that tomb, Mary. Perhaps you are just overwrought.

Simon: Perhaps they all are. Who can believe such nonsense? (*To Mary M.*) Now, how certain are you that you saw an angel?

Mary M.: (*Crying*). I don't know. I only know that we went to anoint His body but it was not there and I do not know where they have taken Him. (*She sits down and sobs*).

Joanna: But Mary, surely you saw the angel?

Salome: (*Sympathetically patting Mary M.'s shoulder*). Possibly not, the poor dear was so upset when she saw Jesus was not in the tomb she just wept and came back here.

Little James: But what of the guards? Were they still at the tomb?

Joanna: We did not see any guards. But there was an angel and—

Simon: No guards? (*To the disciples*) I believe the answer to all this is clear. In their grief the ladies went to the wrong tomb.

All Ladies: No! Definitely not! We know where Joseph and Nicodemus laid Him! We could not be mistaken.

James B.: (*Trying to calm them*). All right. All right. But you must admit, ladies, it would explain the empty tomb and the absence of guards. (*They begin to protest*).

Matthew: What of the seal? (*All are silent*). The Roman Governor Pilate's seal placed upon the stone across the entrance to the tomb. Was it there? Was it broken but still there?

Mary M.: (*Rises slowly*). Yes. I remember seeing it, still attached to the stone that had been rolled away from the entrance—next to the empty tomb. (*Peter grabs cloak and heads for the door*).

Little James: Peter! Where are you going?

Peter: To the tomb; to see for myself. (*He exits and, after a brief hesitation, John follows*).

Nathanael: (*After they exit*). Well, Peter and John will at last give us a clear picture of what has happened. No more of this female prattle. (*Makes a "chatterbox" gesture with his fingers*) Yat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat.

Joanna: It is not prattle! We *did* speak with an angel— (*Mary M. suddenly exits*). Mary? Where are you going?

Little James: They should not go out! No one should. It is too dangerous. If the tomb is truly empty, we will be accused of having stolen the body. Can you not see? That is where the guards are—looking for us!

Matthew: (*Puts on cloak*). Well, it is high time we find out. I have certain connections that will know for certain what became of the guards—or what they are up to. Elder James, while I am out see if you can get a straight story from these ladies. I will not be long.

Little James: Matthew Levi! Wait! (*Matthew, ignoring him, exits*). Wait!

Simon: (*Places a hand on Little James' shoulder, silencing him*). Young James, if a squad of soldiers were to find us, what is the worst that could happen? Hmm?

Little James: Well, they—they could, of course—

Simon: Take our lives? Give us another chance to die for our Lord? If you had another chance, even now, would you die for Him this time? (*Little James hangs his head*). I do not say we should go looking for death but if that is what God wants from us, this time let us behave with honor. (*Little James nods and goes and sits quietly*).

Scene 3.

[Present are: Joanna, Salome, Mary—mother of James, Simon, James Boanerges, Little James, Thaddaeus, Cleopas, Matthew, Andrew, and Philip.]

Joanna: Then the angel said “He is not here; he is risen.”

James B.: Then He is supposedly alive? But where is He now?

Salome: There were actually *two* angels, but only one spoke. Anyway, he said for us to tell you all that the Lord Jesus would meet up with you in Galilee.

Philip: Galilee? But why would He not—

Andrew: Someone approaches. It is John and Peter. *(Opens door).*

Thaddaeus: What news is there? What did you see?

Peter: *(Rather stunned).* The tomb is empty. It is even as the women said.

Thaddaeus: You saw angels then? *(Peter and John shake their heads).*

John: No, we saw no angels. But the tomb is indeed empty. In fact, the cloths that wrapped the Lord’s body were still there but He was not. It was strange. The wrapping that covered his head was all neatly folded up lying apart from the rest.

Philip: Did someone steal the body, then?

John: That is the mysterious part. Who—assuming they could get past the guards whose mission was to prevent this very thing from happening—who would take the time to unwrap the body, let alone so neatly setting the cloths aside?

Peter: Who would take the body at all? To what purpose?

James B.: You are certain it was the correct tomb?

Peter: *(Nodding).* Mm, quite certain. There could be no mistake.

Andrew: Matthew is returning.

Matthew: Ah, Peter, John, what news?

Joanna: They found the tomb empty just as we did.

Thaddaeus: No angels, though. (*Suddenly realizes something*). Cleopas, what of your errand? I believe your journey to Emmaus was of some urgency, was it not?

Cleopas: (Jumps to his feet). Quite right, Thaddaeus. Though I am desperate to know what is behind all these strange occurrences, we must be on our way quickly. (*They exit*).

Simon: So, Matthew Levi, what did your Roman “insiders” say of the guard?

Matthew: Now there is a strange tale indeed. Just after dawn they came running wild-eyed to their superiors, claiming some unearthly being in robes as radiant as lightning appeared and—

Salome: Yes! Just as we told you!

Matthew: (*Nods and continues*). Anyway, this vision rolled the stone away from the entrance to the tomb and sat upon it. According to the guards, their knees failed them and they dropped like dead men! Ha! Oh, to have seen that! (*Laughs*).

Simon: So where are they now?

Matthew: I think you will find this particularly amusing, Simon. The chief priests gave them bribe money and told them to claim the body had been stolen while they slept! Ha-HA! As if someone can claim to know what happens while they are too asleep to see it happen! (*All laugh*).

Simon: An entire squad of soldiers asleep on their watch? That would mean immediate execution.

Matthew: The chief priests told them they would fix it with Pilate so the soldiers would not get into any trouble.

James B.: Then this confirms what we have all heard. The tomb is indeed empty or the guards would simply point to Jesus in His still-sealed grave and have no need of being kept out of trouble.

Little James: But where is Jesus?

Mary M: (*Bursts through the door*). I have seen the Lord! (*Everyone converges on her talking at once in amazement*).

Peter: Let her speak! Please! Mary, what happened? What exactly did you see?

Mary M.: I arrived at the tomb just in time to see you and John leaving. I looked into the tomb and found two men inside in brilliant white robes.

Joanna: Two! The angels! (*Everyone buzzes with excitement*).

Mary M.: Yes, I believe now it was. But I was so distraught; I just wanted to complete the task we had gone to perform; to anoint our Lord's body. The one asked why I was crying and I said it was because my Lord had been taken away and I did not know where they had put Him.

Salome: Did they say He had risen?

Mary M.: No, I turned to leave and then saw another man; I thought him to be the gardener. He also asked why I wept and for whom I was looking. I said, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will get Him." (*She pauses and begins to cry*).

Peter: And then?

Mary M.: And then... He said my name! It was the Lord Jesus! (*Everyone again buzzes with excitement*).

John: What did He say?

Mary M.: He said, "Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Salome: Let us go back to the tomb, that we might see Him! (*Salome, Joanna, and Mary—mother of James exit*).

Philip: What do you think His words mean?

John: (*Peter heads for the door*) I do not—

Little James: Peter! (*He pauses and turns toward Little James, expectantly. Little James hesitates and glances at Simon, then turns back toward Peter.*) Godspeed, Peter. (*Peter nods and exits*).

John: Mary, after He spoke to you, what else happened? What did Jesus do next?

Mary M.: I—I do not know.

John: What do you mean?

Mary M.: I looked away to wipe the tears of joy from my eyes and He was gone.

John: Gone? You mean He left?

Mary M.: I suppose so, only I cannot understand how. I looked away for only the briefest moment. No one could have gone far enough to be out of sight so quickly. It was as if He...

John: Yes?

Mary M.: It was as if He vanished.

James B.: There one minute, disappeared the next? (*Skeptically*) Ah, so now it becomes clearer. I think we understand what you saw.

Mary M.: What do you mean? What are you saying? That I imagined seeing my Lord?

James B.: (*Condescendingly*). No, dear Mary, not imagined. Perhaps what you saw was a— a vision. A message from God to comfort you in your loss and for our encouragement.

Mary M.: No! It was not a vision. What happened was real.

John: Could it be that you saw His spirit?

Mary M.: No! I saw the Lord! There were nail-prints in his hands and feet, a wound in His side. I touched Him and felt real, warm flesh. He even told me not to hold on to Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father. He was as real as any of us.

James B.: Mary. I am sure it must have seemed real to you. But try to think with reason. If Jesus is still in His body, how could He disappear? Why would He disappear? And why would He not show Himself here, to the rest of us? Were we not His closest followers? I fear your grief and the strange events of this day have been too much for you; led you to see with your heart and not your eyes.

Mary M.: But I saw Him! I spoke to Him! Why will no one believe me?

Little James: (*Takes her hand; speaks quietly*). I believe you, Mary.

Mary M.: (*Smiles through her tears*). Bless you, young James.

Andrew: Listen! (*Looks out*) It is the other women. (*They enter and rush directly to Mary Magdalene*).

Joanna: Mary! Mary! We saw Him! The Lord Jesus, just as you said! (*Disciples buzz excitedly*)

Mary M.: I knew it! I knew it was real.

John: What happened? What did He say?

Salome: We went to the tomb and on the way back He met us. He greeted us and we fell and clasped His feet for joy.

Mary M.: His feet; did you see and feel the nail-prints?

All women: Yes! (*Peter enters*)

Andrew: Peter! Now all the women claim they have seen the risen Lord.

Peter: (*Speaks slowly, wearing a look of shock*). I know. I have seen Him, too. (*All the disciples gather around him*).

John: Peter! You saw Him? You spoke to Him? Not His spirit, but the Lord Jesus, alive, in the flesh?

Peter: (*Smiles knowingly at women*). Oh yes. Just as Mary and the others have reported, He is indeed risen. He lives! (*Everyone rejoices*).

James B.: Everyone! Please! (*They quiet down*). Now each of you must tell us all exactly what you have seen and heard. Tell it slowly and leave out no detail. Peter, you speak first.

Scene 4.

[Everyone gathered as if listening to one another's stories.]

John: What wondrous events. Did I not tell you that marvelous things come to those that wait upon the Lord?

Andrew: Who are these that approach? It is Cleopas and Thaddaeus. They are in great haste. (*Admits them*).

Cleopas: (*Winded*). Brothers, we have amazing news!

James B.: As have we!

Cleopas: The Lord Jesus lives! (*All agree excitedly*).

James B.: He has appeared personally to Peter—and the women.

Cleopas: To us also! We were walking to Emmaus when a man joined us. It was the Lord but our minds were prevented from recognizing Him. He asked why we were so upset and we marveled that anyone in Jerusalem would not know what had transpired these past days. He then taught us from scripture about how the Messiah had to suffer to enter His glory and bring salvation to all men.

Thaddaeus: Then we urged Him to stay and eat with us. As soon as He broke the bread our eyes were opened and we recognized Him as the Lord Jesus. Then He simply vanished from our sight!

James B.: *(To Mary Magdalene).* Dear sister, please forgive my unbelief. I do not know how it is possible for One in the flesh to appear and disappear; perhaps I will never truly understand unless I see it for myself— *(A brilliant light appears behind them all and they turn to face it and form a semi-circle around the brilliantly-lit Jesus).*

Jesus: Peace be with you. *(All kneel to Him in homage).* This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. *(Pauses and points to audience)* You are witnesses...

THE END