

FIT FOR A KING!

A play by DAVID NUNN

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An exploration of the uniquely dramatic events
from the arrest of Jesus
to his Resurrection Appearances to his friends.

'...it's gripping indeed! Stunning insights into the emotions of all involved in the great drama. The audience were spellbound throughout!'

FIT FOR A KING

CAST

(in order of appearance)

JOHN (J)

PETER (P)

MARY (MM)

*(Sister of Martha and Lazarus - sometimes known as Mary Magdalene)**

CLOPAS (C)

(Husband of the other Mary – they're the parents of James, the younger)
(Clopas was brother of Joseph, Jesus stepfather – so Clopas is the uncle of Jesus)**

MATTHEW (Mat)

THOMAS (T)

MARY the mother of James (M)

*(the wife of Clopas and mother of the younger disciple James)**

SALOME (Sal)

*(Wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John. Also sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus)**

VIRGIN MARY (VM)

JAMES (Jam)

*(The younger of the 2 disciples with this name - son of Clopas and Mary)**

NARRATOR

JESUS – *non speaking part*

** For further details of these characters see page 26*

ACTS

1

John's house in old Jerusalem. *Late Good Friday evening.*

2

The home in Bethany of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. *Saturday afternoon.*

3

John's house in Jerusalem. *Easter Sunday morning.*

4

The home in Bethany again. *A little while later.*

5

John's home in Jerusalem. *Later that day - both groups reunited.*

FIT FOR A KING

by DAVID L. NUNN

Narrator's introduction

Well a very good morning/evening everybody. Now you're all very, very welcome indeed - thank you so much for coming - we really appreciate that – it's tremendous! We're going to take you back to the events of the very first Good Friday – long, long before the invention of mobile phones! So can I invite you to make sure that yours is well behaved – we don't want it to embarrass you!!

Now it was at that terrifying moment when Jesus was arrested, that the nerve of his disciples cracked completely. We're told that they all forsook him and fled. Nine of them must have run for their lives up over the Mount of Olives and back to Bethany - to the home of Mary and Martha, where they'd been staying. A terrifying moment for them all. And so that meant that the arrest party were able to take off their strangely unprotesting prisoner unhindered. But little did they know that they were being followed. Because, way back there, lurking in the shadows, came Peter and John. It was an extraordinarily brave thing to do – but they were driven on by their great love for Jesus.

Well sadly, as most of us know, a few minutes later even Peter found his courage cracking up under the strain. And he denied three times that he even knew Jesus.

So that just left John. And John had to make his sad way home to the house in Jerusalem where the mother of Jesus and his other close relatives were staying. And it was there that he was to relate to them the absolutely appalling happenings of the night.

And so the little party of Jesus' most faithful supporters found they'd been split in two. There was John, with the mother of Jesus and the other relatives in Jerusalem, and there were the nine disciples with Mary, Martha and Lazarus over the Mount of Olives in Bethany. And neither party had any idea what was happening to the others. Both groups must have been terrified that at any moment there might be a knock on the door heralding an arrest party that was after them too. That at any moment, they too might be hauled off to suffer with Jesus. So it was a terrifying moment for everyone concerned in this great drama.

Well, we'll be going over to the home in Bethany, and in Jerusalem, to see just what is going on.

Now the play is entitled 'FIT FOR A KING!' and you'll hear those words at two significant moments as the great drama unfolds. So your task, should you choose to accept it, is to be very observant and see if you can spot where they come. And also Who, What or Where are described as being FIT FOR A KING? Do you think you can do that? FIT FOR A KING.

So now I think that's quite enough by way of introduction, and we're going to go over to the house in Jerusalem, where John is still reeling over the disasters of the night.

ACT 1 – John’s house in old Jerusalem - Late Good Friday evening.

Solitary figure of John, head in hands, sunk low over a table in deepest grief. There’s a knock at the door. John registers alarm, goes cautiously to the door. Another knock. He climbs on a chair to peep out of top window. Another knock. He climbs down and opens the door.

J Peter! Wherever have you been? Do you know what’s happened?

P Yes – he’s dead.

He enters and collapses utterly distressed in a chair

J Yes – (*emphatically*) he is dead! But where were you? One minute you were warming yourself over that fire – the next you’d disappeared. I’ve looked everywhere for you.

P John, I can’t even talk about it – it was just too dreadful.

J (*sternly*) Come on Peter! I got you into that courtyard – what happened?

P Well, it was so tense – I just cracked. The girl at the door – she recognized me at once. ‘You’re one of his disciples!’ And you know what I said? ‘No way!’ I just couldn’t help it – oh God have mercy! Not that I expect he will after what’s happened.

J Go on.

P It was so cold – that’s why I joined them round the fire. I was terrified - I tried to keep in the shadows, but the firelight must have caught my face. Then someone said, ‘You’re one of them!’ (*He shudders*) Oh no! I failed him again! (*He wrings his hands*) But I just couldn’t drag myself away – not while they’d got Jesus in there. (*He takes a deep breath*)

J And then?

P And then – it seemed to go on forever, that waiting! And then yet another one, ‘You’re certainly one of ‘em – can tell it by your accent. Can’t mistake a Galilean anywhere!’ Oh no! (*He collapses sobbing*)

J Get a grip on yourself Peter!

P You don’t understand John! That’s when it happened!

J What happened?

P That was the very moment when they brought Jesus out into the courtyard. While I was cursing and swearing I’d never known him! He turned and looked straight at me – it just went through me like a sword, that look. So full of grief – and love. It was so brief, so that **HE** wouldn’t betray **ME!** **ME**, who’d just denied three times! And at that very moment... oh no! I shall never forget it!

J (Breathlessly) Well? Go on!

P And then, out of the silence of the night, that sound – it'll ring in my ears for ever!

J What sound!

P A single, solitary cockcrow.

J Well, what's so special about that?

P John, don't you remember? It's just what Jesus said, when I'd been boasting I'd never let him down – 'I'm ready to go with you to prison and death,' that what I said. Can't you remember what he said? 'Peter, before the cock crows you'll deny me three times.'

J Oh my word! He did, didn't he!

P It's all happened just as he said! And it's all MY fault. *He pauses* He always knew me better than I know myself.

J Come on Peter, it's not just you. We're ALL to blame. It's just what he said on the way to Gethsemane, 'You'll ALL fall away because of me this night.' He said it was written, 'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.'

P Well we're certainly scattered right now! We don't even know where the others are.

J Well, his mother's right here with my mother Salome. I took her away before the end. Jesus told me to care for her. But where were you? I didn't see you there. I didn't see ANY of the others there.

P Well, after the look that Jesus gave me, they took him off. And I managed to slip away unnoticed. Don't ask me where I've been - haven't a clue! In the end I seemed drawn to follow the great crowd to Golgotha. I was terrified of being recognized (*he pauses*) - and terrified of seeing Jesus face to face, after what's happened. I couldn't get near the front anyway.

J So you didn't see him at all?

P Only from the back of the crowd.

J Oh dear Peter – it was incredible! They all mocked him, the rulers, the soldiers, the criminals. The nails were tearing his body and their jeering was tearing his heart. It was awful – just to watch it was unbearable.

P You could sense that even at the back of the crowd.

J So you didn't hear what Jesus said. 'Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing.' That's what he said.

P Oh Lord, have mercy! What have I done? I DID know what I was doing!

J Listen Peter you've got to be strong! Jesus would have wanted it that way. Boy was he strong! He told us to love our enemies – and that's just what he was doing, right up to the very end.

P *(breathes out deeply – he's greatly moved)*

J Come on Peter, I haven't finished. After a while one of the criminals fell silent. I think he was taking it all in – hearing all that evil being flung at Jesus and how he just took it. Never a word of protest - no self-pity. And that sick title Pilate put on the cross to mock the religious leaders, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews'! I think this criminal could only see the 'King' part of the sign, because he came out with something really incredible.

P Go on!

J He said, 'Jesus remember me when you come as King.'

P Well he didn't have much time left to remember anything!

J No, no, no! You don't understand – I know what he meant.

P Which was?

J Well, it was as if all the evil in the world was being flung at Jesus. But it's as if he was just absorbing it – it wasn't mastering him, HE was mastering IT. Ruling over it, if you like – like a King. It couldn't break that wonderful love of his. It's as if he really was the King. That criminal saw it – I know he did!

P Ah.

J Wait! You haven't heard what Jesus said to him.

P Well?

J He said, 'Today you'll be in Paradise with me.'

P He said that!

J Yes. He was on that cross because of his claim to be the King, and there he was, as confident as ever, welcoming that man into his Kingdom!

There's a knock on the door – J&P are greatly alarmed

P They're on to us!

J Shh! I'll go and check – Not a sound!

P Be careful! *He goes to hide in the shadows*

John creeps to the door, silently climbs on chair to look out of the small, high window. He climbs down relieved.

J Phew! It's Mary!

(He opens the door – Mary Magdalene enters)

J Mary! What news now?

MM I've just come from... *She spots Peter as he sits down.* Peter! Thank God you're here! We've been terribly worried about you! Are you all right?

Peter's too distressed to speak

J Don't press him Mary! He's terribly upset.

MM Well, aren't we all?

J What's the latest? I had to get back here to care for his mother.

MM Oh John – it was incredible. After you left, we suddenly realized that they'd soon be chopping down his body and flinging it into a common grave with the criminals. It was awful. But just then that rich man, Joseph of Arimathea approached us. He must have read our thoughts because he said, 'Don't worry – you leave this to me!' And off he went. We hadn't a clue what he meant. But a little later we saw him coming back with Nicodemus – you know, that timid one, who'd visited Jesus one night because he was too scared to be seen with him in public. Well, there they were, and they went up to the centurion and had a private word. And then Joseph came over and said he'd got permission from the governor to bury Jesus in his own new tomb. Would we like to help?

J *Amazed.* You don't say!

MM Yes – there they were. Joseph had bought a large linen cloth to wrap his body and Nicodemus had a huge quantity of spices – it must have cost a fortune! I've never seen anyone more determined than those two! It was as if the death of Jesus had totally transformed them!

J Go on!

MM So they got his body down – oh it was too terrible to watch. They were absolutely covered with the blood of Jesus by the end. But it was almost as if they considered it an honour.

J An honour!

MM Yes, an honour. So off we all set. James' mother Mary was with me - and Joseph asked Joanna and Susanna to come too. He seemed to know Joanna quite well. In fact they helped him to lay out the body. Mary and I watched from outside the tomb.

J No! Not the one he's just had cut out of the rock! It must have cost a fortune!

MM Yes – a tomb 'FIT FOR A KING!' We couldn't believe it ourselves. They all had to work so fast – there was just so little time before the Sabbath started. No time to wash the body, no time to get the usual ointments. But they did it! And then Joseph's servants rolled the great stone over the entrance. Joanna and Susanna have gone back to Herod's palace. James' mother Mary came back here with me. We're going to have to stay the night, I'm afraid. There isn't time for us to get back to Bethany now.

There's a knock on the door – all are greatly alarmed. P rushes to hide off stage.

J Shh! I'll go and check – Not a sound!

J again climbs up to look through the high window. Clopas is outside.

J It's all right! It's Clopas! *He gets down and opens door.* Clopas! Come in quick!

Clopas enters, obviously full of grief and exhausted.

C Thanks, John. *He sighs deeply.* What a day, what a day! *He sits* I never thought it would come to this. I've just been trying to comfort the ladies.

MM How are they now?

C My dear wife Mary's comforting them – attempting to comfort them, I should say. But what CAN one say?

MM Listen, I've got to get back to Bethany to see how the others are. I raced all the way here just after they'd arrived. They were absolutely terrified - they must have run all the way there after Jesus was arrested. God knows if they've heard news of what's happened today. And what about my sister Martha - and Lazarus? They'll be sick with worry about us too!

J But we can't break the law about the Sabbath! We've just got to wait until it's over.

C We can set off tomorrow afternoon – we can get to the top of the Mount of Olives before the Sabbath ends – that bit's allowed. And then we can go on from there the moment the Sabbath's over. *He gets up.*

MM No! We can't wait that long!

C It's the only thing to do, I'm afraid. I'll come with you - and my Mary too. Don't forget, the younger James is our son. We're both sick with worry about him too – and for all the others.

MM Well – if you say so.

C At least it will relieve them to know that Peter and John are safe.

MM Salome will have to stay here to comfort Mary. But when the Sabbath's over she could buy the spices for us to anoint his body first thing on Sunday morning.

J All settled then! Look – we've all got to get some rest – we'll need all our strength for tomorrow. Let's say goodnight to the others. Come on!

They all exit.

CURTAIN

ACT 2 – The home in Bethany of Mary, Martha and Lazarus - Saturday afternoon.

James, Matthew, Thomas and others of the nine disciples are there, with Martha and Lazarus. Matthew is pacing to and fro.

Jam Calm down Matthew. There's nothing we can do right now.

Mat Well we can't just sit around here in Bethany doing nothing! We MUST get back to Jerusalem to find out.

Jam Well you heard what those travelers just said. The whole city knows that they've killed Jesus.

Mat No, I can't – I won't believe it. We've got to get over there in person to know for sure.

Jam Matthew, it's far too dangerous. If they really have killed him, they'll be after us too. We've got to lie low.

Mat It's unbelievable! After all we've seen him do! How could he allow it to happen?

T It's just what I said all along. I said it would all end like this when we all set out for Jerusalem. 'Let's go with him, so we can die with him.' That's what I said – and was I right!

Jam Come on Thomas, we don't know for sure. We mustn't lose hope!

T And what about Peter and John? What's happened to them? They must have been caught when they arrested Jesus. We've always kept so closely together.

Jam Calm down Thomas! Things are bad enough without you making them worse.

T If Jesus really is dead, they'll have killed them too!

Jam Thomas – please! Remember Martha and Lazarus – it's their house.

T Yes, and what about Mary? She raced off as soon as we arrived here to find out. We haven't heard a word from her. Perhaps they've got her too!

Mat Thomas – please!

T And what about his mother? You know just how careful Jesus was to keep our Passover a secret. You know what’s happened? Judas has blown our cover – they’ll have got them all by now! Including your Dad, James!

Jam If I could get my hands on Judas, I’d kill him!

As he’s speaking, Mary enters, unnoticed at first.

MM Perhaps you won’t have to, James!

They all turn to see her, astonished.

Mat Mary! Thank God you’re all right! *Clopas and Mary enter.* Clopas! Mary! What news?

MM Jesus is dead! I was there to the bitter end!

T There! What did I tell you!

Mat Thomas - please!

MM It was just too awful – I can’t begin to tell you!

Mat What about the others – are they all right?

MM All right? Well they’re still alive, if that’s what you mean.

Mat But where are they – are they all together? Is anyone missing?

MM They’re all lying low in John’s house - they daren’t be seen. Peter’s there with John – and John’s parents Zebedee and Salome. And of course Mary herself.

Jam And what about Judas? Surely he can’t be with them!

MM Ah, you won’t have to kill him, James. He’s killed himself.

ALL WHAT! No! Never! Impossible! He can’t have! *They are all stunned.*

MM Yes, yes! We just found out as we were leaving. His body’s been found, a horrible sight.

C Seems like he hung himself and in this heat his body all swelled up and burst.

Jam What an end – to think he was one of us!

T One of US! Do you remember Jesus told us one of us would betray him? He said it would be better for that man if he’d never been born. *There’s a stunned silence.*

MM Now listen! *She gets up.* We've only come to fill you in. We've got to get back first thing in the morning. There wasn't time to complete preparing the burial properly – Joseph and the others had to break off because of the Sabbath. So Mary here and I are meeting up with Salome and Joanna to complete it. Salome's buying the spices for us right now. Joanna's got some already.

T Oh dear Mary! So very kind – just like you! So you were right, after all!

MM What do you mean?

T Well, here you are preparing to anoint his body. But last time we were all here, you anointed Jesus then. He said you were preparing his body for burial. Did you realize that at the time? He certainly did.

MM Well, it was an overwhelming impulse. Jesus told us he was going to have to suffer and die – we all heard him, several times.

Mat Dear Mary! You always were so sensitive to everything he said – just like John.

Jam And now it's all happened – just as he predicted.

MM Yes – *almost to herself.* Just AS he predicted.

C Look, the ladies must get some sleep – we've got to get back first thing in the morning.

Jam Good idea! We could all certainly do with it. Come on. After you Mary. *They all go out.*

ACT 3 – John's house in Jerusalem - Easter Sunday morning

Peter and John and Jesus' mother with Zebedee and Salome await news of the disciples at Bethany. (Joanna and 'Suzanna' are the Hasmonian Palace where Herod is staying)

There's a knock at the door. John approaches it cautiously, as previously. He looks out. Peter waits anxiously.

P Who is it?

J It's all right – they're back safely!

He opens the door. Mary Magdalene, Clopas and Mary the mother of James are outside.

J Mary! Clopas! Mary! Are they all safe?

C Yes lad – and jolly thankful to hear you're safe too. But shattered, just like us.

P Thank God they're there!

Salome enters – she sees them and exclaims:

Sal Ah! You're back safely! I've been so worried. I'm all ready – I bought the spices yesterday evening.

MM Then we can get started at once!

Sal Don't you want a bite to eat first?

M No, we're fine. We've planned to meet Joanna at the tomb itself.

Sal Clopas – you stay here with the others. You must be exhausted. I'm going with them - this is women's work.

C Well - if you're sure you can manage.

MM Don't worry Clopas - we won't be too long. Keep an eye on his mother – she's not as young as we are. And she's had a dreadful night.

M Let's go then.

P&J Take care!

M Yes - we'll see you later.

Mary M, Salome and Mary, leave. Peter, John and Clopas watch them go.

P Come and have some breakfast, Clopas. You must have left so early.

C Thanks Peter, I won't say no!

John sees Mary (Jesus' mother) entering.

J Mary! Come in and join us.

VM Thanks John. *She spots Clopas.* Clopas, you're back!

C Hello Mary, love. Yes, we've just arrived. The two Mary's have gone straight on with Salome to the tomb.

VM Dear Clopas! How fortunate I am to have you with me. You've always been such a tower of strength to me – right from the very beginning. My dear Joseph was so thankful to have you as his brother. How you supported him when the news broke that I was pregnant. He felt so alone – but you were right there.

C Dear Mary – we've both been through very deep waters.

VM And now you're right here for me too. And you too, dear John. *She addresses him.* It's no wonder my dear son committed me into your care. None of the others understood him like you – he always thought the world of you.

J Dear Mary – I suppose I'll have to call you Mother now.

VM I've tossed and turned the whole night – I just don't understand. How could it come to this? And yet the signs were there, right from the start. Simeon said a sword would pierce my heart - that Jesus would be a sign to be spoken against. Well he was certainly right!

Mary's bursts in, in greatest agitation, shrieking!

MM Aaah! They've stolen his body, they've stolen his body!

P Mary! Mary! What on earth's the matter?

MM They've taken his body! They've taken his body! The tomb's empty!

J What DO you mean?

MM His body's gone – the tomb's empty!

P No way!

MM He's gone – his body has gone! The tomb is empty! *Very crossly.* Maybe you'd better go see for yourself!

P We will! Come on, John! Quick! *He and John rush out.*

C Mary! Get a grip on yourself! What's going on?

MM The stone's been rolled away. Rolled away, I tell you! We could see from the entrance the tomb was empty. The others were just going inside to see. I've dashed here to tell you.

VM *weakly* I don't think I can take any more!

C Come my dear - I'm sure the boys can work it out. There must be a perfectly simple explanation. Mary, you must try to keep calm – for Mary's sake.

MM I'm going back to see. *She dashes out.*

C Mary – you just stay there. I'm going to make a nice pot of tea!

VM Dear Clopas! Always such a tower of strength in a crisis!

C *To himself* If only she knew! Goodness knows what'll be next! Anything may happen and probably will!

Salome, Mary (mother of James) dash in – probably enter from behind the audience.

Sal Clopas, Mary! Where are the others! We've seen angels – they say he's alive!

VM Alive!

S&M Yes, Alive!

VM Angels?

Sal Yes! They said 'Why are you looking for the living in the place of the dead?'

M The light was dazzling – we were terrified!

Sal They said, 'It's what he told you; that he'd be crucified by sinful men and be raised up on the third day!'

C My dear ladies! You really must calm yourselves. We've all been under a terrible strain.

M They said we were to tell you all – and Peter!

Peter and John rush in

P He's not there!

J The tomb's empty!

Sal Did you see them?

P See who?

M The angels.

J Angels? No angels!

Sal But WE did! They said that Jesus has risen!

M They were right there in the tomb with us!

J Well we saw no angels! The graveclothes, yes - but no body.

M They said we were to tell you all – they mentioned you especially, Peter!

P Me!

J Peter, we must get over to Bethany to tell them something's afoot. We need them here right now.

P I'm right with you.

MM bursts in, shrieking!

MM I've seen the Lord! I have seen the Lord!

C Oh no! Now what did I tell you!

MM I've seen the Lord, I tell you! Right there, outside the tomb!

P Outside? You mean he's alive!

MM Well of course he's alive! - I thought he was the gardener!

J The gardener!

C Oh, I need that cup of tea!

MM Yes. I couldn't see clearly at first - I was so upset. I said, 'If you've taken him away, tell me where you've put him.'

P Well?

MM It's then that I knew! He only said one word, but that's when I knew!

J Go on – go on!

MM He just called my name, 'Mary!' Oh, that voice! So full of love – just as it always has been.

They all cluster closer around her.

MM And then he told me to go and tell you that he's ascending to his Father and your Father, to his God and your God.

P Oh, this is all beyond belief!

MM No, no, no! It's true, I tell you. I've seen the Lord!

Sal Listen – John's quite right! We've got to tell the others – we MUST get them back here at once!

M I'll come with you! Peter, John – it's best you wait here with the others. Who knows what'll happen next!

Sal Clopas, you do believe us now, don't you?

C My dear, Peter's quite right! It's all beyond me too.

Salome and Mary depart.

ACT 4 – The home in Bethany again - A little while later.

Mat This waiting's driving me mad! We can't stay here in Bethany cooped up like this.

Jam We've got to get back to the others.

Mat It's dangerous – but I agree.

T Might as well, I suppose. It's just what I said when we set out for Jerusalem, 'Let's go with him so we can die with him.'

Mat Dear Thomas – always so cheerful and optimistic!

There's a commotion outside – Mary and Salome rush in, shouting together.

Sal We've seen the Lord!

M We've seen the Lord!

Sal We've see the Lord!

Jam Salome! Whatever's the matter!

Sal We've seen Jesus!

Mat You've done WHAT?

M We've seen him! He met us as we were coming here!

Mat *Incredulously* You mean he's ALIVE!

T No way!

Sal It's true! It's true, we tell you!

M We were coming here to tell you that Mary had seen him outside the tomb. SPOKEN to him. And now he's met US!

There's a stunned silence!

Jam Are you sure you're feeling all right, Mother?

M All right! Of COURSE I'm all right!

Sal He told us to tell you – YOU'RE going to meet him too!

Jam Oh God have mercy! After the way we've all failed him!

M He told us not to be afraid! He was as loving as ever!

Sal You must all come back with us at once – the others are all waiting.

Mat Looks like you get your wish James!

Jam Are we all agreed then? We'll get to the bottom of this, if it's the last thing we do! Come on - let's put our lives into the hands of God! *He beckons Mary.* After you, Mother! *They all go out.*

ACT 5 – John's home in Jerusalem, later that day - Both groups reunited.

Everyone present, except Clopas, Peter and Thomas.

MM Whoever thought we'd live to see this day!

Mat To think that you ladies have seen him. Well, we men haven't!

VM Tell us again Mary – what exactly happened outside the tomb?

MM Well, I must have got back there just after John and Peter left. And that's when I saw them – these two figures sitting there – they were dazzlingly bright, they MUST have been angels. It's almost as if they were waiting for me!

M There! We told you we saw angels!

J Well Peter and I didn't!

Mat Go ON, Mary!

MM So I told them, 'They've taken the Lord away and I don't know where they've put him.' And at that moment I turned around and I saw HIM!

J You mean, Jesus?

MM Yes, yes! But I was far too confused to realize who he was.

Mat Did he say anything?

MM Yes – he asked me why I was crying. He wanted to know who I was looking for.

Sal So?

MM So I told him, 'If you've carried him away, tell me where you've put him and I'll get him.' I thought he was the gardener.

J And then?

MM And then... Oh, I shall never forget it! He called my name... 'Mary!' It was his voice! Just as full of love as it always has been. There was absolutely no mistaking it. I just cried out, 'My dearest teacher' – I don't think anyone could have hugged him more than I did at that moment!

Mat And what did he say to that?

MM He said, 'You mustn't cling to me – I haven't yet returned to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I'm returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' And so that's what I did!

Mat Astounding! Beyond belief!

MM Yes, but you DO believe me now, don't you Matthew? After all, Mary and Salome have seen him too.

Jam Yes, tell us about that, Mother.

M Well it was just after we left them all here to fetch you from Bethany. We'd just heard Mary's astounding news. We'd just reached the Mount of Olives when we saw this figure approaching. And before we were close enough to recognize him, we heard that wonderful voice, 'Greetings!' There was no mistaking it – or him! It was Jesus – no two ways about it!

J Praise God!

Sal Well, that's just what we did! We fell at his feet and worshipped him. But we were terribly afraid – you could feel the power of heaven all around!

Mat Go on!

Sal Well, he knew exactly how we felt – that's why he said, 'Don't be afraid.' And you know, as soon as he spoke those words, we weren't any more. All our fear just vanished.

J That's just what Jesus said to us when we witnessed his transfiguration! We were terribly afraid then too.

M And he told us to go and tell you that he's going before you to Galilee and that you'll see him there.

Mat It's a great pity that Peter isn't here to hear all this. Where did you say he was going?

J I think he just wanted to be left alone. You know just how desperately upset he's been. He considers it's all his fault.

Mat The poor boy!

J Actually, I think it's best that he hasn't heard all this. He doesn't think that after all that's happened Jesus would ever have any time left for him. No chance for HIM seeing Jesus - and after all, none of us men have anyway!

There's a knock at the door – they again exhibit fear.

J Not a sound! I'll go and check.

He climbs up to see, as previously.

J It's Peter! *He climbs down and opens the door.*

All Peter!

J Peter, come in, quick! *He shuts the door behind him. Peter is very silent!*

Jam What's up, Peter? You look as if you've seen a ghost!

P *In a quiet voice* A ghost? No. I've seen - I've seen Jesus. *All astounded.*

Jam You've done WHAT!

J You've seen the Lord, Peter? Is that what you're saying?

P Don't press me, folks. But yes, that's it.

J Can you tell us about it, Peter. The ladies have just been telling us of their experiences today.

P No, I can't – I really can't! Look, please excuse me – I just want to be alone!

He goes out – there's a stunned silence.

Mat Well, well, well! And after all you were saying, John! Looks as if you ladies were right all along!

There's another knock at the door – they all again exhibit fear.

J Not a sound! I'll go and check.

He climbs up to see, as previously.

J It's Clopas! *He climbs down.*

M Clopas! He's meant to be in Emmaus!

John opens the door

J Clopas! Astounding news! The Lord has risen and he's appeared to Peter!

M My dear, whatever's happened? You're out of breath!

C We've seen him – we've walked with him – we've talked with him – we've even eaten with him!

Mat Who on earth are you talking about, man? Pull yourself together! You look just about done in.

C Well so would you be if you'd just run all the way from Emmaus! It's Jesus of course! It's Jesus! He's alive!

ALL Jesus! You've seen Jesus! Where!

M Calm down, darling! Take your time! Here, come and sit down.

Someone gets him a chair and he sits at the table

C Thank you – thank you!

Others bring a drink and some food.

J Here, have a drink – you must be shattered!

He drinks deeply from the cup.

M There, dear! Is that better?

C Thanks, everyone. What a day – what a day!

J Tell us exactly what's happened, Clopas. Mary says she's seen Jesus, the other ladies say they have – Peter says he has - and now you say YOU have!

C Yes. Well, as you know I set off home this morning and Luke came with me. We hadn't gone very far before this stranger joined us - he asked what we were talking about. It was incredible! He didn't seem to have a clue about what's been happening. We were staggered! 'Haven't you heard?' we said. 'Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn't know what's been happening this weekend?' And do you know what he said? 'What things? Go on, you tell me.'

J Just a minute Clopas. Where had he come from? Did he say?

C No, not a word. I think we were so surprised we never thought of asking. Too busy filling him in with everything, I suppose. 'Haven't you heard about Jesus?' we said. He was a great prophet – my word, did he have God's power on him! You should have heard the things he said – seen the things he did! And you know what happened less than a week ago? Our chief priests and rulers had him arrested, and condemned to death – and they crucified him last Friday. Just three days ago! And you know what? We'd so hoped that he was God's Promised One - the One we Jews have been waiting for, for centuries.

J Hadn't he heard anything about all this?

C No, no, no.

ALL *Astounded reaction:* Incredible – that's amazing – he must have heard!

C Now where was I? Where was I? Ah yes! We told him about this morning, and how some of you ladies had gone to the tomb and couldn't find his body – and how you'd come back saying you'd seen a vision of angels who said he was alive.

Sal We certainly did – that’s for sure!

C And John, we even told him how you and Peter had raced to the tomb, and found it empty, like the ladies had said. ‘The body had gone,’ we told him - but they didn’t see any angels!’

Mat He must have been staggered!

C Ah! You just wait! I haven’t finished! You see, up till then it was we who’d done most of the talking. But now! My! Do you know what he called us? ‘Fools!’ ‘You’re so foolish’, he said. ‘You’re so slow to believe all that the prophets predicted about the Messiah.’ ‘So Jesus couldn’t be the Messiah because of all these things that happened to him, eh? Those are the reasons why you can’t believe? Well let me tell you, Those are the very reasons why you should! Don’t you realize that everything you’ve just been telling me about has been clearly predicted in the Scriptures? Don’t you realize that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer these very things and enter into his glory?’

J Amazing! I’d never looked at it like that!

C And neither had we!

Mat Go on, Clopas. What next? What did he say?

C My word, Mat, what didn’t he say! He started right there back in the time of Moses and worked up all through the psalms and prophets, all the classic quotations – right up to the present day. Had it all at his finger tips! Marvellous! We just gaped at him. I mean, in a way it was old stuff to us. We Jews have it pumped into us from the day we start school – the story of the Messiah. We’ve all been brought up on it! Heard it hundreds of times. But not the way this man put it over! All those bits and pieces of prophecy – the difficult bits the priests spend half their lives discussing – he just fitted them together like – well, like one of those jigsaw puzzles. Made the whole thing suddenly clear and sort of – well, inevitable. Especially the resurrection.

MM The resurrection!

C Yes! It’s the climax of the whole story. The final miraculous piece that makes sense of all the rest! The Messiah comes, but nobody recognizes him. That’s what he said! Nobody wants him. He’s not the least like what anybody expected him to be. Instead of crowning him king, we execute him. We don’t know who he is so we get rid of him. But Messiah is the conqueror of death. And on the third day he comes back to establish his kingdom.

J The third day! That’s exactly what Jesus kept telling us! ‘On the third day I will rise!’ My! What fools we’ve all been!

Mat And we all thought that his words couldn’t possibly come true now.

- C Exactly. But you defeat your enemy, not by running away, but by standing up to all that he can throw at you, and emerging triumphant on the other side!
- Mat But our leaders believe that the Messiah cannot die. He's the conqueror of death, they say. What would he have to say about that?
- C Unless he meets death face to face, how can he conquer it? That's it, Mat! But wait! I haven't finished! You listen to this.
- MM But you haven't told us yet how you've seen Jesus, Clopas. We'd almost forgotten about that!
- C Ah, wait! I'm coming to it! You see, by now we were approaching Emmaus and - disaster! He looked as if he was going further! Well, we'd just got to hear the end of his story. It was as though his words were setting our very hearts on fire! 'Come on in!' we urged him. 'Come and have a meal with us – it's getting late.'
- J And did he?
- C Yes, he did! Only something rather unusual happened. We sat down with our guest, but he sort of took the role of our host. He took the bread, blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to us, and – in that instant, we got it!
- J Got what!
- C We recognized him at last! He was no stranger – he was Jesus! Jesus IS the Messiah!
- ALL *Great exclamation.* Jesus!
- C Yes, Jesus! He was dead and is alive again! *Fervently:* Blessed be his holy name!
- ALL *Even more astounded!* Jesus!
- C Yes, Jesus!
- MM Jesus! You mean he'd been with you all the time and you didn't know it?
- C Yes – that's it! Don't ask me how we could have been so blind! It was as he was explaining the Scriptures that it all gradually clicked into place. Bit by bit. Everything the prophets predicted about the Messiah fitted him EXACTLY. A 'Fit for a King' you might say!
- J So just what happened at the meal? You all sat down together?
- C Yes – and he took the bread, and blessed it, and gave it to us – that was the moment! The final piece of the puzzle. We've shared so many meals with him in the past and suddenly, here we were doing so again! Incredible – but True!
- J Well, go on! What happened then?

C Oh, he – he disappeared. *He says it in a matter of fact way.*

MM Disappeared!

C Yes, disappeared - vanished. One moment he was there, offering us the bread. The next, he was gone.

Mat Just a minute, Clopas. Are you sure you know what you're saying? Vanished! People don't just vanish!

C Not ordinary people, Mat – not people like you and me! But this is the Lord, Mat! He's passed through death itself – he's not tied down in time and space like us! Way out there, on the other side of death, he's the King in the Glory of his Kingdom! Why, you can't expect him to be just ordinary, can you!

Mat Well, no.

C I mean, it stands to reason. He wouldn't be God if he was like us now, would he?

Mat I suppose not.

J I think I'm beginning to get it! At the tomb this morning – the graveclothes! They were totally undisturbed! Just as if his body must have passed right through them!

C That's it, John! That's it!

NARRATOR

As they were saying this...

The audience should be focusing on his surprise intervention, enabling 'Jesus' to slip on stage unnoticed. A bright light should suddenly illuminate 'Jesus' on the words 'Jesus himself stood among them'. From then on, the cast act out the narrator's script.

....Jesus himself stood among them. But they were startled and terrified, thinking they were seeing a ghost. And he said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones, as you see I have.'

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

And he said, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.'

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, 'This is what is written: The Christ must 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. You are witnesses of these things. And I am going to send the promise of my Father to you; but stay in the city until you've been clothed with power from on high.' *Jesus departs.*

NARRATOR:

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

Thomas enters

J Thomas, Thomas! We've seen the Lord!

C He's been right here with us.

MM How could you have gone missing!

Mat We've ALL seen him, Thomas!

P Even I have!

Thomas looks at them all, amazed!

T My dear friends! My dear friends! Whatever's got into you?

J What DO you mean? Got into us! We've all seen the Lord, Thomas! The Lord! He's been right here with us! You've only missed him by minutes!

T Oh my goodness! *To himself, or to audience* They've all cracked under the strain. I might have guessed. I shall have to humour them.

Mat Clopas has spent the afternoon with him!

T So you've all seen the Lord have you?

ALL Yes, yes!

T Right here in this room!

ALL Yes!

Sal He's even eaten some of this fish!

MM He's only just gone!

T Just gone, eh?

MM Yes!

T Well let me tell you. Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will NOT believe it.

Cast freeze

NARRATOR:

A week later, the disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but Jesus came and stood among them, (*Jesus appears*) and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand and place it in my side; stop doubting and believe.'

T My Lord! *Long pause as he considers.* And... *Pause* ...and my God!

Thomas kneels at his feet – arms outstretched in astonishment and praise. Cast and Thomas remain frozen.

NARRATOR:

Jesus told him, 'You have believed because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

Now Jesus did many other things in the presence of his disciples, which we've not told you about; but we've told you these that YOU may believe that Jesus IS the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing YOU may have life in his name.

Narrator freezes with cast – long pause. Cast take Narrator's lead to relax.

APPLAUSE

Epilogue – Narrator

Well thank you very much everybody – it's great to have you here. Now, I wonder if you spotted that title, 'Fit for a King!?' Who is going to tell me what two things were 'Fit for a King'? Any ideas? Yes, over there! ANSWER

Yes, the tomb was one of them – it was a tomb 'Fit for a King'.

And one more? This is a tricky one! ANSWER

Yes, it was the prophecies about the Messiah having to suffer, die and rise from the dead. Those prophecies about the Messiah fitted Jesus exactly – a 'Fit for a King' you might say.

And the third one? Who's got the third one? Not even the cast have got the third one, because I haven't told them what it is – because it wasn't in the play. It wasn't in the play. So what's the third one? Well, if what we've told you is true, which we believe it is, then what sort of lives should we be living – this is what Peter said actually – what sort of lives should we be living out of gratitude to God for his great love for us? What sort of lives? Surely our lives should be, not Fit for A King, but Fit for THE King! There we are!

Well, wonderful to have you all here, everybody. There are refreshments in the hall next door- please stay, the cast will love to chat to you. And God bless you all this Eastertime! And a very, very blessed Easter to you all. I think the cast deserve another round of applause.

FIT FOR A KING

Notes on the characters

Details of the characters and of their relationships to one another, as detailed in the cast list on page 2, are drawn from the writings of Eusebius, the great historian of the early church, and of Hegesippus, a second century Jewish church historian.

'James the younger' is mentioned in all the four lists of the apostles as 'of Alphaeus'. He was known as 'James the younger' to distinguish him from the other James, the brother of John (the 'sons of Zebedee.')

Are Clopas and Alphaeus two versions of the same name? They could well be two versions of the Aramaic name usually transliterated Chalphai. From there, there's no great difficulty in equating James the son of Clopas with James the son of Alphaeus, i.e: James the younger. The various details make this a firm probability.

From there, Clopas be equated with Cleopas. Cleopas is the nearest genuine Greek name to Clopas, and it seems likely that Luke is referring to this same person when narrating the Emmaus story. If so, it throws a flood of light on these two otherwise obscure figures. It would mean that the first man to see the risen Lord was the husband of the woman who stood by the cross, watched the burial, went early to the tomb, and who had seen the risen Lord herself. What's more, she and Clopas would be parents of one of the apostles, and would have been at the heart of the company who followed Jesus. This makes it far less surprising that Clopas should have seen the risen Lord before any of the apostles.

Eusebius adds the intriguing information that Clopas was the brother of Joseph, the husband of the Virgin Mary. So Clopas would have been Mary's brother-in-law.

The play presumes that Mary Magdalene and 'Mary of Bethany' are the same person. They never appear together on the pages of the Bible. It's hard to believe that the Mary, who a week before had been told that her beautiful deed would be remembered throughout the world, played no part in the resurrection story, but that the privilege of seeing the risen Lord was given to another, almost unknown, Mary. It's possible that there were two greatly privileged women, but the supposition seems unnecessary. The impulsive, emotional, devoted, discerning, privileged woman of the earlier stories reappears in the vivid characterization of the resurrection stories. She's mentioned first, dashes off to Peter and John, lingers in the house, returns to the tomb, stands there weeping. She sees angels, senses a presence, and hears Jesus utter her name. She cries 'Rabboni' and clings to him. Why invent another Mary, when Mary of Bethany is so perfectly portrayed? The one who loves much, whose action was to be remembered wherever the gospel is preached throughout the whole world, was surely also the one who first saw the Lord.

I am indebted to Frank Morison, John Wenham and Stuart Jackman for the inspiration I have derived from their books on these events. My film, 'THE HOLY CITY...and a Garden' is the official film of 'The Garden Tomb Association' in Jerusalem. See www.blueskiesvideo.co.uk

DAVID NUNN – April 2017