

Anno Domini

(In The Year of Our Lord)

THE ORIGINAL STAGEPLAY



Cleveland O. McLeish

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Characters

Voice (Male)
Mary – Mother of Jesus (Female)
Mary Magdalene (Female)
John (Male)
Young Woman (Female)
Peter (Male)
Matthew (Male)
Scribe (Male)
Pharisee (Male)
Young Man (Male)
Thomas (Male)
David (Male)
Jesus (Male)

Setting

A big, blank stage is needed, with spotlight coming up on different areas, suggesting different locations and timeline. Each area will require its own props and additional items to compliment the scene.

The Story

This play examines the death and resurrection of Jesus from the perspective of the frightened, disappointed, doubting and fearful Disciples who had deserted Jesus during the trial and execution, and also from the perspective of the Scribe and Pharisee, who are trying to come to grips with their decision to have Jesus killed.

There is one particular Scripture that I especially wanted to highlight that I have never heard anyone talk about, and I have not seen it in any of the movies that were produced about this historical event.

The tombs broke open, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After Jesus' resurrection, when they had come out of the tombs, they entered the holy city and appeared to many people. (Matthew 27:52-53).

The play ends with a now resurrected Jesus reminding His disciples about the importance of partaking in the communion.

Play Details

Length: 20-40 Minutes

Cast: 3 Females | 10 Males | Extras (non-speaking)

Audience: Teens & Adults

Genre: Biblical Drama

The Script



SCENE 1

LIGHT UP

Setting: Empty stage, expandable spotlight.

There is a line of people, standing DS (Down Stage): some are mourning, some throwing insults; others are grouped together, apparently having a silent discussion on what is taking place.

A MAN, broken, wounded and bleeding is slowly led across the stage by two soldiers carrying whips. Occasionally, they whip the MAN to try and get him to move a little quickly, but He is very weak, and faint, and falls under the weight of the cross at times. This MAN is JESUS.

VOICE: My servant will act wisely; He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him - his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness.

Jesus falls to his knees under the weight of the cross. The soldiers immediately start whipping him, He squirms in pain. With a strong will and determination, he manages to pull himself back to his feet.

VOICE: So will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

A Pharisee and a Scribe appears behind the soldiers, engaged in a silent but satisfying conversation.

VOICE: Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

The crowd is closing the path behind the Soldiers. The Soldiers struggle to keep the crowd at bay, as they throw silent insults and jeers at the Man carrying the cross.

Pharisee and Scribe step aside, to allow room for the crowd.

VOICE: He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Jesus again falls under the weight of the cross but this time he is unable to get back up. The soldiers beat him until they are satisfied he can go no further. They pull a man from the crowd and force him to carry the cross. His name is Simon.

VOICE: Surely, he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted.

Tears flow from Jesus' eyes as the pain seeps through his mortal body.

VOICE: He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him. And by his wounds we are healed.

MARY, mother of Jesus, MARY MAGDALENE, and JOHN, watches as the cross, Jesus, crowd and Soldiers exit the stage.

MARY: My son.

VOICE: We all like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

LIGHT OUT

SCENE 2

LIGHTS UP

A wood fire burns at center stage. PETER sits by the fire, trying to get warm, while momentarily glancing offstage.

A YOUNG WOMAN sees him, and walks over, pointing at him.

WOMAN: I know you. I have seen you in his company. You are one of Jesus' disciples.

PETER: I don't know what you are talking about.

VOICE: He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

The Young Woman can't keep her eyes off Peter.

WOMAN: You are one of His. I know you are. Sometimes you were with the twelve, and other times with the three.

PETER: Will you leave me alone, woman. I told you, I am not who you say I am.

VOICE: By oppression and judgement he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

WOMAN: You are lying. I know you are. You are a disciple of Jesus. (*calling offstage*) Hey, everybody, get over here. This man is one of them.

PETER: (*firmly*) Woman, I said I don't know the man.

The roster begins to crow. Peter hears...and remembers. He buries his hand in his face, exits quickly. The WOMAN and a few others follow after him.

VOICE: With His arms stretched out on a cross, He absorbed the sins of the whole world. It was God's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

Matthew enters, inching closer to the other side of the stage, glancing around nervously, mindful of his environment.

VOICE: Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

JOHN: (*O.S.*) Matthew.

John and Mary, mother of Jesus, emerges from a dark corner of the stage.

MATTHEW: How could this happen?

MARY: He said it would.

MATTHEW: That he would die, murdered like a common animal...like a thief. This is no death for a King.

JOHN: His kingdom is not of this world, Matthew.

MATTHEW: (*gestures offstage*) Look at Him. Our teacher, our master. We left everything to follow Him, and now He does nothing to save Himself from such cruelty.

MARY: His path was chosen for Him, as are ours.

MATTHEW: I am confused.

JOHN: Where are the others?

MATTHEW: Hiding. Running. Like common criminals. We were not expecting this.

There is a SOUND OF THUNDER and CRACK OF LIGHTNING.

JOHN: It's getting dark.

MATTHEW: It's only the fourth watch of the day.

JOHN: We need to go.

MARY: I will not leave my son.

MATTHEW: He is dead, Mary. There is nothing more we can do.

They make their way to the exit.

VOICE: For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. He gave His life a ransom for the world. Time before Christ will be no more. Now begins the year of our Lord -- Anno Domini.

LIGHTS FADE