COME MESSIAH KING

DRAMA COMPANION
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Four stand alone vignettes.

Scene 1: 1m 1w - Zechariah and Elizabeth's neighbors:
What do they think of Zechariah returning to the village mute after completing his priestly duties in Jerusalem?

Scene 2: 2m 1w - Joseph's neighbors:
What is the commotion they hear at Mary's parents' home? There are rumors that Mary, Joseph's betrothed, is pregnant.

Scene 3: 2m - The shepherds:
Listen to their conversation around the campfire after that hectic night when they rushed to the stable after the angel announcement.

Scene 4: 1m 1w - Archelaos, from the court of Herod, is worried about his niece, Susanna. She is new to the court. He fears she will suffer the recriminations of the angry king after the Magi left town without stopping to inform him of the whereabouts of the new baby King.
SCENE 1

Scene starts after Yahweh, Hear our Pleas and before Psalm 24 Underscore (between pages 19 and 20)

Benaiah: Elderly villager, neighbor to Zechariah and Elizabeth. Devout, stubborn.
Leah: Benaiah’s wife. Outspoken and just a little gossipy.

Benaiah (pronounced ben-aw-yaw’) and Leah live in the same village as Zechariah and Elizabeth. When Zechariah returns home mute from his priestly duties at the temple, Benaiah and Leah, like everyone else in the village, wonder what happened that day. Speculation is running rampant and Benaiah is anxious to see an end to the gossip. It’s morning and they’re eating breakfast. It has been more than a month since Zechariah returned home from the temple and they wonder at his continued silence and Elizabeth’s seclusion.

They are humble people of little means. There are bowls of barley cakes, goat cheese and boiled eggs on a low table. They sit eating on mats. There are jars (for retrieving water) of pottery in one corner, sleeping mats and blankets in another.

Leah: Perhaps he is ill after all. It’s been weeks and still Zechariah remains silent. And—(knowingly) I’ve not seen Elizabeth out at all. She hasn’t even been to the well for water. She must be sending Hannah to fetch it. (a beat) Well, who could blame her for wanting a little privacy. After what happened? Still, I wonder at the real reason Zechariah remains mute. An angel appearing in the Holy of Holies? Should we be surprised that people have ideas of their own about that?

Benaiah: (speaking slowly, deliberately) People should remember of whom it is they speak. We’ve known Zechariah and Elizabeth all their lives. Have either of them ever done anything that should make us doubt them?

Leah: No, never before. But perhaps, just perhaps there was a....oh, how should we say it? A moment when disappointment overcame? It can do strange things to people—disappointment, I mean. Elizabeth and Zechariah have no heir and as a Priest to receive the honor of offering the incense—at his age? Well... (shaking her head) perhaps there was a moment, when he was alone and he knew that he would never offer the incense again, never have an heir, perhaps those thoughts converged (tapping her temple) and he wanted to remedy those circumstances. Could you then blame him for making up a story about an angel?

Benaiah: (impatient) Bah! Too much talk at the well, woman! Ancient promises have a sudden way about them. We wait and wait—(holding up a finger) and then Yahweh acts! Zechariah may be old, but his mind is still sharp and he’s as strong as an ox! You think he’s ill? Have you noticed the light in his eyes? Why should we doubt his story? (shaking his finger) No! People should quiet their wagging tongues! We will yet see what Yahweh will do.
Leah: *(doubtful)* I don't know, perhaps, but whatever the real circumstances, I do wish he would get back his voice. Our Sabbath is a poor gathering without Zechariah to read the scrolls.

Benaiah: Yes, I miss his teaching already. If it continues I may send to Sepphoris to see if a rabbi might travel here for a time. No good can come if our people go long without hearing the law.

Leah: Well, you may as well send for him since you believe Zechariah's word. It seems that he is to remain mute until there is a baby. *(raising an eyebrow)* He may never speak again!

Benaiah: Careful old woman, or you may join Zechariah and I will have my respite from the town's gossip.

Leah: *(ignoring the insult)* Be reasonable, Benaiah. Can you really believe such an outrageous thing? Hannah says that Zechariah clearly indicated to Elizabeth that she would bear a child! Elizabeth is no Sarah. Our father Abraham held his promise a long time. Do you think that all of the sudden the Creator just decided to use an old priest and his wife to bear the forerunner to the Messiah? I think not. Elizabeth is long past her time!

Benaiah: *(stubbornly)* As was Sarah! Yahweh will do what Yahweh will do! And neither you nor I will have a say in it.

Leah: *(throwing up in hands in exasperation)* Ach! You're an old, stubborn man!

Benaiah: *(voice rising with emotion)* Maybe so—but I'm an old, stubborn man who expects a gift wrapped in an unexpected package! And I wager that I'll find more joy than those naysayers at the well. No, I won't count old Zechariah and Elizabeth out! Not yet!

Leah: Well, don't hold to your dreams too tightly, old man. They're like pottery, they may just crack!

Benaiah: *(waves his hand dismissively)* If it cracks, it cracks, woman! I say blessed be Zechariah and Elizabeth! Blessed be the God of Israel, who keeps his promises. When have we needed the Messiah more than we do now? Hmm? Perhaps a bit of cracked pottery might be just what we all need!

*He resumes his breakfast as lights fade*
SCENE 2

*Scene starts after Ding Dong Merrily on High and before Joseph Good, Joseph True*

*(between pages 53 and 54)*

Eli: A villager from Nazareth, neighbor to Anna and Joachim, Mary’s parents
Adah: Eli’s wife
Jacob: Also from Nazareth, neighbor to Eli and Adah

*We shift our drama to Nazareth where Eli, Jacob and Adah discuss last night’s events at the home of Joachim and Anna, Mary’s parents. After Joseph discovered Mary’s pregnancy, he went to their home to discuss the circumstances. Their raised voices came to the attention of several neighbors.*

*When the scene opens at Eli and Adah’s home they are in mid-discussion. Jacob has stopped by on his way to town. They are just finishing their morning meal and Adah has begun to clear away the dishes while they discuss last night’s events.*

Eli:  It was a terrible roar, I’m telling you! An animal in pain sounds better. Do you mean to tell me you slept through it?

Jacob: You know how I sleep and still you ask me that?

Eli:  True. The captain of King Herod’s armies and all his soldiers could come thundering through your home and you wouldn’t rouse. You need a wife. You miss everything.

Jacob: *(shrugging nonchalantly)* Why should I have a wife? I have you. I miss nothing.

Eli:  True again. I’m just annoyed that you missed hearing that last night! But never mind, I’ll tell you!

Jacob: So, what was the cause of this terrible roar?

Adah: Joseph! And Joachim and Anna!

Jacob: Really? Some issue between them? Surely not.

Eli: Oh yes, no mistake! Joseph must have gone straight away to Joachim’s after Mary’s return.

Jacob: Mary’s back?
Adah: Yes, last evening. *(annoyed again)* Did you not see the caravan coming through? *(Jacob shrugs again)* You missed that too? You know, I thought it strange that Joachim allowed Mary to leave so abruptly before harvest. Not even a word to her closest friends. And now, it becomes clearer.

Jacob: What is it, Adah? What’s going on?

Eli: It’s Mary. She is *(a beat)* with child.

Jacob: What! No! That can’t be!

Adah: I would say the same thing had I not seen it for myself.

Eli: It’s the sad truth, my friend.

Jacob: But...she has been gone for months! She was visiting her cousin!

Adah: Now we know that it was more than a simple visit.

Eli: Poor Joseph.

Jacob: Poor Joseph? *(shaking his head regretfully)* No, he is the cause of this and to the everlasting shame of poor Anna and Joachim!

Eli: How can you say that? We know Joseph! He would not bring such shame on the good name of his family.

Adah: And Mary would? No! There must be another answer!

Jacob: Would you care to guess what that might be?

Adah: Perhaps the trip—someone unknown. Someone—someone who... *(Her voice trails off. She is at a loss.)* I don’t know. I just don’t know.

Jacob: But Joseph went to Joachim’s last night? Could you hear the conversation?

Eli: Pieces of it. Enough to make out that it seems Joseph wants to end the matter quietly.

Jacob: That sounds like Joseph. But there are legal matters; they’ll need to be addressed. And Mary? What does she say?
Adah: I spoke to a cousin. She made me promise to stay quiet but now that Mary is back, I think there are no secrets left. Word is that Mary asked to go to her cousins because she says an angel told her that her cousin was with child.

Jacob: You mean Elizabeth? No! I know her! She cannot bear a child. She is long past her time. Something’s amiss here.

Adah: That isn't all. Mary is saying that she has been with no man—not Joseph, not anyone. She is saying—that the same angel told her that she is to bear the Messiah! That the baby is conceived—of Yahweh.

Jacob: *(Shock)* What? Has Mary taken leave of her senses?

Adah: Mary is scared! And who can blame her?

Eli: Do you defend her?

Adah: I don't know what I'm doing Eli, but I've known Mary all her life. She's good and truthful. Something has happened that I don't understand. Has anyone confirmed whether Elizabeth is actually with child? It seems like a good place to start.

Jacob: Confirm it if you like, Adah. It won't change anything. We've not heard the last of this. The last word will come from Joseph. If Yahweh has had a hand in this, let him save Mary. For she may yet have the whole of Nazareth turn their back on her or worse.

Adah: *(Distressed)* May Yahweh have mercy on Mary.

Eli: Yes, may Yahweh have mercy...for not many will.

*Lights out*
Mesha: An older shepherd  
Cyrus: A young shepherd

It is a cold night—the night after the Shepherds return from the stable. Mesha is hunched over their campfire. He has a blanket wrapped tightly around him.

The mats they use for beds are spread out near the fire. Cyrus sits close. He has a large bag from which he pulls bread and cheese. He tears the bread and offers a portion to Mesha. They ponder the events of the previous night.

Mesha: Do you think anyone else saw them? Was it really just us?

Cyrus: The angels?

Mesha: *(Disbelief)* Of course, the angels! Surely we weren’t the only ones. How could such an announcement be just for us!

Cyrus: *(Shaking his head in wonder)* I don’t know. You saw the faces of everyone we met! Stunned!

Mesha: The Messiah, in David’s town! He has not forsaken us!

Cyrus: All the years of torment...

Mesha: *(Nodding)* Pangs of the Messiah!

Cyrus: It’s over Mesha! Think of it!

Mesha: Yes, all the Jews that have been slaughtered at the hands of the pagan Romans, so many crucified...

Cyrus: Could Yahweh truly be ready to end our suffering?

Mesha: *(getting more and more excited)* You heard them Cyrus! Good news! How long has it been since we heard good news? *(clapping Cyrus on the back)* Oh, by heavens, we were nearly blinded, weren’t we? Rome and their gods! Now, they will see. Yahweh, He is God; there is no other! Were the angels wrong, Cyrus? *(Not waiting for an answer)* No! There he was. Just as they said!
Cyrus: Mesha?

Mesha: What?

Cyrus: Did it seem... *(voice trails off)*

Mesha: What?

Cyrus: Well, did it seem strange to you to find Him there— in a stable, I mean? The Messiah?

Mesha: Well, maybe. It did all seem pretty ordinary but who are we to question the ways of Yahweh?

Cyrus: You're right. And there was nothing ordinary about those angels! *(Falling silent as he prods the fire)* Mesha?

Mesha: What?

Cyrus: The Torah tells of the waiting for another baby. Remember? Abraham and Sarah?

Mesha: Of course, I remember. Another of his promises fulfilled... but a long time in coming. I'm telling you, Cyrus, Yahweh's ways are not like ours. He gives and he takes away. Today, Yahweh gives. I think I'll just be grateful.

Cyrus: They were something weren't they—the angels? I don't think I'll ever forget the sound.

Mesha: Me either. When you go home, tell your little Benjamin this story and someday when he has brothers and sisters, tell them also. Tell it well, Cyrus. Tell it well.

Cyrus: I'll do my best. *(Looking skyward)* Do you think they'll return?

Mesha: The angels?

Cyrus: Of course, the angels!

Mesha: How am I to know?

Cyrus: I don't think I'll be able to sleep.

Mesha: Try. Tomorrow we take the lambs to Migdal Eder * to be pastured.
Cyrus: Ah, yes, the tower, so near to where the Messiah lays, the little lamb! Perhaps we will get another look at him!

Mesha: Perhaps, but we have a job to do. We won't be there long. The chief shepherd of the temple flocks is coming himself to examine the lambs. If all is well, he will expect them to be delivered for sacrifice. (a light-hearted joke) I'm afraid our baby Messiah will just have to wait his turn.

Cyrus: (Chuckling) Yes, I suppose. Well, since you are taking the first watch, I'll try to sleep. (Clapping Mesha on the back) It's a good night my friend. For unto us is born this day a Savior. Who would have ever thought...

Lights out

*(If interested in learning more about Migdal Eder, Jewish life and the society of Jesus' day, read Alfred Edersheim's "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah."*)