GROUP INTERPRETATION OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE:
EIGHT ORIGINAL SCRIPTS FOR USE IN CHURCH

THESIS

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By

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The purpose of this project was to prepare eight scripts derived from Biblical texts using various techniques of oral interpretation. All scripts employ two or more readers and are non-doctrinal in content, making them useful to any Bible-based church. Chapter I presents a statement of the problem, a review of the literature, justification for the project, the purpose, and procedures that were to be followed. Chapter II contains the scripts, general information for their use, and commentaries on each. The scripts are entitled "The Birth of Christ," "The Crucifixion," "The Resurrection," "The Second Coming of Christ," "The Last Supper," "Baptism," "Marriage," and "Christian Leadership." Chapter III includes a summary of the creative process, observations, and recommendations for future scripts.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The field of oral interpretation and the Bible have come down through the centuries as partners. Both the Old and the New Testaments, though different in literary styles, were originally written to be read aloud or sung. The Old Testament evolved from stories which were passed orally from generation to generation. Robert Jacobs describes the Old Testament as we have it.

... [It] is the work of a succession of editors, who fathered together from the culture of their times the raw materials with which to compose the national story. From extant manuscripts, from oral tradition, from the understanding of the Law available to them, they drew together a continuous narrative out of a national consciousness, often tested by defeat and exile.¹

The early prophets delivered their messages orally, and when these were later recorded, much of the oral style of the prophets was retained. The later prophets read aloud their messages or recorded them after giving them orally. Many of the Psalms were written to be sung or chanted.² The letters


of the New Testament were obviously written to be read. The author would write his letter to a church to be read aloud to the congregation, and then it was expected that the letter would be passed on to other churches. This is clearly expressed by Paul in Colossians 4:1: "And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea." There was no way of reproducing written materials except by hand; therefore, a single manuscript would be shared by many through the oral reader.

These readers throughout the ages have been trained for this purpose. As far back as pre-Homeric Greece, there is evidence that rhapsodes (wandering reciters) were an important part of the religious festivals honoring the gods. Men were offered special inducements for developing "voices capable of communicating the treasures of their culture."\(^3\)

The influence of the Bible in Europe during the Medieval Period was greatly dependent on those skilled in oral reading. By the fourth century, readers in the monasteries were responsible for reading the Scriptures aloud in church. These readers were young men and boys who remained readers until they reached adulthood. St. Jerome, who translated a version of the Bible known as the Vulgate, was "so impressed

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when he heard St. Hilarion recite the Scriptures from memory that it seemed to him as if the saint were in the very presence of God."\(^4\)

During the period following the Norman Conquest, Lanfranc, who was Archbishop of Canterbury in the days of William the Conqueror, wrote copiously on the training of children at an early age in the monasteries. They read aloud and practiced chanting. Keeping up the standards of oral reading was the cantor's responsibility. He had to rehearse those who were to read or be prepared to read himself.\(^5\)

The Renaissance brought the concept that salvation depended on following the rules laid down in Holy Writ. The general public learned to read in order to know the will of God.\(^6\) This public interest increased with the translations by Wycliffe, Tyndale, and Miles Coverdale, and finally the "Great Bible" in 1539. By 1559, there was so much controversy over the general public's inappropriate reading of the Bible aloud in public places that Queen Elizabeth decreed that only "persons who were capable readers, even if laymen, should be appointed to read the church services."\(^7\)

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 50.
\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 49-50.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 100.
\(^7\) Ibid., p. 102.
The eighteenth century found the general public so well-versed in reading the Scriptures that it caused problems in the church, where the readers had become ineffective in their delivery. The people wanted and expected good readers. Addison and Steele recommended one minister as a model of an excellent reader because "he responded to the emotional spirit of the liturgy in joy or sorrow. He had good diction, appropriate tempo, variety, correct cadence, proper emphasis, and other vocal skills which contributed to his success." 8

The twentieth century continues the tradition of reading the Scriptures aloud in services. However, there is little if any attention paid to making this reading effective.

Review of the Literature

Perhaps it is the lack of interest in preparation that has resulted in a generally apathetic attitude toward the reading of Scriptures and, consequently, in the relatively small amount of literature that has been written on this subject. With the exception of a few books, the researcher must go to practical textbooks in the field of oral interpretation and to religious texts which are concerned with hermeneutics.

Vocal and Literary Interpretation of the Bible, by S. S. Curry, was the first modern textbook dealing with the subject of reading the Bible orally, and much of its contents is

8Ibid., p. 115.
applicable today. Curry deals with the interpretation of the various literary forms in the Bible by placing the emphasis upon the underlying spirit as it was manifest in the form and content. The literary form and style, then, should influence the oral expression of the material. Curry makes the following statement:

Whenever it is possible, the minister should make not only a close and thorough study of the Scripture to be read but an original arrangement or adaptation of his lesson. He should begin at the right point, omit all unnecessary passages, and bring all into unity. He can do this and at the same time unfold a lesson which directly bears on the theme, day, or occasion.9

Much of the text deals with the process of making this "adaptation."

The most current text, *Oral Interpretation of the Scriptures*, by Charlotte I. Lee, discusses the basic principles of oral interpretation and the use of the body and voice. Literary styles in general are explained. Most of the book, however, deals with specific problems in handling the literary styles of the Bible.

Harold Brack's *Effective Oral Interpretation for Religious Leaders* would be an effective guide for laymen involved in leading parts of religious services as well as church staff members. The book is divided into four parts: (1) The Task of Oral Interpretation—the purpose of oral interpretation; (2) The Act of Oral Interpretation—the physical...

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aspects of preparation; (3) Oral Interpretation of the Worship Service—a chapter is devoted to each aspect of the service; and (4) Oral Interpretation of the Ritual—including a general chapter plus chapters on the baptismal, communion, wedding, and funeral rituals.

*Reading the Bible Aloud*, by J. Edward Lantz, is primarily aimed at the individual layman reader. The bulk of the book stresses the importance of understanding the Bible and selecting and understanding the passages to read. One chapter deals with the physical aspects of preparation and presentation, and one chapter discusses the various methods of group reading.

"A Study of the Oral Interpretation of the King James Version of the Bible as the Scripture Lesson in the Sunday Morning Worship Services of the Protestant Churches," by Paul Hunsinger, provides the only survey information available regarding the use of Bible reading as part of the worship service. Although the statistics are outdated, some indications of the survey still hold true today.

1. Scripture reading is one of the most important parts of worship services in most churches.
2. Scripture reading should be more effective.
3. Older members of the congregation prefer the traditional King James Version; the younger generation is more interested in modern versions that project
Chloe Armstrong's *Oral Interpretation of Biblical Literature* deals primarily with the oral presentation of the Bible by a single reader. Emphasis is placed on the values of reading the Scriptures aloud, preparation for understanding the material, and the physical preparation and skill development for the presentation. The same principles for analyzing and studying the literature and for developing vocal and physical skills are applied that are suggested in such oral interpretation textbooks as *Oral Interpretation*, by Charlotte Lee; *The Oral Interpretation of Literature*, by Chloe Armstrong and Paul Brandes; *Communicative Reading*, by Otis J. Aggertt and Elbert R. Bowen; and *The Art of Interpretation*, by Wallace Bacon. Armstrong does mention briefly the group reading approach, touching upon choral reading and readers theatre. Her comments are brief and limited to how these styles are handled.

Reference will be made throughout this chapter to these two styles of group reading. Therefore, it seems appropriate to define them as they are used in this context.

In *Choral Speaking Is Fun*, choral reading is defined as the use of a trained group of readers "to strengthen,

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underline, and enrich the meaning of a piece of literature by the use of various qualities of voice in the same way that a symphony enriches and develops a theme in music by using various instruments."\(^{11}\) This enhancement is acquired in three ways.

1. Different voice qualities—high, medium, and low—are used to elicit different emotional responses.

2. A varying number of voices is used in changing intensity.

3. Solo voices are contrasted with massed voices to indicate actual quotation or to give dramatic importance to a climactic section.\(^{12}\)

Readers theatre is defined by Irene Coger and Melvin White as follows:

[It is] a medium in which two or more oral interpreters through vivid vocal and physical clues cause an audience to see and hear characters expressing their attitudes toward an action so vitally that the literature becomes a living experience—both for the readers and for their audience.\(^{13}\)

Coupled with this definition is the criteria for selecting readers theatre materials. The following dramatic qualities and styles of writing are essential to Coger and White:

"evocative power, compelling characters, action, enriched


\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 3.

language, and wholeness." Other authors do not agree with restricting the use of literature to that which presents characters and action. Joanna Maclay's definition simply states that readers theatre is a "technique for staging literary texts in such a way that the text is featured in the performance." This means that the "purpose of the production is to clarify, illuminate, extend, or provide insight into the particular literary text being presented." This definition focuses on the literature, regardless of form and whether "dramatic" or not.

Readers Theatre Comes to the Church, by Gordon Bennett, deals solely with the readers theatre approach. The book is divided into two parts: the first part is a practical description explaining the "what, why, and how" of readers theatre; the second part is a series of short scripts. The discussion focuses on the presentation of plays, but recognizes the value of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and the Bible as potential material. There are two Bible scripts included. One uses the Biblical wording unchanged as sound in the King James Version, using echoes. The style is actually more in keeping with the definition of "choral

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14 Ibid., p. 33.
16 Ibid., p. 3.
17 Ibid., p. 11.
reading" as recognized in this chapter. The other script is an adaptation of John 9, involving paraphrasing to modernize the language and inserted exclamations to create a more realistic crowd effect. This would be an invaluable book for any religious group to use as a guideline for incorporating readers theatre into its program.

Both choral reading and readers theatre are based on "simplicity and imagination."\textsuperscript{18} This results in six advantages they have over conventional drama in the church, as seen by Bennett.

1. They make use of a variety of material, including essays, novels, stories, plays, and poetry.
2. They eliminate the need for memorization of lines verbatim, which eliminates much of the stage-fright problem.
3. They avoid the money and time problems of conventional theatre with its elaborate trappings and scenic effects. This does not, however, mean they do not take time for rehearsal.
4. They permit the presentation of some large-cast or difficult dramas that might not otherwise be produced because of staging difficulties.

5. They help the participant readers develop their voices and interpretation skills, and they help the listeners develop their imaginations.

6. They give the church other exciting means of dramatizing the faith, teaching Christian ideals, commenting on modern society, and aiding worship.  

Encyclopedia for Church Group Leaders also supports the use of readers theatre in the church program. Like Bennett, Lee Gable recognizes the use of novels, short stories, and the Bible as materials, but his primary focus is on plays.

In The Art of Building Worship Services, Thomas McDormand devotes a full chapter to "Making the Most of the Scripture." Recognizing the necessity for using the Scriptures in all phases of the church program, he emphasizes that Scripture reading should be "a significant factor in achieving desired worship results. Again we would point out that the deliberate effort to achieve variety, without the sacrifice of dignity, will prove richly rewarding." He suggests this variety can be achieved through the use of specially rehearsed individual readers, choral reading, and drama--tableaux, pantomimes, simple dramatizations, and pageants.

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In addition to these texts on the practical aspects of group readings, there are many books of short dramatic scripts, but few Bible reading scripts. Many denominational magazines, such as The International Journal of Religious Education, Spectrum, and Church Recreation, publish short scripts—both dramatic and Bible reading—in almost every issue. Other sources of Bible reading scripts found were Choral Readings from the Bible, by Brown and Heltman, Dramatics in the Christian School, by Dan and Dorothy Wargo, some scripts by Oscar Rumpf, and the printed arrangements by Robert Lehman. Lehman has published two small leaflets and has a collection of seven readings, entitled "Expanded Parables," which will be published in book form in January, 1977. Others throughout the country are using group presentations of the Scriptures, but they are arranging their own adaptations which are unpublished.

Justification

Every church incorporates the reading of the Scriptures into its various organizations—Sunday School, missionary groups, training groups, Bible study groups, and worship services, to mention only a few. Usually this reading is by the minister or a layman or is in the form of a responsive reading with the congregation participating. Very often the presentation has little or no understanding, meaning, or emotion projected.
Many people hear the Bible more than they read it, and most people do not really know it at all. If the Bible is recognized as God's message to man, it should be vital to him. But how can it be vital if one's only contact with it is lifeless? Ryllis Lynip and Omar Goslin say that if it is to be significant it must become a part of "the fundamental life of men and women. This generation more than any other is an age of sensation: we see more, hear more, feel more than any of our ancestors." To communicate the Scriptures to this generation, therefore, it must be made interesting and exciting.

The lack of excitement stimulated by Bible reading in churches probably rests in the oral presentation, for the Bible itself is full of excitement. Ronald Sleeth refers to the Scriptures as the "Great Dramatic Event." This term is certainly applicable when we look at the all-encompassing literature it contains. There are stories, biographies, histories, tales, poetry, and letters. Just as "the drama is not created for the silent reader, but must be given

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life,"25 so the literature of the Bible can come to life when read orally.

One of the standard criteria for good literature is that it does not say everything, but leaves the reader open to use his own knowledge and imagination. J. B. Phillips says this of the Bible:

The basic facts are given to us, but it is our own God-given imagination which must fill out the picture. We are obliged to think for ourselves, to use heart and mind to make as honest a reconstruction as we can from the materials provided.26

Not all people can read with an imagination that brings literature to life. This is the purpose of the oral interpreter.

Among the best oral presentations of the Bible are the recordings of Charles Laughton27 and the Speak Four Trio—group readings by three women.28 Laughton's presentation of Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego makes the story overwhelmingly real to the listeners. Likewise, the recording of the Speak Four Trio makes the stories of the Bible come to life by the use of three voices speaking in harmony and by creating sound effects. Most interpreters will never reach the


27Charles Laughton Reading from the Bible, Decca Records, DL 8031, 33 1/3 rpm.

28The Speak Four Trio, presented by Paul Baker, Word Records, W 4013-LP, 33 1/3 rpm.
level of achievement attained by these professionals, but with training and rehearsals, they can put Scripture reading on a higher plane than it is now in most churches.

Many churches across the nation are already using group interpretation in their services. However, according to a survey by Bennett, the focus is primarily on plays, although other forms of literature, including the Bible, are used. The Southern Baptist Convention indicates that the reason they include short scripts, especially choral reading scripts, in almost every issue of *Church Recreation* is because they are wanted and used by so many churches. It would seem to be a reasonable assumption, then, that this is true of other denominations as well. Often there is no one in the congregation who feels qualified to arrange or write material, or time does not permit an original arrangement to be assembled, but the church would readily present a script already written. As already recognized, many short dramas have been published, but comparatively few Bible reading scripts for groups have been. Perhaps if there were more scripts available, we would see more interest in the Scripture reading in worship services.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this thesis is to arrange, adapt, and/or write a series of short scripts derived from Biblical texts for oral presentation by two or more readers that will be
non-doctrinal in content, making them useful to any Bible-based church. Such a series will allow variety in terms of subject matter but will have a unity of purpose and an overall unity in style.

Procedure

The scripts will be prepared for group oral presentation, but they will not necessarily follow all the regulations for readers theatre or choral reading as defined. This will allow for more flexibility and freedom and variety in style.

Although the Bible is composed of many forms of literature, it is still a unified whole. L. Berkhof refers to it as God's "progressive revelation." Each part builds onto what has already been presented. The Old Testament is applied in the New Testament. Old Testament quotations are found throughout the New Testament. Therefore, Scriptures on given subjects throughout the Bible will be compiled in each script when appropriate. George Hedley indicates that both Testaments should be used in every service. However, the scripts to be compiled will incorporate both the Old and the New Testaments only if the combination will serve the purpose intended. It is recognized that it will take time and study to select the right passages to "devoutly and

creatively compile effective scripts. Various Biblical helps, such as lectionaries, concordances, and other reference books, will be used as guides.

In an attempt to appeal to multiple audiences, several different available translations of the Bible will be consulted for use in preparing the scripts. Traditionalists may prefer the King James Version, but the contemporary language of some of the modern translations may have more meaning to others. Therefore, it is assumed that mixing the styles may have a broader appeal than limiting the scripts to only one translation.

The preparation of each script will begin with the collection of all possible Scriptures relating to a chosen subject from both the Old and the New Testaments. These Scriptures will be analyzed to determine a form on which to build the script. An endeavor will be made to make each script different in approach. The translation which is most compatible with the form being employed will be used. As much of the script as possible will be verses, taken in whole or in part, that have been arranged and adapted to create a unified reading. Original comments will be used to bridge the verses together and make the script flow smoothly. When necessary for flow or rhythm, verses will be

31Ibid., p. 163.
paraphrased. The number of readers used will be determined by the material.

Two sets of guidelines will be used in preparing the scripts. Paul Hunsinger's six guidelines for selecting Scriptures for oral reading will be applied to the selection of verses. They are as follows:

1. Is the thought, feeling or attitude expressed worthy of the consideration of the audience?
2. Does the passage reflect the higher spiritual aspects of the idea of God?
3. Is there an emphasis upon the higher ethical and social ideals in the material?
4. Is the material related to the general interests of the majority of the audience?
5. Does the material give fresh insight into life; does it give inspiration, enrichment, or spiritual edification?
6. Is this material adaptable for oral reading as the Scripture lesson at the present time and to this audience?³²

Certain qualities should be present in material which is to be read aloud if the presentation is to be effective. Coger and White have established the following guidelines for selecting any script material, religious or secular:

1. Evocative power
2. Compelling characters
3. Action
4. Enriched language

³²Hunsinger, pp. 148-152.
5. Wholeness

Strong evocative power pulls the audience "deeply into the experience recorded so that its significance is felt and becomes a part of his vicarious life." Strongly-delineated characters arouse interest and compel the attention of the audience. The characters need to be seen in action--either inner or outer--"that is provocative, intriguing and stirring." The language should be rich in evocative overtones that benefit from being heard, and the script must have a sense of completeness--that is, it must have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

In the field of oral interpretation, stage directions and interpretation comments are usually omitted, leaving these elements to the discretion of the director. Therefore, very few comments of this nature will be incorporated into these scripts.

Recognizing that the minister should determine the topic or the Scriptures to be used in a service, Dr. L. L. Armstrong, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Denton, Texas, was consulted regarding an overall theme for the series. His immediate reaction was to use the holidays or celebrations recognized by the church. These are special occasions that occur every year, and therefore, ministers

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33 Coger and White, p. 33.

34 Ibid., pp. 33-39.
are always looking for new and interesting ways to enhance these services.\(^\text{35}\) This idea will be followed, on the assumption that this will assure the usability of the scripts by more churches.

Each script will have a performance time of approximately ten minutes, in compliance with the need indicated by the Southern Baptist Convention as mentioned earlier. A ten-minute reading will fit into a worship service or other church meeting allowing plenty of time for the sermon, a discussion, or other aspects of the program.

\(^{35}\)Dr. L. L. Armstrong, pastor of First Baptist Church, Denton, Texas, personal interview, March 9, 1976.
CHAPTER II

THE SCRIPTS

Eight scripts have been prepared for group oral presentation on special occasions that are recognized in most Bible-oriented churches. These occasions are Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Advent, the Last Supper, baptism, marriage, and President's Day, which is celebrated by some denominations in the month of February because George Washington's and Abraham Lincoln's birthdays occur during this month.

In compliance with normal procedures for interpretation scripts, only a few comments regarding stage directions and line interpretations have been incorporated into these scripts. However, some comments about staging suggestions are included when the scripts themselves are formed around particular ideas. For example, the script "Marriage" is built around the traditional marriage vows; therefore, the presentation will be a more unified whole if the style of production suggests a wedding service. The suggested staging is only one way of presenting the script and is not intended to replace the creative ideas of a director.

The scripts have been prepared so that they may be performed without the need of special theatrical lighting,
settings, properties, or costumes. This will facilitate their use within religious services and will eliminate special expenses. However, the use of suggestive properties and lighting, coordinated clothing, and simple movement can add to the effect of the presentation.

The number of readers used can be adjusted for most of the scripts. For example, groups desiring to use a large number of people may increase the number of readers, particularly in the chorus. Groups having only a few readers may reduce the number of voices needed by re-assigning some of the lines. Comments concerning the adjustment of lines for particular scripts are included with those scripts.

All Scriptures used are listed in the commentary for each script. Scriptural references are indicated in parentheses at the end of each line that is taken directly from the Bible. Scriptures that are paraphrased are identified by the word "Reference." These are included for reference only and are not to be read during the presentation.

Several different translations of the Bible have been used in writing these scripts. The particular translation used is indicated in the commentary introducing each script. In the event that more than one version is used within one script, identification is made in each scriptural reference.
"The Birth of Christ"

Commentary

"The Birth of Christ," a reading arranged for ten readers, has three distinct sections. The first two sections are very brief and together serve as a prologue to the third section, which is the story of the birth of Christ as recorded in Matthew and Luke. The reading illustrates that the birth of Christ was a fulfillment of prophesies given throughout the Old Testament.

In the second section, the readers are to be divided into two groups. At times they should be reading simultaneously, with Group 1 being dominant. If, however, there is a problem with hearing or understanding when the two groups are reading simultaneously, the parts could be read in antiphon.

The director may choose to use the chorus more extensively than is indicated in the script, depending upon the voices chosen, by incorporating special effects, such as echoing, chanting, chiming, repeating, and harmonizing.

Scriptural references were taken from the King James Version of the Bible. Scriptures used are as follows:
The Script

ALL: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

VOICE 1: Then God created man . . .

VOICE 2: In his own image created he him. (Genesis 1:27)

VOICE 3: But man sinned against God.

VOICE 1: Yet . . . God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son into the world . . . (John 3:16; I John 4:9)

VOICE 2: Made in the likeness of man . . . (Philippians 2:7)

VOICE 3: To atone for man's sins.

ALL: And the Word became flesh! (John 1:14)

(Shift stage picture. Next section read by two groups. Indented lines of Group 2 should be read quietly, but simultaneously with Group 1, and should be timed so that the two groups end together.)

GROUP 1

And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham and said,

In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. (Genesis 22:15, 18)

GROUP 2

Abraham . . .

Abraham . . .

Abraham . . .

And Abraham begat Isaac,

And Isaac

Begat Jacob,

Judas, Boaz, Obed,
that shall have dominion. (Numbers 24:19)

The Lord said, I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper. (Jeremiah 23:5)

Jesse, and Jesse Begat David, the King, Solomon, Asa, Josephat, Amon, Josias, Azor, Jacob, and Jacob

Begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ! (Matthew 1:16)

(Shift positions again. There will be four individual readers: Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Angel, and Mary. All other readers will form the Chorus and will read all other parts: the prophecies, the Shepherds' line, and the ending.)

NARR. 1: Now the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph. (Luke 1:26-27)

CHORUS: Of the house of David. (Verse 27)

NARR. 1: And the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her and said, (Verses 27-28)

ANGEL: Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee. (Verse 28)

NARR. 1: But she was greatly troubled.
ANGEL: Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end. (Verses 30-33)

MARY: How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? (Verse 34)

ANGEL: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God. (Verse 35)

MARY: Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. My spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. (Verses 38, 49)

NARR. 1: And the angel departed from her. (Verse 38)

NARR. 2: Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph, being a just man, and not
willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream. (Matthew 1:18-20)

ANGEL: Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Verses 20-21)

NARR. 2: Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet Isaiah. (Verse 22)

CHORUS: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

NARR. 2: Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus. (Matthew 1:24-25)

NARR. 1: And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into
Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called
Bethlehem . . (Luke 2:1, 3, 4)

CHORUS: Because he was of the house and lineage of David.
(Verse 4)

NARR. 1: To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being
great with child. (Verse 5)

CHORUS: Thou, Bethlehem, though thou be little among the
thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come
forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel.
(Micah 5:2)

NARR. 1: And so it was, that, while they were there, the
days were accomplished that she should be delivered.
(Luke 2:6)

CHORUS: When the fulness of the time was come, God sent
forth his Son, made of woman. (Galatians 4:4)

NARR. 1: And she brought forth her firstborn son, and
wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in
a manger because there was no room for them in the
inn. (Luke 2:7)

NARR. 2: And there were in the same country shepherds
abiding in the field, keeping watch over their
flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord
came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone
round about them: and they were sore afraid. And
the angel said unto them, (Verses 8-10)
ANGEL: Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (Luke 2: 10-12)

NARR. 2: And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, (Verse 13)

CHORUS: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Verse 14)

NARR. 2: And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, (Verse 15)

CHORUS: (Or one voice from the Chorus) Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. (Verse 15)

NARR. 2: And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. (Verse 16)

CHORUS: Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)
NARR. 2: And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. (Luke 2:20)

NARR. 1: Now there also came wise men from the east to Jerusalem. And lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they were come, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him. (Matthew 2:1, 9, 11)

1 VOICE: Wonderful, Wonderful,
2 VOICES: Councillor, Councillor,
3 VOICES: Mighty God, Mighty God,
4 VOICES: (Slow) Everlasting Father,
5 VOICES: (Slow) Prince of Peace!

FULL CHORUS: Unto us a child is born ... God's Son is given.

ALL: The Word ... became ... flesh!

"The Crucifixion"

Commentary

"The Crucifixion" is a coordination of the events recorded in the four Gospels to form a narrative on the crucifixion of Christ with original commentary on the crucifixion process added.
The script is arranged for seven readers, with number 7 delivering all the commentary material. The reading could be done with more or less readers (to increase the crowd atmosphere). However, number 7 should remain as indicated in the script. The other parts could be adjusted according to the number of readers used. It is recommended that in staging the performance, number 7 should be physically separated from the other readers in some way.


**The Text**

**ALL:** Crucify him! (repeat 3-5 times, loud and intense)

1: And Pilot delivered Jesus to be scourged . . . and crucified. (John 18:16)

2, 3, 4, 5, 6: Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the palace and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. (Matthew 27:27)

2: And they stripped him. (Verse 28)

7: The Jews called their scourging the "intermediate death." Several strips of leather were attached to a piece of wood. At the end of each strip was
sewn a chunk of bone or a small piece of iron chain. This instrument was called a flagellum. The flagellum was brought all the way back, then it whistled forward and made a dull sound as the strips of leather smashed against the body driving the bone and chain into the flesh. It was also the custom, prior to crucifixion, to permit the soldiers to enjoy some play with the prisoner, provided he was not killed in the process.

3: They put on him a purple robe. (Matthew 27:28)
4: And they plaited a crown of thorns and put it upon his head. (Verse 29)
5: And a reed in his right hand. (Verse 29)
6: And they kneeled down before him. (Verse 29)
2: And mocked him, saying, (Verse 29)
1-6: Hail, King of the Jews. (Verse 30)
6: And they spat upon him. (Verse 30)
5: And took the reed and smote him on the head. (Verse 30)
1: And when they had mocked him, they took off from him the purple, and put on him his garments. And they lead him out to crucify him. (Mark 15:20)
7: The road to Golgotha was almost exactly one thousand paces—about 3,000 feet. The first part of the march was along a narrow road, up a slight incline, then it dipped sharply down into the
valley below. Outside the gate the road continued for thirty yards to the foot of Golgotha.

1: And he went out bearing the cross for himself. 
   (John 19:17)

7: But weakened by the scourging, Jesus stumbled and fell.

5: And they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: 
   him they compelled to go with them, that he might bear the cross. 
   (Matthew 27:32)

3, 4: And there were also two others, robbers, led with him to be put to death. 
   (Luke 23:32)

1: And when they were come up to a place called Golgotha . . . 
   (Matthew 27:33)

2: That is to say, The place of a skull. 
   (Verse 33)

7: A rocky hill about fifteen feet high.

6: They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall. 
   (Verse 34)

7: Wine containing a grain or two of incense was believed to help deaden the pain—an act of mercy permitted by the Romans.

1: And when he had tasted it, he would not drink. 
   (Verse 34)

7: The crucifixion began. The prisoners were stripped of their clothes. A cloth was wound around their loins and between the thighs with the loose end tucked in at the back. In turn, each forearm was
held flat to the crossbeam. A square-cut nail was quickly and efficiently driven into place. Then the force of the hammer nailed the feet into position.

1: And there . . .

2, 5, 6: Golgotha, (whisper)

1: They crucified him,

2, 5, 6: Golgotha. (Whisper)

3, 4: And the robbers . . .

3: One on the right hand,

4: And the other on the left. (Luke 23:33)

7: Near nudity not only added to the shame of the criminal, but also made him helpless before the thousands of insects in the air.

2, 5, 6: And the people sat and watched him there. (Matthew 27:36)

7: Constant pain forced the men to move in agony.

1: And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

2: And parting his garments among them, the soldiers cast lots. (Verse 34)

7: The clothes and sandals of each man crucified had been placed in a loose pile in front of him.

3: And it was the third hour . . . (Mark 15:25)

7: Nine o'clock in the morning.
4: And the superscription of his accusation was written above him, The King of the Jews. (Mark 15:26)

5: And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, (Matthew 27:39)

6: Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself: (crowd noises, which continue under this line) if thou art the Son of God come down from the cross. (Verse 40)

3: And the rulers also scoffed at him, saying, (Luke 23:35)

2: He saved others: let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. (Crowd noises) (Verse 35)

1: And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, offering him vinegar, and saying, (Verse 36)

5: If thou art the King of the Jews, save thyself. (Crowd noises) (Verse 37)

3, 4: And the robbers also that were crucified with him cast upon him the same reproach. (Matthew 27:44)

6: And one of the robbers which were hanged railed on him, saying, (Luke 23:39)

4: Art not thou the Christ? Save thyself and us. (Verse 39)

6: But the other answered, and rebuding him said, (Verse 40)
3: Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. (Verses 40-41)

6: And he said,

3: Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. (Verse 42)

1: And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Verse 43)

2: And there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved . . . (John 19:25-26)

7: The disciple, John . . .

2: He saith unto his mother,

1: "Woman, behold, thy son." (Verse 26)

2: Then saith he to the disciple, (Verse 27)

1: "Behold, thy mother." (Verse 27)

2: And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home. (Verse 27)

6: And it was now about the sixth hour. (Luke 23:44)

7: Noon.

5: And a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, the sun's light failing. (Verses 44-45)
When the body sagged, its weight hung on the nails in the hands and the knees bent forward. This caused the pectoral muscles at the side of the chest to become momentarily paralyzed, making breathing impossible. The cause of death in crucifixion was almost always asphyxiation. Shifting the weight to the feet made breathing possible, but cramped the legs and thighs.

And about the ninth hour, (Matthew 27:46)

Three in the afternoon.

Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? (Verse 46)

Which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Verse 46)

And some of them that stood there, when they heard it, said, (Verse 47)

This man called Elijah. (Verse 47)

Eli, meaning God, was mistaken for Elijah, the prophet.

After this, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished . . . (John 19:28)

And after threescore and two weeks shall the Messiah be cut off . . . for the transgression of my people . . . said God. (Daniel 9:26; Isaiah 53:8)
1: Jesus saith, "I thirst." (Verse 28)
5: And one ran, and filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, (Mark 15:36)
2: Let be, let us see whether Elijah cometh to save him. (Matthew 27:49)
1: When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (John 19:30; Luke 23:46)
3: And having said this, he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit. (Luke 23:46; John 19:30)
4: And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom (strong) . . .
4, 5: (Build in intensity) And the earth did quake . . .
4, 5, 2: And the rocks were rent. (Strongest) (Matthew 27:51)
3: And when the centurion, which stood by over against him, saw that he so gave up the ghost, he said, (Mark 15:39)
6: Truly this man was the Son of God! (Verse 39)
1: Son of God! (Whisper)
2: Son of God! (Loud whisper)
3: Son of God! (Normal voice)
4: Son of God! (Loud)
5: Son of God! (Louder)
"The Resurrection"

Commentary

"The Resurrection" is a narrative which portrays some of the events that occurred on the day of the resurrection of Christ and one incident of his appearance to his disciples eight days later. The story combines the events set forth in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible by Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-14; Luke 24:1-43; and John 20:1-31.

The reading is arranged for four male and four female voices. The readers are as follows:

M1--Male #1
M2--Male #2
M3--Male #3
M4--Male #4
F1--Female #1
F2--Female #2
F3--Female #3
F4--Female #4

The Script

(Drum roll--begin quietly and build to a strong climax. The first part of the reading, to the *, should be very strong.)

MALES: Behold, the earth did quake!
M1: And an angel of the Lord descended . . .
(Gradually build on next three lines)
F1: Brilliant . . .
F2: Dazzling white . . .
F3: Like lightening!
F4: (Softly) White as snow!
M1: Descended from heaven!
M2: And the angel rolled back the stone from the tomb of Christ . . . (Reference: Matthew 28:2-4)
M3: That curtain of Jesus' death!
M2: And the tomb was empty!
F1: Empty . . .
F2: Except for the linen cloths.
F3: The body was gone!
M1, M2, M3: And it was the third day . . .
M4: The first day of the week. (*)

FEMALES: And very early in the morning, the women came to the tomb . . .
F4: Mary Magdalene,
F2: Mary, the mother of James,
F1: And others, (Reference: Mark 16:1)
FEMALES: Bearing spices and ointments to anoint the body of Jesus. (Reference: Luke 24:1)
F3: And seeing the stone taken away, they were frightened, (John 20:1)
F4: Confused,
F2: Bewildered,
F1, F4: And they said among themselves,
F2: "Who has rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb?" (Reference: Mark 16:3)

M1: For the weight of the stone was great.

M2: Too great for a single man . . .

M3: Or even two men.

FEMALES: Then the women entered in . . .

F1: Trembling . . .

FEMALES: And found not the body of the Lord Jesus. (Luke 24:3)

F2: Only the linens!

F3: Empty!

M4: Then they saw the angel and were frightened and bowed down their faces to the earth. (Luke 24:5)

F1: Mercy!

F2: Mercy!

F3, F4: Lord, have mercy!

M4: And the angel said to them,

M3: "Fear not. For I know that you seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who was crucified. But why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here.

Behold the place where they laid him. He is risen from the dead, as he said." (Matthew 28:5-6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:5)

FEMALES: And they remembered . . . (Luke 24:8)

F3: For Christ himself had said, "The Son of man must be crucified and on the third day he
will rise again."  (Reference:  Luke 24:7)

But how could this be?

And the angel continued,

"Go and tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you into Galilee. There you will see him."  (Reference:  Matthew 28:7)

And the women returned . . .

Still frightened,

Still confused,

But filled with joy,

And told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.  (Luke 24:9)

"He is not there."

"The angel said He is risen."

"He goeth into Galilee."

Their words appeared as idle talk to the apostles, and they did not believe them.  (Luke 24:11)

But Simon Peter and John,

The other disciple whom Jesus loved,

Went to the tomb, running.  (Reference:  John 20:4)

John outran Peter, and reached the tomb first. And stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths lying there . . .

Empty . . .

But he did not enter.  (Reference:  John 20:5)

He waited.
Then Simon Peter came and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin,
Which had been upon Christ's head.
For the head was always wrapped separately.
It was not lying with the linen cloths, but was rolled up in a place by itself.

Then John entered the tomb, and he saw and believed. (Reference: John 20:6-8)

Believed what?
That the body was gone?
That Christ had risen?
They knew what they saw.

But they did not understand the scripture, that Jesus must rise again from the dead. (Reference: John 20:9-10)

Then the disciples went back to their own homes, wondering at what had happened. (Reference: Luke 24:12)

That same day,
The first day of the week,
Jesus appeared five times . . .
To his disciples and followers.
But the first was to Mary Magdalene.
(Mark 16:9)
Mary stood weeping outside the tomb.
F1: In sadness,
F3: Not in fear . . .
F4: And as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain,
M1: One at the head,
M3: And one at the feet. (John 20:12)
M2: They said to her,
M1, M3: "Woman, why are you weeping?"
F4: She said to them,
F2: "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." (John 20:13)
F4: Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was he. (Verse 14)
M4: He had returned as he said.
M2: But he was not recognized.
F3: Mary was too concerned with death to see life.
M4: Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?"
F4: Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him,
F2: "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."
(Reference: Verse 15)
M4: Jesus said to her, "Mary."
F4: She turned . . .
That voice . . .

Tender and compassionate . . .

It had to be Him!

She said to him,

"Rabboni."

Which means Teacher,

Or Master. (Reference: Verse 16)

Jesus said to her, "Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (Verse 17)

So Mary Magdalene went . . .

Full of joy . . .

And said to the disciples,

"I have seen the Lord."

And she told them that he had said these things to her. (Reference: Verse 18)

But the disciples were mourning . . .

Too concerned with death . . .

And would not believe her. (Reference: Mark 16:10-11)

To see life.

Now that very day, Simon Peter and another disciple were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. (Reference: Luke 24:13)
They were sad, Disheartened, Disillusioned.

And Jesus drew near and walked with them. But they did not recognize him. (Reference: Verses 15-16)

Oh, foolish men! Where is your faith? Believe the prophets!

And as they walked he interpreted to them in all the scripture the things concerning himself. (Reference: Verse 27)

Still their eyes were closed. And when they drew near to the village, they constrained him, saying, "Abide with us." (Reference: Verses 28-29)

And he went in with them. And it came to pass, when he sat down with them to meat, he took the bread and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them. (Reference: Verse 30)

And their eyes were opened, and they knew him. (Verse 31)

And he vanished out of their sight. (Verse 31)

And they returned to Jerusalem that same hour to tell the other apostles. (Reference: Verse 33)

"The Lord has risen indeed." (Verse 34)
MALES: And as the eleven met behind closed doors, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (Reference: John 20:19)

F3: But they were terrified.

F4: It must be a spirit! (Reference: Luke 24:36)

F1: They could not conquer their disbelief!

F2: They needed proof!

M4: So he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have." (Luke 24:38-39)

M1, M2, M3: And they believed:

M3: But Thomas,

F3: One of the apostles,

M3: Was not with them when Jesus came. (John 20:24)

F3: So the disciples found him and said,

M2: "We have seen the Lord."

M1: "He is risen."

M4: "He lives."

F3: But Thomas said to them,

M3: "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails . . .

M1: "But we have seen the nail prints . . . "

M2: "In his hands . . . "

M4: "And in his feet!"
"Nevertheless, unless I see . . . and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." (Reference: John 20:25)

Oh, Thomas!
Oh, ye of little faith!
Conquer your doubts!
Believe!

But Thomas believed not.

Eight days passed . . .

And the disciples were again gathered, and Thomas was with them. (Verse 25)

And the doors were shut,

But Jesus came . . . and stood among them, and again 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; do not be faithless, but believing." (Reference: Verses 26-27)

Thomas answered him,

"My Lord and my God." (Verse 28)

Jesus said to him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." (Verse 29)

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written, but these
are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in his name. (Verses 30-31)

F1: Consider, therefore, your disbelief.

F2: Consider, therefore, your doubts.

(Drum roll begins, quietly, building gradually underneath the next four lines to the *)

F3: Consider . . . the tomb!

F4: The empty tomb!

M1, M3: Oh, death where is thy sting?

M2, M4: Oh, grave, where is thy victory? (I Corinthians 15:55) (*)

MALES: Jesus conquered death!

FEMALES: He is alive!

M1, M2, F1, F2: Christ, our Lord, has risen!

M3, M4, F3, F4: Yes, risen!

M1: Hallelujah! (Echo, overlapping, several times by different readers, building in intensity)

ALL: Amen!

"The Second Coming of Christ"

Commentary

"The Second Coming of Christ" is a reading prepared for the Advent season. It attempts to blend the beauty of the language of the traditional King James Version of the Bible
(identified by "KJ" in the script) with the sometimes more meaningful contemporary language of the modern versions. The Living Bible and Good News for Modern Man ("LB" and "GN," respectively) are the modern versions employed.

This effect might best be achieved if the readers fall into two distinct generations. The reading is arranged for two choruses of any size: the Traditional Chorus (TC) and the Contemporary Chorus (CC). It is suggested that the Traditional Chorus be composed of members of the "older generation," according to current concepts, and the Contemporary Chorus be composed of members of the "younger generation." There is also a solo reader (M), who does not belong to either chorus but should be of the younger generation. Solo readers are indicated as follows:

M—Middle Reader

Solo Readers from the Traditional Chorus:

| T1 | T2 | T3 | T4 | T5 | T6 |

Solo Readers from the Contemporary Chorus:

| C1 | C2 | C3 | C4 | C5 | C6 |

This script could be performed with as few as three readers: one each for the Middle Reader, the Traditional Chorus, and the Contemporary Chorus.

This reading would work particularly well if the readers carried manuscripts to demonstrate that both the
traditional and contemporary language are taken from texts.

Biblical references used in the script are as follows:

King James Version: Psalms 33:1; 150:3, 5; Isaiah 40:5; Zechariah 2:10; Matthew 13:24-30; 16:27; 24:6-7, 11, 21, 29-31; Luke 17:3; Philippians 4:5; I Thessalonians 5:2; II Timothy 4:1; II Peter 3:10; Revelations 16:15.


The Script

CC: Sing!
TC: Sing praises!
ALL: Sing praises unto the Lord!
T1: Praise him with the trumpet! (KJ, Psalms 150:3)
Cl: Praise him with the harp. (Verse 3)
T2: Praise him with the symbals. (Verse 5)

HALF OF EACH
CHORUS: And rejoice.
ALL: Rejoice in the Lord, O ye nations. (KJ, Psalms 33:1)
T3: Lift up your voice.
C2: For the Lord said,
"Sing and rejoice: for lo, I come!" (KJ, Zechariah 2:10)

So sing!

Sing unto the Lord!

Wait a minute. What are we singing about? I thought Jesus had already come... as a baby in Bethlehem... and gone... back to heaven. So why sing about his coming?

Not that coming!

His second coming!

He promised He would come again.

Oh.

Christ dies...

Then arose from the dead...

Then ascended into heaven...

And some day he will return just as he went away. (LB, Acts 1:11)

But before he ascended he said,

"I go to prepare a place for you. (KJ, James 14:2)

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; (Verse 3)

That where I am there ye may be also." (Verse 3)

That means he's with God, preparing for our coming. (LB, James 14:2)

And when everything is ready, he'll come and get us. (Verse 3)
M: When will all this happen? How will you know that it's time for his coming? (Reference: GN, LB, Matthew 24:3)

C4: No one knows when that day or hour will come. (GN, Mark 13:32)

C3: But Jesus did give us signs to watch for.

T4: He said, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars." (KJ, Matthew 24:6)

T6: For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. (Verse 7)

T1: And many false prophets shall arise; (Verse 11)

C5: And scoffers will make fun of you who are Christians and say: "He promised to come, didn't he? Where is he?" (GN, II Peter 3:3)

T2: And there shall be great tribulation. (KJ, Matthew 24:21)

C2: There will be persecution such as the world has never before seen in all its history . . . (LB, Matthew 24:21)

C3: And will never see again. (Verse 21)

T4: And immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened. (KJ, Matthew 24:29)

T5, T3: And the stars shall fall from heaven. (Verse 29)

T1, T2, T6: And the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. (Verse 29)
TC: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man. 
..." (Verse 30)

M: But some of those things sound like they're happening now.

T5: I know.

M: It's all so hard to understand.

C6: Jesus realized that . . .

C4: So he often taught in parables.

Cl: Particularly when he spoke about his Kingdom.

T3: For instance, he used a parable to explain about the coming of his Kingdom. He compared it to a fig tree.

C6: He said, "When its branches become green and tender, and it starts putting out leaves, you know that summer is near. (GN, Mark 13:28)

C5: In the same way, when you see these things happening you will know that the Kingdom of God is about to come." (GN, Luke 21:31)

C2: "And then at last," he said, (LB, Matthew 24:30)

T1, T2, T6: ... When the powers of heaven shall be shaken ... (KJ, Matthew 24:29)

CC: "The signal of my coming will appear in the heavens and there will be deep mourning all around the earth. (LB, Matthew 24:30)

ALL (Except M): And the nations of the world will see me arrive in the clouds of heaven, with power and
great glory." (Verse 30)

C1-C6: Yes. The Lord himself will come down from heaven. (GN, I Thessalonians 4:16)

C3: His coming shall be like the lightening that flashes across the sky. (Reference: LB, Matthew 24:27)

T4: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together. (KJ, Isaiah 40:5)

T5: And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet. (KJ, Matthew 24:31)

T3: And they shall gather together his elect from the four winds. (Verse 31)

C5: . . . They will gather his chosen people . . . (GN, Verse 31)

C6: . . . From one end of the world to the other." (Verse 31)

T6: He will judge the quick and the dead at his appearing. (KJ, II Timothy 4:1)

T4: And he shall reward every man according to his works. (KJ, Matthew 16:27)

T5: The apostle John wrote of seeing a vision of God's kingdom and the judgment.

C1: He saw a great white throne and the one who sat upon it. (Reference: GN, LB, Revelation 20:11)

C4, C5: And he saw the dead, great and small standing before God.
C2, C3, C6: And the Books were opened, including the Book of Life. (LB, Verse 12)

Cl-C6: Each was judged according to his own deeds, written in The Books. (GN, Verse 12)

TC: Yes . . . we will all be judged!

HALF OF TC: Thus shall it be . . . (KJ, Luke 17:3)

OTHER HALF OF TC: When the Son of man is revealed. (Verse 3)

M: I suppose there is a parable to help explain the judgment, too.

C4: Certainly.

T1: Jesus said, "The Kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. (KJ, Matthew 13:24)

T3: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. (Verse 25)

Cl: Tares--that's thistles, or weeds.

T2: But when the blade was sprung up, there appeared the tares also. (Verse 26)

T6: And the servants said, 'Wilt thou that we gather them up?' (Verse 28)

T4: But he said, 'Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in
bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." (Verses 29-30)

M: Perhaps you'd better explain that one. I'm not sure I understand all of it.

C3: All right.

C1: Jesus is the farmer who sowed the seed. (LB, Matthew 13:37)

C4: The field is the world. (Verse 38)

M: (Beginning to understand) And the seed represent the people of the Kingdom. (Verse 38)

C2: The thistles are the people belonging to Satan. (Verse 38)

C6: The enemy who sowed the thistles is the devil. (Verse 39)

C5: The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. (Verse 39)

C3: At the end of the world Jesus will send his angels to separate the evil people from the good . . .

M: (Realization) Those who believe in Him.. (Reference: Verse 41)

C1: The evil will be thrown into a burning furnace . . . (Reference: Verse 42)

T1: Hell.

C2: And the good will be taken into the Kingdom of heaven. (Reference: Verse 43)

M: I see.
T2: In the meantime . . .

T3: Until he does come . . .

T4: We must all watch and wait.

T6: Be ready.

T5: Be prepared.

M: Why?

C2: Because if you're not ready when he get's here, then it will be too late.

T5: On several occasions Jesus compared himself to a thief in warning us to be prepared. (Reference: GN, LB, II Peter 3:10; I Thessalonians 5:2; Revelation 16:15)

C5: Everyone would be ready for him if they knew the exact hour of his return. (LB, Luke 12:39)

C6: Just as they would be ready for a thief if they knew when he was coming. (Verse 39)

T6: There wouldn't be any problem.

C4: They wouldn't let the thief break into the house. (GN, Luke 12:29)

M: So we must be ready all the time.

C1: Yes, for he'll come when we're least expecting him. (Reference: GN, Luke 12:40)

T1: We are told to be patient. (GN, James 5:7)

T2: Be alert. (LB, I Peter 1:13)

T3: Take courage. (LB, James 5:7)

T4: Believe in Jesus Christ. (KJ, Acts 16:31)
T5: And be obedient to God. (GN, I Peter 1:14)
T6: Knowing the time! (GN, Romans 13:11)
TC: For the Lord is at hand. (KJ, Philippians 4:5)
CC: His coming is nearer now than when we first believed in him. (LB, Romans 13:11)
M: So ... sing!
CC: Sing praises!
TC: Sing praises unto the Lord!
CC: And rejoice!
ALL: Rejoice in the coming of the Lord!

"The Last Supper"

Commentary

"The Last Supper" is a reading designed to be used as part of a Communion service, with the offering of the bread and wine following the reading. The readers could possibly help with the serving if laymen are normally used in serving Communion to the congregation. It is suggested that the service then conclude with the congregation singing a hymn, perhaps "A Parting Hymn We Sing," "Bless Be the Tie That Binds," or "Oh, Saving Victim Opening Wide." If not used as a part of the Communion service, the last line of the script should be eliminated.

The reading is arranged for eleven readers, who represent the Apostles, with the exception of Judas Iscariot. It is suggested that the readers be arranged so they are seated
and standing in an interesting stage picture—perhaps in a manner similar to Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper. If desired, a projection of the painting might also be used.

It is essential that the readers react in character throughout the performance. The audience must feel that the readers are all anxious to share in telling the story.

The contemporary language of the script lends itself to a simple presentation of this reading using modern dress. However, the production can be made as elaborate as desired.


The Script

PETER: Welcome. (Several repeat "Welcome," "Yes, welcome.") We are eleven of the chosen disciples of Jesus. We are simple, hard working men—mostly fishermen—but privileged to be known as the Apostles of Jesus. I am Simon Peter.

ANDREW: I am Andrew, Peter's older brother.

PHILIP: I'm Philip.

BARTHOLEMEW: Bartholemew, of Cana.
MATTHEW: Matthew.

JAMES A: James, the son of Alphaeus.

JUDAS: Judas, the son of James.

SIMON: Simon, the Cananaean.

THOMAS: Thomas.

JAMES Z: I am James, the son of Zebedee.

JOHN: And I am John, his brother. One of our original group is no longer with us—Judas Iscariot—but we shall explain later.

ANDREW: We have gathered here in memory of our Lord's death to break bread together. Let us explain how this came about.

JAMES Z: We had been with Jesus three years—listening and learning. Then in the third year of his ministry, we had returned to Jerusalem during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The day came when the lambs for the Passover meal had to be killed. (Luke 22:7)

BARTH: Some of us came to Jesus saying, "Where do you want us to get the Passover supper ready for you?" (Matthew 26:17)

JOHN: Then he called Peter and me saying, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house he enters, and say to the owner of the house: "The Teacher says, Where is my room where my disciples and I shall eat the Passover supper?" Then he will show you
a large upstairs room, fixed up and furnished, where you will get things ready for us." (Mark 14:13-15)

PETER: We went and found everything just as Jesus had told us, and prepared the Passover supper. (Luke 22:13)

MATTHEW: When it was evening, we sat down together to eat—Jesus and the twelve of us.

SIMON: He said to us, "I have wanted so much to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will never eat it until it is given its real meaning in the Kingdom of God." (Luke 22:15-16)

JUDAS: We didn't really understand what he was saying. We had shared many meals with him but none of us knew this would be our last.

(Pause)

PHILIP: Then an argument came up among us as to which of us should be thought of as the greatest. (Uneasy, embarrassed shuffling among the men.) (Luke 22:24)

THOMAS: This subject had come up before when the wife of Zebedee asked Jesus to allow her sons, James and John, to sit on his right and left when he became King. (Reference: Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45)
PHILLIP: His answer was the same now. He said, "The kings of this world have power over their people. But this is not the way it is with you. Rather, the greatest one among you must be like the servant. Who is greater, the one who sits down to eat or the one who serves him? The one who sits down, of course. But I am among you as the one who serves." (Luke 22:24-27)

JAMES A: Then he rose from the table, took off his outer garment, and tied a towel around his waist. He poured some water into a washbasin and began to wash our feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. We were all uneasy. Then he came to Simon Peter. (John 13:4-6)

PETER: I said to him, "Are you going to wash my feet, Lord?" Jesus answered me, "You do not know what I am doing, but you will know later." I declared, "You will never, at any time, wash my feet." "If I do not wash your feet," he answered, "you will no longer be my disciple." Then I said, "Lord, do not wash only my feet, then. Wash my hands and head, too." (John 13:6-9)

MATTHEW: Then Jesus turned to all of us and said, "Whoever has taken a bath is completely clean and does not have to wash himself, except for his feet. All of you are clean—all except one." (John 13:10)
JUDAS: Jesus already knew he was to be betrayed and who was going to betray him; that is why he said, "All of you, except one, are clean." (John 13:11)

JAMES A: After he had washed our feet, Jesus put his outer garment back on and returned to his place at the table. "Do you understand what I have just done to you?" he asked. "You call me Teacher and Lord and it is right that you do so, because I am. I am your Lord and Teacher, and I have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash each other's feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you." (John 13:12-15)

PHILLIP: We sat in silence for a while as we thought on what he had said and done.

THOMAS: Then, while we were eating, Jesus, being deeply troubled, said, "I tell you this: one of you will betray me." (John 13:21; Mark 14:18)

BARTH: We looked at one another, completely puzzled about whom he meant. (All respond) We began to ask him, one after the other, "Surely you don't mean me, do you?" (All respond) (John 13:22; Mark 14:19)

THOMAS: He said, "The Son of Man will die as God has decided it; but how terrible for that man who betrays him. It would have been better for that man if he
had never been born." (Luke 22:22; Matthew 26:24)

**PETER:** John, whom Jesus loved, was sitting next to him. I motioned to him and said, "Ask him who it is that he is talking about." (John 13:23-24)

**JOHN:** So I moved closer to Jesus' side and asked, "Who is it, Lord?" Jesus answered, "I will dip the bread in the sauce and give it to him; he is the man." So he took a piece of bread, dipped it, and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

(John 13:25-26)

**JAMES A:** Judas spoke up, "Surely you don't mean me, Teacher?" Jesus answered, "So you say." (Matthew 26:25)

**MATTHEW:** As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan went into him. Jesus said to him, "Hurry and do what you must!" (John 13:27)

**SIMON:** None of us at the table understood what Jesus said to him. Since Judas was in charge of the money bag, some of us thought that Jesus had told him to go to buy what we needed for the feast, or else that he had told him to give something to the poor. We were unaware that Judas had conspired with the chief priests and agreed to deliver Jesus to them for the price of thirty pieces of silver. (John 13:28-29)
BARTH: After Judas accepted the bread, he went out at once. It was night. (John 13:30)

JAMES Z: Later, when Judas learned that Jesus had been condemned to death, he repented and took back the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and elders. But it was too late. Judas then went out and hanged himself. (Pause) But let us return to the night of the Last Supper. (Reference: Matthew 27:3-5)

ANDREW: After Judas had left, Jesus said, "My children, I shall not be with you very much longer. You will look for me; but I tell you now what I told the Jews, "You cannot go where I am going." "Where are you going Lord?" Simon Peter asked him. "You cannot follow me now where I am going," answered Jesus, "But later you will follow me." Then Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I am ready to die for you." Jesus answered him, "Are you really ready to die for me?" (John 13:33, 36-38)

THOMAS: Then he turned to all of us and said, "This very night all of you will run away and leave me." (Matthew 26:31)

JUDAS: Again, we were disturbed. (All respond)

THOMAS: He continued, "For the scripture says, 'God will kill the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will
be scattered."

(Please, I spoke up and said to Jesus, "I will never leave you, even though all the rest do!" "Remember this," Jesus said to me. "Before the rooster crows two times tonight, you will say three times that you do not know me." I answered even more strongly, "I will never say I do not know you, even if I have to die with you!" (Matthew 26:33-34; Mark 14:30-31)

(Please, We all said the same thing. (All respond) (Mark 14:31)

(Please, Then, as we were eating, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks to God, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you that I will not drink this wine from now on until the Kingdom of God comes." Then he took the bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and gave it to us, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in memory of me." We did so. (Luke 22:17-19)

(Please, In the same way he gave us the cup, saying, "This cup is God's new covenant sealed with my blood which is poured out for you. Whenever you drink it, do it in memory of me." (Luke 22:20; I Corinthians 11:25)

(Please, Then we sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives. (Mark 14:26)
JOHN: We have continued steadfastly in fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayer, praising God, ever since. (Acts 2:42)

ANDREW: Blessed be our Lord.

SIMON: Praise God!

PHILIP: Amen!

(Pause)

MATTHEW: Before partaking of the bread and cup, we ask that each man should examine himself. For if anyone eats the Lord's bread or drinks from his cup in an improper manner, he is guilty of sin against the Lord's body and blood. For if he does not recognize the meaning of the Lord's body when he eats the bread and drinks from the cup, he brings judgment on himself as he eats and drinks. (I Corinthians 11:27, 29)

JAMES A: You cannot drink from the Lord's cup and also from the cup of the devil. (I Corinthians 10:21)

JAMES Z: You cannot eat at the Lord's table and also at the table of the devil. (I Corinthians 10:21)

PETER: You must believe that the blood of Christ was shed to ransom you from sin—that Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. (I Corinthians 5:6)

JUDAS: And until the Lord comes again, we shall continue to proclaim his death whenever we eat this bread and drink from this cup. (I Corinthians 11:26)
JOHN: So come now. Let us celebrate our feast together.

"Baptism"

Commentary

"Baptism" is a choral reading for five voices varying in quality from dark (#1) to light (#5). The voices may be all male, all female, or mixed, providing there is variance between them. The voices should be used to their fullest advantage employing vocal range, volume, intensity, and timing. Many special effects, such as chanting, harmonizing, and non-verbal vocal sounds, may be attained, depending upon the voices chosen. Three readers have been assigned to the dialogue spoken by Jesus so that some kind of special effect, such as harmonizing, may be used to characterize the voice of Jesus.

The following Scriptures, taken from the King James Version of the Bible, are used in the script: Matthew 3:13, 14, 16; 28:19-20; Mark 1:3, 5, 7-9; 16:16; Luke 3:16, 22; John 1:29; 3:5; 11:25-26; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16; Romans 6:3; 10:9; II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:27; 5:25; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:15-17; I Peter 3:18, 22.

The Script

ALL: Repent! Repent! Repent! (Build in intensity on each)

3: And be baptized!
1: Repent . . .

4: (Echo) Repent.

2: . . . And be baptized!

5: (Echo) And be baptized!

4: The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

1: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." (Mark 1:3)

2: John preached the baptism of repentance . . .

4: (Echo) Repentance.

2: . . . For the remission of sins.

3: (Echo) Remission of sins.

1: Repent of your sins!

5: Purify your heart!

1: And be baptized!

5: Wash away your sins!

3: Repent . . .

2: The inward confession.

3: Be baptized . . .

2: The outward expression.

4: Inward . . .

1: Between thee and thy God.

4: Outward . . .

1: A proclamation to others.

3: And there went out unto John all the country of Judea and all they of Jerusalem.

1: And they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. (Mark 1:5)
Confessing.
Confessing their sins.
And John baptized with water . . . (Reference: Luke 3:16)
Washed away their sins.
Washed in the river.
The water of the river Jordan.
But greater things were to come!
Greater!
Much greater!
For one mightier than John would come to baptize . . .
To baptize with the Holy Ghost! (Reference: Mark 1:7, 8)
Yes! Baptize with the Holy Ghost!
Not water alone.
But John continued to baptize with water . . .
Preparing the way of the Lord!
Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. (Matthew 3:13)
And John was confused. (Reference: Matthew 3:14)
He was confused.
This was Jesus.
The Lamb of God!
Who taketh away the sin of the world!
(Reference: John 1:29)
John was perplexed.

He was perplexed.

For baptism washed away sin...

And this man was sinless.

This man was already clean.

This man was already pure.

Why then, came he to be baptized?

And Jesus answered saying,

"Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:14)

Fulfill...

Provide...

Righteousness...

Salvation...

To provide salvation...

As God had planned.

And Jesus was baptized of John in the Jordan. (Mark 1:9)

And He went up straighway from the water;

He went up.

And lo, the heavens were opened unto him.

Behold!

And he saw the Spirit of God...

The Spirit of God...

The Spirit of God...

Descending as a dove, upon him. (Matthew 3:16)
5: The Spirit of God came upon Him.

1: And a voice came out of heaven saying,

ALL: "Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22)

2: Then Jesus went forth . . . teaching . . .

2, 3, 5: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. And I say unto you . . . except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God. But he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (John 11:25-26; John 3:5; Mark 16:16)

1: And Jesus and his Apostles went about . . .

baptizing.

3: Teaching . . .

4: And baptizing.

2: Then Christ suffered for our sins . . .

4, 5: Crucified.

3, 4, 5: The just for the unjust.

2: That he might bring us to God . . .

1: For forgiveness.

2: Being put to death in the flesh . . .

1, 3: He died!

2: But quickened by the Spirit. (I Peter 3:18)

1, 3, 4, 5: He arose!
And before he ascended to his Father he appeared before his disciples, charging them, saying,

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Go.
Teach.
Baptize.

And the disciples went abroad teaching, saying,

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus . . .
And shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, . . .
Thou shalt be saved." (Romans 10:9)

And the disciples commanded the people, saying,
(Reference: Acts 10:48)

"If thou believest, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized . . .
And wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord . . . (Acts 22:16)
And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38)

For this is a new baptism . . .
More than the baptism of John!
More than the symbol of washing.
More than a cleansing.

For baptism is now like unto the figure of Christ.
(Reference: I Peter 3:22)

His death.

His resurrection.

We are buried with him by baptism into death.

And as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3)

Newness of life!

Death . . .

To physical life.

Resurrection . . .

To spiritual life.

If a man be in Christ . . .

Baptized into Christ. (Galatians 3:27)

He is a new creature. (Reference: II Corinthians 5:17)

A new man.

Therefore, put on this new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.
(Ephesians 4:24)

Walk in the Spirit. (Reference: Galatians 5:25)
3: Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.  
(Colossians 3:15)

5: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. (Colossians 3:16)

2, 4: And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (Colossians 3:17)  
(Pause)

1, 3: Repent!  
5: (Echo) Repent.

2, 4: Be baptized!  
5: (Echo) Be baptized.

ALL: And walk in newness of life!

"Marriage"

Commentary

"Marriage" is a reading based on the wedding vows. Scriptures are taken from both the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version of the Bible (identified as "KJ" and "RS," respectively, in the script). The following Scriptures are used in part or in total: Genesis 2:18, 21-23; 3:16; 18:19; Numbers 6:22-23; Joshua 24:15; Esther 1:20, 22; Proverbs 5:18; 12:4; 14:1; 19:14; Ecclesiastes 9:9; Solomon 8:6; Jeremiah 29:6; Matthew 19:4-6, 26; Luke 24:38; I Corinthians 7:2-3; 13:4, 7, 8; 10:30; 11:3;

"Marriage" is arranged for nine readers:

#1--Female #4--Male #7--Male or Female
#2--Female #5--Male #8--Male or Female
#3--Female #6--Male #9--Male or Female

Numbers 1, 2, and 3 represent the bride; 4, 5, and 6 represent the groom; and 7, 8, and 9 represent the Minister/Holy Spirit. The reading may be adapted to three readers (using only one bride, one groom, and one Minister/Holy Spirit) or six readers (using two of each).

The script is arranged to suggest a wedding ceremony that should be carried out during the production in some way. One suggested staging would be for the readers to be either humming or "ahhh-ing" the traditional wedding march as they enter from offstage. The readers would enter in pairs in the following order: 7 (alone), 8 and 9, 1 and 4, 2 and 5, and 3 and 6. Using a four-step unit, have the readers form a "circle":

```
  7
 / \  
#8   #9
 /   \
#1   #4
 /   \
#2   #5
 /     \
#3   #6 (floor level)
```
The Script

7, 8, 9: (Acting as minister. Delivery of service is flat and rote.) Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the presence of God to join this man and this woman in holy marriage; which is instituted of God, regulated by his commandments, blessed by Our Lord Jesus Christ and to be held in honor among all men. Let us therefore reverently remember that God has established and sanctified marriage for the welfare and happiness of mankind.¹

(Each person places his hand on the shoulder of the person in front of him to complete the "circle" or "ring.") Repeat after me. I . . . do take thee . . . to be my wedded wife . . .

8, 9: . . . to be my wedded husband . . .

(Very quick cue pick-ups on next six lines, even overlapping)

1: I, Mary, do take thee, Edward . . .

4: I, Edward, do take thee, Mary . . .

2: I, Lisa, do take thee, John . . .

5: I, John, do take thee, Lisa . . .

3: I, Diane, do take thee, Paul . . .

6: I, Paul, do take thee, Diane . . .

¹The marriage vows (the dialogue of the Minister) are taken from George E. Sweazey, In Holy Marriage (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).
1-6: ... to be my wedded wife (husband) . . .
7, 8, 9: ... And I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be thy loving and faithful husband . . .
8, 9: ... loving and faithful wife . . .
1-6: And I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be thy loving and faithful husband (wife) . . .
7, 8, 9: In plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.
1-6: In plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both . . .
(Start at normal speed, slow down toward end, as though hesitating)
(7, 8, and 9 lower heads)
1: Stop!
3: Hold on!
4: Wait a minute!
2: What am I doing?
5: How did I get here?
6: I'm not ready!
1-6: Let me . . . let me think a minute!
2: (Next six lines thoughtful) I do promise and covenant . . .
4: To be loving and faithful . . .
1: In plenty and in want . . .
6: In joy and in sorrow . . .
3: In sickness and in health . . .
6: As long as we live!
1-6: I can't do it. That's . . . that's too much to ask!
(7, 8, and 9 raise heads, now acting as Holy Spirit)
7: Peace be with you! (KJV, I Peter 5:14)
8: Why are you troubled?
3: Marriage . . .
6: It's such a big step!
1: I'm not sure I'm ready to cope with having him around all the time . . .
2: . . . For the rest of my life!
4: I'm so accustomed to leading my own life!
5: Living alone!
7: But God said it was not good that man should be alone.
8: So he made him a helpmate. (Reference: RS, Genesis 2:18)
9: Yes. He caused a deep sleep to fall upon the first man, Adam, and he took one of his ribs, and
made a woman, to be Adam's wife. (Reference: RS, Genesis 2:21-22)

7: Have you not read that God made the male and female that they should be as one flesh? (Reference: KJ, Matthew 19:4-5)

9: As Adam said, she was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. (Reference: KJ, Genesis 2:23)

8: God commanded all men, saying, "Take you wives. Let every man have his own wife, and every woman have her own husband." (KJ, Jeremiah 29:6; Reference: I Corinthians 7:2)

2: Yes, I know all that . . .

3: And I believe it . . .

6: But marriage is such a big responsibility!

8: Responsibility? Yes!

9: But responsibility which is God-given.

8: And God is faithful! He will provide the strength to succeed. (Reference: RS, I Corinthians 10:30)

7: Through his disciples, he has given instructions to those who enter marriage.

9: First, the head of the woman is the man, and every man shall bear rule in his own house. (KJ, I Corinthians 11:3; Esther 1:22)

8: He will command his children and his household. (KJ, Genesis 18:19)
7: To the woman God has said, "Submit yourself unto your own husband, and he shall have rule over thee. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." (KJ, Colossians 8:18; Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:23-24)

1, 2, 3: (Realization) For the man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man. (RS, I Corinthians 11:3)

9: However, the husband should "render unto the wife her due benevolence; and likewise the wife unto her husband." (RS, I Corinthians 7:3)

8: And God has charged the man to provide for his own, especially for those of his own house. Those who do not provide, God says, are worse than infidels. (Reference: RS, I Timothy 5:8)

4, 5, 6: I'll do my best!

7: God also instructed the wives . . . to be sober, discreet, chaste, . . .

1: (As 1, 2, and 3 begin to think of things also) Virtuous . . .

8: (Nods yes) A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband. (KJ, Proverbs 12:4)
7: . . . To bear children, to love her children, to guide her house, . . .
3: To be wise . . .
2: Prudent . . .
9: (Nods yes) A prudent wife is from the Lord.
    (RS, Proverbs 19:14)
7: . . . And to be faithful in all things. (Reference: KJ, Titus 2:3; I Timothy 5:14; Proverbs 14:1; I Timothy 3:11)
8, 9: And let marriage be held in honor among all!
    (KJ, Hebrews 13:4)
8: All the wives shall give honor to their husbands.
    (RS, Esther 1:20)
9: And husbands shall give honor to their wives,
7: As unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life. (RS, I Peter 3:7)
7, 8, 9: And finally, be you of one mind, having compassion one of another, and love. (KJ, I Peter 3:8)
1: Love!
4: Yes, love!
9: Husbands, Love your wives, and be not bitter against them. (KJ, Colossians 3:19)
8: Love your wives as you love yourselves. (Reference: RS, Ephesians 5:33)
7: Love your wives even as Christ also loves the church, and gave himself for it that it should
be holy and without blemish. (RS, Ephesians 5:25, 27)

8: Likewise, women, love and reverence your husbands.
   (Reference: KJ, Ephesians 5:33)

8, 9: For love is as strong as death. (KJ, Solomon 8:6)

9: It suffereth long and is kind.

6: Love envieth not . . .

5: Is not puffed up . . .

8: Love beareth all things,

4: Believeth all things,

2: Hopeth all things,

1, 2, 4, 5: Endureth all things.

1-6: Love never faileth. (KJ, I Corinthians 13:4, 7, 8)

7: Therefore, husbands, live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest . . . and be ravished always with her love. (KJ, Ecclesiastes 9:9; Proverbs 5:18)

7, 8, 9: And above all else . . . serve God!

8: Joshua said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (KJ, Joshua 24:15)

9: Do you likewise.

7: For the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God! (RS, I Corinthians 11:3)

7, 8, 9: And in God all things are possible! (KJ, Matthew 19:26)

1, 2: All the adjustments of marriage . . .
4, 5: All the responsibilities of marriage . . .

3, 6: They're all possible through God.

1-6: I'm ready now. Let's go on with the wedding.

(7, 8, and 9 bow heads momentarily, then raise them again as the Minister)

7, 8, 9: Repeat after me. I . . . do take thee . . . to be my wedded wife . . .

1-6: (This time, with meaning) I . . . do take thee . . . to be my wedded wife (husband); and I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be thy loving and faithful husband (wife), in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.

7, 8, 9: I pronounce you man and wife. Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. Let us pray. "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace, both now and in the life everlasting." (KJ, Matthew 19:6; Numbers 6:22-23)

ALL: Amen! (With gusto and feeling)

(Readers exit in reverse order of entering)
"Christian Leadership"

Commentary

This choral reading should be used on President's Day or a day dedicated to Christian national leadership.

The reading is arranged for four light quality and four dark quality voices. If a group numbering more than eight is used, it is recommended that the solo lines be arranged so that all readers have at least one solo line. Solo lines are indicated as follows:

L1--Light #1   D1--Dark #1
L2--Light #2   D2--Dark #2
L3--Light #3   D3--Dark #3
L4--Light #4   D4--Dark #4

All Scriptures used in this reading are taken from the King James Version of the Bible. The following verses are used in part or in total: Genesis 5:24; 17:1; Exodus 18:20; Deuteronomy 5:30; Joshua 24:15; I Kings 2:61; II Samuel 22:31; Isaiah 55:4; Psalms 33:12; 133:1; Proverbs 1:5, 7; 10:12; 11:1; 12:19, 22; 16:11; Luke 13:33; Acts 14:16; Romans 4:12; 13:8; II Corinthians 7:2; 8:21; Ephesians 4:1; 5:2; Colossians 1:10; 4:5; I Thessalonians 2:11; 4:12; III John 4.
The Script

LIGHTS: Blessed!

DARKS: Blessed!

ALL: Blessed is the nation!

L1: What nation?

DARKS: Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord!

(Psalms 33:12)

L2: (Echo) Whose God is the Lord!

LIGHTS (except L1): Blessed!

D1: Blessed is the nation . . .

L1: Whose God is the Lord?

D1: . . . Whose leaders are chosen of God!

L2: (Echo) Whose leaders are chosen of God!

LIGHTS (except L1): Blessed!

D2: Blessed is the nation . . .

L1: Whose leaders are chosen of God?

D2: . . . Whose leaders walk with God!

L2: (Echo) Whose leaders walk with God!

LIGHTS (except L1): Blessed!

D3: (Stretch name out, calling) Abraham.

L3: God called Abraham. (Reference: Genesis 17:1)

D4: And Abraham walked with God.

L4: A leader of the people.

DARKS: He walked with God.

D1: (Stretch name out, calling) Joshua.

L2: God called Joshua.
And Joshua walked with God.

A leader.

He walked with God.

(Stretch name out, calling) Enoch.

God called Enoch. (Genesis 5:24)

And Enoch walked with God. (Genesis 5:24)

A leader.

Abraham . . .

Joshua . . .

Enoch . . .

All leaders!

All walked with God!

You chosen leaders of this nation . . .

Of any nation . . .

God challenges you!

Walk worthy of the vocation wherein you are called. (Ephesians 4:1)

Walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham . . . (Romans 4:12)

The faith of Joshua . . .

The faith of Enoch . . .

Faith in God! (II Samuel 22:31)

For His way is perfect. (II Samuel 22:31)

Walk in the ways which the Lord our God hath commanded you. (Deuteronomy 5:30)

Walk in his statutes. (I King 2:61)
LIGHTS: Walk in wisdom! (Colossians 4:5)

L1: A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; (Proverbs 1:5)

L2: And a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsel. (Proverbs 1:5)

D3: But fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)

DARKS: Walk, therefore, in wisdom.

DARKS: Walk, therefore, in wisdom.

LIGHTS: Walk in honesty! (Reference: I Thessalonians 4:12)

D1: Wrong no man . . . (II Corinthians 7:2)

D4: Corrupt no man . . . (II Corinthians 7:2)

D2: Defraud no man. (II Corinthians 7:2)

L3: Provide for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. (II Corinthians 8:21)

L4: For a just weight and balance are the Lord's. (Proverbs 16:11)

L1: But a false balance is abomination to the Lord. (Proverbs 11:1)

DARKS: Walk, therefore, in honesty.

LIGHTS: Walk in truth! (III John 4)

L2: The lip of truth shall be established forever . . . (Proverbs 12:19)

D3: But a lying tongue is but for a moment. (Proverbs 12:19)
D1: Lying lips are abomination to the Lord . . .
   (Proverbs 12:22)
L3: But they that deal truly are his delight.
   (Proverbs 12:22)
DARKS: Walk, therefore, in truth!
LIGHTS: And walk in love! (Ephesians 5:2)
L4: How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell
   together in unity . . . and love. (Psalms 133:1)
D4: Hatred stirreth up strifes, (Proverbs 10:12)
D2: But love covereth all sins. (Proverbs 10:12)
D3: It worketh no ill to its neighbor. (Romans 13:8)
L2: Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.
   (Romans 13:8)
DARKS: Walk, therefore, in love.
LIGHTS: Walk in all these ways . . .
L1: In wisdom . . .
L2: In honesty . . .
L3: In truth . . .
L4: In love . . .
LIGHTS: In all these ways walk worthy of the Lord.
   (Colossians 1:10)
D1: Ye who are the chosen leaders . . .
D2: Of this nation . . .
D3: Of any nation . . .
D1: God hath charged you! (Reference: I Thessalonians 2:11)
D4: Every one of you!

D1: For he said, Behold I have given a leader and commander to the people, and he shall show the people the way wherein they must walk. (Reference: Isaiah 55:4; Exodus 18:20)

DARKS: Therefore, walk . . .

LIGHTS: Wait not.

DARKS: Walk . . .

LIGHTS: Linger not.

DARKS: Walk . . .

LIGHTS: Move constantly forward.

DARKS: Walk today and tomorrow and the day following in all the ways which the Lord hath commanded you. (Luke 13:33; Deuteronomy 5:30)

L2: God suffers all nations to walk in their own ways, for he hath said, "Choose you whom ye will serve." (Acts 14:16; Joshua 24:15)

DARKS: But blessed is that nation . . .

LIGHTS: (Echo) That nation.

DARKS: Whose leaders serve . . .

LIGHTS: (Echo) Serve.

DARKS: And walk . . .

LIGHTS: (Echo) Walk.

DARKS: With God!

LIGHTS: Blessed!

ALL: Blessed!
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

Summary

Eight scripts derived from Biblical texts were prepared for group oral presentation using various techniques. The scripts incorporated the characteristics of both readers theatre and choral reading in varying degrees, but were not limited to the requirements of either of these two techniques.

To assure usability of the scripts by a larger number of churches, each script was oriented to a special occasion that is celebrated or observed in most Bible-oriented churches. "The Birth of Christ," a Christmas script, is a narrative reading illustrating that the birth of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament was a fulfillment of the prophesies given throughout the Old Testament. "The Crucifixion," prepared for the Easter season, is a coordination of the events recorded in the four Gospels with original commentary on the crucifixion process. "The Resurrection," another Easter script, records some of the events that occurred the day of the resurrection of Jesus and one incident of his appearance to the disciples eight days later. "The Second Coming of Christ" was prepared for use in the
Advent season. "The Last Supper," which employed readers theatre techniques, was created to be a part of the Communion service, but could be used just as effectively in conjunction with a service which centers on, but does not serve, Communion. "Baptism" is a reading which could be used in connection with a baptismal service or in any service celebrating that sacrament. "Marriage," based on the wedding vows, projects the atmosphere of a wedding ceremony in its form. It would be effective not only in a service dealing with the subject of marriage, but also in one dealing with Christian family life. The last script, "Christian Leadership," was prepared to be used on President's Day, which is celebrated by some denominations in the month of February, or any day dedicated to Christian national leadership.

The preparation of each script began with the collection of all possible Scriptures relating to the chosen subject from both the Old and New Testaments. References from the two Testaments were used in different ways in different scripts. For example, "The Birth of Christ" illustrated the New Testament fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. "Baptism" used Scriptures solely from the New Testament, but over fifty per cent of the Scriptures in "Christian Leadership" were from the Old Testament.

After the Scriptures were collected, they were analyzed to determine the most effective techniques to be employed in
creating the script. Although the verses were all related, often they were repetitious or did not fit together. Sometimes ideas evolved that needed further scriptural development or support in another direction.

Once the technique was determined, the script began to develop. The Biblical translation which best suited the technique being employed was used. For example, the contemporary language of *Good News for Modern Man* lent itself to the story-telling technique employed in "The Last Supper."

Various translations of the Bible were employed in an attempt to appeal to multiple audiences. The traditional King James Version was used in several of the scripts. Modern versions applied were the Revised Standard Version, *The Living Bible*, and *Good News for Modern Man*. Other translations were consulted in collecting the Scriptures, but these three best suited the purpose of the scripts.

Commentary was kept to a minimum in an attempt to keep the scripts non-doctrinal. The verses, taken in whole or in part, were arranged and adapted to create a unified reading. Then original comments were used to bridge the verses together and make the script flow smoothly. When necessary for flow or rhythm, verses were paraphrased. The guidelines established by Paul Hunsinger and Coger and White, which were presented in Chapter I, were applied in creating the scripts.
The number of readers used was determined after, or as, the technique was formulated. Most of the scripts were written with an approximate number of readers in mind. "The Last Supper" was written with the specific number of eleven readers to be used. "Baptism," on the other hand, was completely written, then analyzed to see how many voices would work most effectively. Five were assigned.

Variety was used in assigning the number of readers to be used in each script. The scripts were arranged for as few as five readers ("Baptism") and as many as would be available for two choruses ("The Second Coming of Christ"). However, almost all of the scripts can be adjusted to more or less voices (as few as three for some scripts), with the exception of "The Last Supper." This flexibility was intentional so that the scripts could be used regardless of the size of a group.

The performance time of the scripts will vary from approximately eight to twelve minutes. They were designed for this time period to enable them to be used within a worship service or other church meeting allowing plenty of time for the sermon, a discussion, or other aspects of the program.

Observations

Scripts for group oral presentation have been written and produced effectively for a long time. The current need
for new scripts, particularly that expressed by the Southern Baptist Convention, led to the preparation of the present eight scripts. The following observations have been made as a result of this work.

In preparing the scripts, many translations of the Bible were consulted and employed in addition to the traditional King James Version. Some scripts employed only the King James Version, others used one of the modern versions, and still others mixed the tradition of the King James Version with the modernization of contemporary versions. It was found that the modern versions were often easier to work with because the contemporary language blended more readily with original comments, when it was necessary to use them to develop a technique or provide a smooth flow to the scripts. Also, mixing modern versions within a script worked well because the language styles were similar. Scripts that used the King James Version as the sole source presented greater problems in blending the style of the original lines with that of the Bible. The language of the King James Version is so beautiful and elegant that it is difficult for a novice to create lines that can stand beside those of that version. Scripts that combined the King James Version with modern translations were the most difficult to prepare because the language of the King James Version has a natural rhythm and flow that is absent from the contemporary versions. Generally speaking, because of the language
styles, the King James Version adapts better to scripts using choral reading techniques and modern versions adapt better when readers theatre techniques are employed.

Those readings composed mainly of unfamiliar verses will probably be the most interesting to audiences. Although many people enjoy hearing their favorite passages re-read, a large number of people tend to pay less attention and lose interest if they are too familiar with the material. They can pay only partial attention and still know what is happening. However, when new material is presented, the audience is more apt to listen.

The audience will probably respond more favorably to scripts that are uplifting—scripts that "celebrate" or "praise" something or some one. Therefore, topics that were naturally uplifting developed more readily. Scripts that deal with a more sombre topic, such as "The Crucifixion," need special care so that the conclusion is not on such a low level that the audience does not feel emotionally satisfied.

Keeping the scripts non-doctrinal in tone can be difficult. If a script is primarily scriptural with very few original lines there is less tendency for doctrine to be expressed. However, when verses are taken out of their original context and words are omitted or paraphrasing is used, a writer can adapt the Scriptures in such a way that they express an opinion, whether done deliberately or
unintentionally. This is a danger of which a writer must be conscious. An attempt was made to avoid letting this occur in the eight prepared scripts.

These scripts were prepared, hopefully, with some accuracy of "ear for performance." However, the only true test for the effectiveness of a script is its performance. Even professional playwrights often take new shows "on the road" prior to Broadway openings to allow time to re-write parts that do not meld or work for an audience. Therefore, there is the probability that some aspects of some of these scripts may need to be altered for performance.

Recommendations

These eight scripts are only a beginning in fulfilling the need of churches across the nation for such scripts. Therefore, it is recommended that more such scripts be prepared. There are many other holidays or observances that would provide subject matter for additional scripts in this same series. Some of these are Lent, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Dedication Day (for children), Memorial Day, and New Year's Day. In addition to these, which are observed by most churches, each denomination may have its own observances that would provide occasions for scripts to be prepared.

Topics should not be limited to special occasions. Any lesson or series of lessons that is taught in the Bible
could serve as focal points for scripts.

The present scripts were prepared for an eight- to ten-minute time period. However, it is felt that scripts running only five minutes may be just as valuable for use within worship services or church meetings. Therefore, it is recommended that a series of scripts of this length be prepared in the future.
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