

The Passion Narrative of St. Mark

Narrator: It was two days before the celebration of the Feast of the Passover in the city of Jerusalem. Jesus had been in the city with his disciples for some time. He openly spoke about the fact that he would have to suffer and die to save people from their sins. He also challenged the religious authorities by condemning their self-righteous attitudes. So the Chief Priest and religious leaders met to form a plan.

Priest #1: This man, this Jesus of Nazareth must be silenced!

Priest #2: Yes! By all means. There is great danger that the people will listen to his foolish talk instead of to us.

Priest #3: Let's arrest him. Let's put him in prison so that no one will be able to hear him.

Priest #1: That's a good idea. That would put him out of action.

Priest #2: Wait...wait...we can't do that. The people have been following him with palms and shouts of Hosanna! If we arrest him now there will be a great riot.

Priest #3: You're right. We will have to wait for a better time to get rid of this trouble-maker!

Narrator: So it was that the religious leaders decided to wait before trying to get rid of Jesus. While this was being done, Jesus and his disciples traveled just over a mile to the East of Jerusalem to a city known as Bethany. It was there that Jesus and his disciples were entertained as the guest of a man named Simon, who had been healed by Jesus of a skin disease like leprosy. As they ate, a woman entered the room with a beautiful

jar filled with expensive perfume. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus' head.

Man #1: Look at what she is doing! How dare she!

Woman #1: What a waste! That perfume could have been sold for money to give the poor.

Man #2: There would have been enough to feed many people! You selfish woman!

Woman #2: How could you do such a thoughtless thing? God will surely punish you for being so stupid!

Jesus: Friends, please be kind. Stop bothering this woman and leave her alone. She has done a very beautiful thing for me. I know there are poor people who could be fed, but they will always be in your world. You will always have chances to see to their needs. I will not always be here in this world with you. What this woman has done is all that she could just now. She has believed in me and the promise of God. She has poured this perfume over me to prepare me for burial, for this is your custom, I want you to know that wherever people talk about the good news of God's love, this woman and her kindness will be remembered.

Narrator: After the woman finished attending Jesus, Judas Iscariot left the gathering and went out to find the religious leaders who were seeking to get rid of Jesus. He found them very interested and **willing** to hear what he had to say.

Priest #1: There is a knock at the door. Who could it be?

Priest #2: I'll see.

Judas: Quick! Let me in' I have something you need!

Priest #3: Wait a minute! You can't just come in here without an explanation. Who are you?

Judas: My name is Judas Iscariot.

Priest #1: Is that supposed to mean something to us?

Judas: I am a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, the one you want to kill.

Priest #2: How do you know that we want to kill him?

Judas: He has made fools of you all! I know your kind. You cannot stand to have someone get the better of you. I know that Jesus is in great danger.

Priest #3: So why are you here? Why would one of his disciples want to talk to us?

Judas: Jesus has made a mistake. He is not doing things according to what my plans were. He is not the Messiah I thought he would be. I want to help you arrest him.

Priest #1: Really?

Judas: Yes, I believe it is the only way.

Narrator: The priests were pleased with what Judas had to say. They promised to give him money for his efforts. So Judas began to look for opportunities to have Jesus arrested away from the crowds. **Shortly after Judas'** exchange, the disciples and Jesus were together. It was now the first day of the Festival of unleavened bread, the day the lambs for the Passover meal

were killed. The disciples with Jesus began to ask questions of their Lord.

Disciple #1- Jesus, where are we going to celebrate the meal of the Passover?

Disciple #2: Yes, Lord, where shall we be gathering? We have no house or building in which to stay.

Jesus: Go ahead of the rest of us into the city. You'll meet a man carrying water in a jar. Follow him to the house where he works and say to the owner of that house: "The Teacher says, Where is the room where my disciples and I will eat the Passover meal?" The owner will then show you a large upstairs room that is fixed up and furnished. That is where you **will** get everything ready for us.

Narrator: The disciples did as Jesus requested and found everything as Jesus had told them it would be. It was then that they prepared the Passover meal. Soon the others arrived with Jesus and they began to eat. As they were eating, Jesus began to speak.

Jesus: Friends, I have to tell you something. One of you who is eating with me now will betray me tonight.

Disciple #1: No, Lord! That cannot be!

Disciple #2: Surely you don't mean me, Lord!

Jesus: It is one of you who dips his bread in the dish I have used. The Son of Man will die as the Scriptures have said he would. But, it will be terrible for the one who will betray the Son of Man! It would have been better if that man would never have

been born!

Narrator: As they were eating, Jesus took a piece of bread, gave a prayer of thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples.

Jesus: Take this. This is my body.

Narrator: Then Jesus took a cup, gave thanks to God, and handed it to them and they all drank from it.

Jesus: This is my blood, which is poured out for many, my blood which seals God's covenant. I tell you, I will never again drink this wine until the day I drink the new wine in the Kingdom of God.

Narrator: After the meal the disciples sang a hymn together and then went out to the Mount of Olives. It was a quiet place away from the rush of the city. It was there that Jesus spoke again to his disciples.

Jesus: Tonight all of you will run away from me and leave me, for the Scripture says - "God will kill the shepherd, and the sheep will all be scattered." But after I am raised to life I will go back to Galilee to meet you there.

Peter: No, Lord! I will never leave you, not even if all the rest do, I will not!

Jesus: Peter, I tell you that before the rooster crows two times tonight you will say three times that you do not know me.

Peter: No, Lord! I will never do that! I will not deny you even if it means I will have to die myself!

Narrator: All the other disciples agreed with Peter. After awhile,

they came to the place called Gethsemane. Jesus again spoke to his disciples.

Jesus: Sit here awhile for I must pray.

Narrator: Jesus then took Peter, James and John on a little further with him. He was very sad and said to them

Jesus: The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here awhile and keep watch so that I might pray to God.

Narrator: Jesus moved on a little further and threw himself on the ground and prayed- Jesus: Father! My Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet, not what I want but what you want should be done.

Narrator: Jesus returned to his disciples and found them asleep.

Jesus: Peter, are you asleep? Weren't you able to stay awake for even one hour? Keep watch and pray that you not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

Narrator: Once more he went away alone to pray, saying the same words he had said before. Then he came back to the disciples and again found them sleeping. They could not keep their eyes open and did not know what to say to Jesus. When Jesus came back a third time, he said to them

Jesus: Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come! Look, the Son of Man is now being handed over to the power of sinful human beings. Get up, let's go! Look! The man who is betraying me is here!

Narrator: While Jesus was speaking, Judas, one of the twelve

disciples arrived with a large crowd. They had swords and clubs. They had been sent by the chief priests, the Teachers of the Law and the elders of the religious community. They had been told that Judas was going to kiss the man whom they were to arrest that night. Judas came to Jesus and greeted him.

Judas: Teacher!

Narrator: It was then that Judas kissed Jesus. When he stepped back several people from the crowd grabbed Jesus and held him tightly. One of those who were standing there drew his sword and slashed at one of the priests' slaves, cutting off his ear. Jesus spoke out

Jesus: Did you have to come with swords and clubs to capture me as though I was an outlaw or a common criminal? Day after day I was with you in the city - in the temple - and you did not then arrest me. But the Scriptures must come true.

Narrator: When it was obvious Jesus was being taken prisoner, the disciples - each and every one of them - ran away. A young man dressed only in a linen cloth tried to follow. When they tried to arrest him by grabbing his cloth, he stripped it away from his body and ran away naked. It was then that Jesus was taken to the house of the High Priest where all the important religious leaders were gathering. Peter followed from a distance. He went into the courtyard of the High Priest and sat there with the soldiers by the warmth of the fire. The Chief Priests and the whole Council tried to find enough evidence so they could put Jesus to death, but they could not find any. Many witnesses told lies against Jesus, but their stories didn't agree.

Man #1: I heard him say that he was going to tear our Temple down!

Man #2: I heard that too! He said he would tear down that man-made temple and build another one up in three days without any human effort at all!

Narrator: But even these men could not get their stories to match. Finally, the Chief Priest questioned Jesus.

Priest: You have heard many people say many things. Have you no answer for these things people say about you?

Narrator: But Jesus would not respond to the priest. So again the High Priest questioned him.

Priest: Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed God?

Jesus: I am. And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right side of the Almighty and coming with the clouds of heaven'

Priest: Enough! We don't need any more witnesses! You heard his blasphemy! You heard how he claims to be God! What is your decision?

Narrator: All the people gathered there voted against Jesus. They felt that he was guilty and should be put to death. Some of them began to spit on Jesus. They also blindfolded him and struck him as they taunted - "Guess who has hit you." The guards also took him and slapped him. While this was happening, one of the servant girls of the priest spoke to Peter while he sat by the fire.

Girl: Hey' I know you. You're one of the ones with Jesus of Nazareth.

Peter: I don't know what you're talking about, girl' I don't

understand what it is that you are saying to me!

Narrator: Peter tried to walk away from the fire into a nearby passageway. It was at that time a rooster crowed.

Girl: I'm sure that I am right. I man over there - he's one of them!

Peter: I don't know what you are talking about!

Narrator: Now some of the others agreed with the girl. Another spoke out.

Man: You can't deny you are one of them. I can tell by the way you dress and the way you look that you are from Galilee just like this Jesus.

Peter: I swear that I'm telling you the truth! May God punish me if I'm not' I do not know the man you are talking about!

Narrator: Just then, a rooster crowed a second time. Peter remembered the words of Jesus.

Jesus: "Before the rooster crows two times, you will say three times **that you do not** know me."

Narrator: Peter was crushed by the memory. He broke down and cried more than he had ever cried before. Meanwhile, the priests decided to take Jesus to the Roman Governor of Judea, named Pontius Pilate. They brought him to Pilate in chains and handed him over.

Pilate: Are you the king of the Jews?

Jesus: So you say.

Priest #1: You see! This man is crazy!

Priest #2: He is an enemy of Rome!

Priest #3: He plots an overthrow!

Pilate: Aren't you going to answer all these things? Listen to all these accusations?

Narrator: Jesus remained quiet. Pilate was amazed at the reaction of Jesus. He seemed so calm - so in control - even though his life was threatened. By now, a crowd was gathering where Pilate and the religious leaders held Jesus. They came to Pilate for a yearly favor. Rome had the custom of releasing one Jewish prisoner from jail at the Feast of the Passover. They did this because the Jews were very hard to deal with and they tried to calm them down with this gesture.

Pilate: I know why you're here. It's time to release one man to you from our prisons. Do you want me to set free for you the King of the Jews?

Narrator: Pilate did this because he knew the priests were jealous of Jesus. And he did not like the priests or favor letting them get their way. But the priests were very smart. They spoke in the crowd.

Priest #1: Before you answer, think! There is a better man to have than this.

Priest #2: Yes! There is the man Barabbas. He is one of our rebels one who hated Rome and plots to kill them when he can.

Priest #3: That's right. Barabbas is the one who can help us

most.

Crowd: Give us Barabbas - we want Barabbas!

Pilate: Very well, you have made your choice. What do you want me to do with the one you call the king of the Jews.

Crowd: Crucify him! Crucify him! Crucify him!

Pilate: But what crime has he committed?

Crowd: Crucify him! Crucify him! Crucify him!

Narrator: Pilate was afraid of the crowd and wanted to please them. So, he set Barabbas free. Then he had Jesus whipped and beaten, and handed him over to be crucified.

Narrator: The soldiers took Jesus away from the crowd inside the governor's palace. There they called together the soldiers. They put a purple robe on Jesus, made a crown of thorny branches and put it on his head.

Soldier #1: Here's to the great and glorious king!

Soldier #2: Long live the king of the Jews!

Narrator: They beat him over the head with a stick, spat on him, fell down on their knees and mocked him. When they had finished making fun of him, they took off the purple robe and put his clothes back on him. Then they led him away to be crucified. On the way, they became concerned about Jesus.

Soldier #1: He's getting weak. He may not make it to the hill.

Soldier #2: You there! Get over here! You'll carry the cross for

this man!

Narrator: The soldiers grabbed a man named Simon who was from Cyrene to carry the cross to the hill of the skull called Golgotha. They tried to give Jesus a mixture that would drug him but Jesus would not take it. Then they crucified Jesus and divided his clothes among themselves, throwing dice to see who would get which piece of clothing. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The notice of what he was accused of said - "The king of the Jews." Alongside Jesus, one on each side, were two criminals. As people passed by the cross, they mocked at Jesus.

Woman: Aha' You were going to tear down the temple and build it up in three days!

Man: Yes' That's what you said! Why don't you come down from that cross and save yourself?

Priest #1: Look! He saved others but cannot save himself!

Priest #2: Look at the great Messiah now!

Priest #3: Come down from the cross, Messiah, and we'll believe in you'

Narrator: Even the dying criminals mocked Jesus. At noon the whole country was covered with a deep darkness none had ever seen before. This great darkness lasted for three hours. At three o'clock, Jesus cried out

Jesus: "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?"

Narrator: People who heard this mocked even more.

Woman: Listen, he's calling for Elijah!

Narrator: At that moment, someone came up to the cross with a sponge that had been soaked with cheap wine. They put it on a stick and held it by Jesus' mouth.

Man: Wait! Let's see if Elijah will come to bring him down from the cross!

Narrator: It was then that Jesus gave out a loud cry and died. At that moment the huge curtain in the temple that separated the people from the place where God was believed to abide was torn in two from top to bottom. One of the soldiers near the cross who had seen the whole experience saw how Jesus died and said

Soldier: "This man really was the Son of God!"

Narrator: Now there were some women there at the foot of the cross. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James the Less, and Salome. They had been with Jesus since the days of ministry in Galilee. They had often helped Jesus. Many other women who had come to Jerusalem were there also. Near evening, Joseph of Arimathea came. He was a respected member of the council who had sentenced Jesus to death. Because it was the day before the Sabbath, and because he was a man who was awaiting the kingdom of God he went to Pilate.

Joseph: Your excellency.

Pilate: What is it now?

Joseph: I would like you to hand over to me the body of Jesus

who was crucified this day.

Pilate: He is dead already?

Joseph: Yes, excellency. He is dead.

Pilate: Soldier, is it true? Is the king of the Jews dead?

Soldier: Yes, sir. It's true

Pilate: Take him then. I'm glad to have this whole thing over with!

Narrator: Joseph went back to the hill of the skull. He and the women took Jesus from the cross. They wrapped him in linen and placed him in a tomb which had been dug out from solid rock. These were the tombs saved for very rich or important people. Then, he rolled a large stone across the entrance to the tomb. The women saw where the body of Jesus was placed and made plans to anoint his body with funeral ointments after the Sabbath - or God's Day - had passed.